Beyond Boundaries and Categories: The Living Dead in Medieval Literature

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Abstract

The living dead are unstable; they appear throughout medieval literature under mutable and mutually reinforcing representations. This thesis is a literary study that analyses representations of the living dead in narratives from medieval England. It argues that the instability of the living dead makes a holistic view the only way to study them.

To this end, this thesis dissolves some of the most familiar dichotomies and typologies in medieval studies. It destabilizes boundaries, such as 'life/death' and 'corporeal/incorporeal', and categories, such as 'revenants', 'saints', and 'ghosts'. These frameworks are problematised as linguistic and ontological obstacles, which hinder our understanding of the living dead. Moving beyond boundaries and categories, this thesis tracks new connections and incorporates narratives ostracised by existing interpretative frameworks. It seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of the instability that characterised and empowered the living dead in medieval literature.

The findings from this thesis contribute to our broader understanding of medieval storytelling. This thesis examines a culturally diverse stock of literary building blocks that became synonymous with the living dead in medieval England. A common repertoire of narrative patterns and motifs shaped, and were themselves shaped by, narratives of the living dead. Narrative imitation and variation, credulity and creativity, emerge as central themes in this project.

This thesis is organised thematically to track discernible patterns across these literary elements. Chapters one and two analyse representations of the living dead as shapes and forms of human bodies. Zoomorphic imagery related to the living dead are explored in chapters three and four, while chapters five and six investigate the use of elements and senses in these stories, respectively. Overall, this thesis celebrates the instability of the living dead, identifying this characteristic as crucial to their lasting imaginative potential.

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Abbreviations

AB	*Analecta Bollandiana*
BL	British Library, London
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHR	*English Historical Review*
Morgan	Pierpont Morgan Library, New York
NLA	*Nova Legenda Anglie, as collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave, and others*, ed. Carl Horstman. 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901)
OMT	Oxford Medieval Texts
OUP	Oxford University Press
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1844-1864)
RS	Rolls Series

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Introduction

The boundary between life and death is all too often taken for granted. A door is perhaps the most familiar analogy for this boundary: a door which, when opened, becomes a threshold.[1] In going through this door, in crossing its threshold, the living and the dead are imagined breaching a boundary between them. And yet, the door is a deceptively reassuring analogy. It supposes that access to life and death can be determined and controlled at a fixed point. The very concept of the living dead undermines the exclusivity of life and death and dispels such hopes for predictability or stability. Instead, the living dead seem to come from both and neither side of the door. Tales of the living dead, recorded throughout history, thus destabilise the boundary between life and death. In fact, it might be more accurate to say that the living dead stand in the open doorway, on the threshold itself, neither entering nor leaving.[2] Their presence there unsettles us, but also compels us to leave the door open.

Medieval England is a fitting case in point. A wealth of narratives about the living dead survives in its literature. This is in part a result of complex and fluid understandings of life and death during this period. More than just a biological process, death took many forms and could be onset by sin, sleep, and seclusion.[3] These multiple understandings of death indicate the futility of imposing modern distinctions between life and death upon medieval evidence. As Victoria Thompson has argued, dying in medieval England entailed the dissolution of time itself; the dying body became an intersection for time and eternity, in an ever-liminal state.[4] In short, death simultaneously served as a sign of mortality and immortality. In this context, the prevalence of the living dead in medieval literature is less surprising; they reinforce a central Christian paradox that to be human is to be both mortal and immortal. It is in the study of the living dead that we are most starkly confronted with the limits of our conceptual boundaries. Familiar dichotomies between life and death, soul and body, and Christian and non-Christian belief are subsumed into

[1] Ruth Richardson, 'Death's Door: Thresholds and Boundaries in British Funeral Customs', in *Boundaries and Thresholds: Papers from a Colloquium of The Katherine Briggs Club*, ed. Hilda R. Ellis Davidson (London: The Thimble Press, 1993), 92.
[2] Elif Boyacıoğlu, 'The Revenant on the Threshold', *Folklore* 62 (2015), 14-19.
[3] On different types of death, see Jane Gilbert, *Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 6-7; Victoria Thompson, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 49.
[4] Victoria Thompson, 'The View from the Edge: Dying, Power, and Vision in Late Saxon England', in *Boundaries in Early Medieval Britain*, eds. David Griffiths, Andrew Reynolds and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 2003), 95-96.

this unstable literary phenomenon. The living dead undermine the integrity of such boundaries and ultimately invite us to look beyond them.

The imaginative potential of the living dead lies in their defiance of language. Therein, however, also lies the challenge for the scholar. As Stephen Gordon has observed, 'it is impossible to corral liminal entities into discreet linguistic or typological units'.[5] Attempts to conceptualise the living dead are thus doomed to failure. Rosanne Gasse's concept of the 'life/death hybrid', that is, any person who is simultaneously alive and dead, caught in the in-between, illustrates the oxymoronic knot at the heart of this study.[6] To an extent, this challenge has been surmounted in medieval studies through the fragmentation of the living dead into conceptual categories. By isolating types or categories, scholars have transformed 'the living dead' into a more manageable array of entities, such as revenants, saints, and ghosts. These categories are typically predicated on varying moral types, social groups, or explanatory frameworks. In effect, they bring a sense of order to an extremely messy literary record. The convenience of this taxonomy is undeniable, as is the fact that some medieval writers did try to differentiate apparitions of the living dead. However, the literary record is far messier than we allow our neat set of categories to suggest. Furthermore, these categories are ultimately constructions, which represent possibilities, rather than historical realities. Medieval storytellers and modern scholars alike have only been able to select from this range of possible constructions because of the instability of the living dead. As such, if we rely too heavily on the categories that demarcate our field, we risk losing sight of the very factor that makes them possible. To understand the imaginative potential of the living dead, we need to look beyond these categories and embrace their fundamental instability.

This thesis is an experiment in looking beyond boundaries and categories to foreground the instability of the living dead in medieval literature. In what follows, I argue that we must dissolve our typologies if we are to understand the living dead. This thesis adopts a holistic approach to not only integrate atomized studies of the living dead, but also show that the living dead are more than the sum of these parts. As a result, this thesis offers not only fresh interpretations of familiar stories, but also new analysis of hitherto peripheral examples that have been neglected through our adherence to typological frameworks. By destabilizing our boundaries and categories, I aim to more fully embrace the uncertainties that abound in stories of postmortem survival. However,

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[5] Stephen Gordon, 'The vitality of the dead in medieval cultures', *Journal of Medieval History* 48:2 (2022), 158.
[6] Rosanne Gasse, 'The Living, the Dead, and Those In-between: The Hybridity of Dying', in *Hybridity in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 162.

before leaving these boundaries and categories behind, I would like to start by identifying them and their usefulness to the study of the living dead. This introduction thus begins by taking stock of our current state of knowledge on the living dead in medieval literature. In this field, three categories of the living dead have received particular attention, namely, 'revenants', 'saints', and 'ghosts'. I will therefore start by assessing how far our knowledge of the living dead has been advanced through the study of these three categories, before explaining why and how we might move beyond them.

The Dangerous Dead

The 'revenant' is arguably the most notorious category of the living dead in the Middle Ages. This French loan word for the 'returned' has received a particular meaning in medieval studies as the 'reanimated corpse'.[7] This understanding of the living dead as revenant thus focuses on belief in the corpse's ability to rise from the dead. Archaeological approaches have tried to measure the prevalence of this belief through non-normative, or 'deviant', burial customs. These studies have revealed how a small number of the buried dead were treated differently, in ways that suggest different attitudes towards their bodies and their vitality.[8] Although the extent to which these non-normative burials can be confidently interpreted as revenants is a matter of contention, there is a scholarly consensus that some of these practices, especially postmortem decapitation, provide evidence for strategies to control 'the dangerous dead'.[9] Our understanding of this belief in revenants has been fleshed out through study of both archaeological and literary records. For example, John Blair's 'The Dangerous Dead in Early Medieval England' expertly brought together this range of evidence for studying revenants.[10] Blair's study revealed a category of dead outcasts, whose return had to be prevented by imprisoning their corpses in liminal spaces, like remote boggy places. Similar literary-archaeological approaches have shown how revenants, and related burial practices, are linked to medieval ideas about disease causation.[11] This understanding of the shunned corpse as a

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[7] Nancy Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', *Past & Present* 152 (1996), 17.
[8] Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford: OUP, 2009); Eileen Murphy, ed. *Deviant Burial in the Archaeological Record*, *Studies in Funerary Archaeology* 2 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008).
[9] Leszek Gardeła, 'The Dangerous Dead? Rethinking Viking-Age Deviant Burials', in *Conversions: Looking for Ideological Change in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Leszek Słupecki and Rudolf Simek (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2013), 99-136; Matthew Beresford, 'The Dangerous Dead: The Early Medieval Deviant Burial at Southwell, Nottinghamshire in a Wider Context', *MBArchaeology Local Heritage Series* 3 (2012), 1-16.
[10] John Blair, 'The Dangerous Dead in Early Medieval England', in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds. Stephen Baxter et al. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 539-559.
[11] Stephen Gordon, 'Disease, Sin and the Walking Dead in Medieval England: A Note on the Documentary and Archaeological Evidence', in *Medicine, Healing and Performance*, eds. Effie

source of social and biological pollution has contributed to our understanding of medieval concerns about the dangers of the dead.

Nancy Caciola has provided the most comprehensive study of stories about the returning dead in northern Europe during the Middle Ages.[12] The wide scope of Caciola's most recent study, *Afterlives*, has enabled her to contrast the prevalence of belief in revenants in northern Europe with that of belief in disembodied spirits in Mediterranean regions. Throughout her work, Caciola aims to identify the contributions of earlier, 'pagan', societies to these traditions about the returning dead. The 'pagan' origins of revenant belief have indeed attracted attention in medieval studies. Most notably, an emphasis on enduring 'pagan' elements has featured prominently in studies concerned with Christianization.[13] However, the identification of these beliefs as 'pagan' or 'Christian' is a contentious matter. A growing number of scholars consider this distinction to be a hindrance to understanding the widespread belief in revenants during the medieval period.[14] Nevertheless, Caciola has rightly drawn our attention to the diverse cultural strands at work in stories of the returning dead from the medieval period.[15]

The idea that the corpse could return to harm the living seems to have been widely accepted in medieval England.[16] Revenant stories from twelfth-century England, such as those narrated by William of Newburgh, have proven to be particularly rich sources for literary and historical study. These narrative sources provide insights into the local, unofficial, beliefs that circulated in local communities in medieval England.[17] Recently, a particular emphasis has been placed on the narratological functions of such stories within longer texts, especially histories and chronicles.[18] Stephen Gordon has advocated this

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Gemi-Iordanou et al. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 55-70; Marilyn Dunn, *The Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons c.597-c.700: Discourses of Life, Death and Afterlife* (London: Continuum, 2009), 33.

[12] Nancy Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

[13] Nancy Caciola, '"Night is conceded to the dead": Revenant Congregations in the Middle Ages', in *Contesting Orthodoxy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Louise Kallestrup and Raisa Toivo (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 17-33; Dunn, *The Christianization*, 174-180.

[14] Carl Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 86-87; Stephen Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters: Demons and the Restless Dead in Medieval England, c.1050-1450* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 8-11; Christian Livermore, *When the Dead Rise: Narratives of the Revenant, from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2021), 1-2.

[15] Caciola, *Afterlives*, 16.

[16] Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 612-614.

[17] Carl Watkins, '"Folklore" and "popular religion" in Britain during the Middle Ages', *Folklore* 115:2 (2004), 144-146.

[18] Lisa Ruch, 'Digression or Discourse? William of Newburgh's Ghost Stories as Urban Legends', in *Medieval Chronicle VIII*, eds. Erik Kooper and Sjoerd Levelt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 261-271;

literary-critical approach and advanced compelling arguments for reading these inserted narratives as moral and social commentaries.[19] These narratives have also been approached chronologically for evidence of change and continuity.[20] For example, Carl Watkins has contended that tales of revenants were increasingly reinterpreted as returning souls in need of help as postmortem purgation became a more dominant explanation for the returning dead in twelfth-century chronicles.[21]

Themes of change and continuity have also preoccupied diachronic studies of the revenant. Christian Livermore has traced revenant beliefs across the medieval and modern periods and stressed otherness and fear of death as their common elements.[22] Livermore's study is exceptional for its concentration on the revenant alone over time; other chronological surveys tend to present the revenant as a medieval chapter in a longer history of the returning dead.[23] Scholarly interest in the social and cultural conditions underpinning representations of the living dead has also led to the appearance of more focused case studies, whose scopes vary from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century Scotland.[24] The study of the revenant in the eighteenth century, however, has also served to highlight its similarities with the vampire.[25] David Keyworth's broad chronological study of vampires and revenants has shown the connections between these reanimated corpses as well as the uniqueness of the vampire in its thirst for blood.[26] The decaying

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Stephen Gordon, '"Agite, agite et uenite!" Corrupted breath, corrupted speech and encounters with the restless dead in Geoffrey of Burton's *Vita sancte Moduenne virginis'*, *Journal of Medieval History* 48:2 (2022), 183-198.

[19] Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters*; See also, 'Social monsters and the walking dead in William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum Anglicarum'*, *Journal of Medieval History* 41:4 (2015), 446-465; 'Monstrous Words, Monstrous Bodies: Irony and the Walking Dead in Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium'*, *English Studies* 96:4 (2015), 379-402; 'Medical Condition, Demon or Undead Corpse? Sleep Paralysis and the Nightmare in Medieval Europe', *Social History of Medicine* 28:3 (2015), 425-444.

[20] Jacqueline Simpson, 'Repentant Soul or Walking Corpse? Debatable Apparitions in Medieval England', *Folklore* 114 (2003), 389-402; Polina Ignatova, 'The Undead: Ghosts and Revenants', in *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c. 1300-1700*, eds. Philip Booth and Elizabeth Tingle (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 438.

[21] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, 170-201.

[22] Livermore, *When the Dead Rise*, 15.

[23] Ronald Finucane, *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead and Cultural Transformation*, repr. (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996); Peter Maxwell-Stuart, *Ghosts: A History of Phantoms, Ghouls & Other Spirits of the Dead* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006); Owen Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[24] Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Martha McGill, *Ghosts in Enlightenment Scotland* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018); See also the essays in *The Folklore of Ghosts*, eds. Hilda R. Ellis Davidson and W.M.S. Russell (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981).

[25] David Keyworth, 'Was the Vampire of the Eighteenth Century a Unique Type of Undead-corpse?', *Folklore* 117:3 (2006), 241-260.

[26] David Keyworth, *Troublesome Corpses: Vampires and Revenants from Antiquity to the Present* (Southend-on-Sea: Desert Island Books, 2007).

body emerges from these studies as laden with enduring imaginative potential, made manifest throughout history and across cultures in the concept of the 'vampire/revenant'.[27]

The ontological ambiguity of the revenant is also a recurring theme in the study of medieval vernacular literatures. For instance, revenants seem to haunt the study of monsters in Old English literature, especially in the analogues to the character of Grendel.[28] In fact, the search for the revenant in Old English literature has proven to be quite contentious. Since the 1970s, scholars have debated whether the speaker in *The Wife's Lament*, an Old English poem found in the Exeter Book, should be interpreted as a revenant, speaking from within their earthen dwelling.[29] Susan Deskis, in one of the more recent contributions to this debate, has argued that the imagery in this poem allows us to read the speaker as being dead, even if it does not require us to do so.[30] In a similar way, Middle English material presents complex readings of revenants; many, often admonitory, iterations of the revenant in Middle English romance and poetry include entombed speakers, resurrected penitents, and ambulant corpses.[31] The didactic and exhortative functions of revenants can also be discerned in late medieval sermon material, found in exempla collections and preachers' manuals.[32] Kenneth Rooney's study of the dead, approached through the lens of the macabre, has revealed how the dead could become synonymous with the personified figure of Death in late medieval art and literature.[33] Undoubtedly, the most well-studied vernacular milieu for the revenant is Old Icelandic literature.[34] Given ample studies on the sagas, it is unsurprising that *draugr*, Old Norse

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[27] Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*, repr. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 2-3.
[28] Andy Orchard, 'Grettir and Grendel Again', in *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1995), 152-168.
[29] Elinor Lench, '*The Wife's Lament*: A Poem of the Living Dead', *Comitatus* 1 (1970), 19; Shari Horner, 'En/Closed Subjects: *The Wife's Lament* and the Culture of Early Medieval Female Monasticism', *Æstel* 2 (1994), 45-61; Berit Åström, 'Murdering the Narrator in *The Wife's Lament*', *Medieval Feminists' Newsletter* 27 (1999), 24-27.
[30] Susan Deskis, 'Lyric Modes and Metaphor in *The Wife's Lament*', *English Studies* 101:4 (2020), 385.
[31] Livermore, *When the Dead Rise*, 67-91.
[32] On revenants in late medieval preaching exempla, especially in John Mirk's *Festial*, see Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters*, 130-160.
[33] Kenneth Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 225-231; Corinne J. Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 222-224.
[34] Hilda R. Ellis Davidson, 'The Restless Dead: An Icelandic Ghost Story', in *The Folklore of Ghosts*, eds. Hilda R. Ellis Davidson and W.M.S. Russell (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), 155-175; William Sayers, 'The Alien and the Alienated as Unquiet Dead in the Sagas of the Icelanders', in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 242-263; Kirsi Kanerva, 'From powerful agents to subordinate objects? The restless dead in

revenants, often provide analogues and interpretative frameworks for scholars studying revenants in medieval England.[35] For this reason, it is interesting to note that revenant hauntings, and other unexplainable phenomena, in medieval Icelandic texts have been reconceptualised as 'paranormal encounters' in a recent anthology, edited by Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd.[36] The editors propose a shift in scholarly focus away from categories of being and towards human experiences. This shift is partly a response to overlap across ontological categories, which span revenants, vampires, and trolls, as well as giants, dwarves, and elves.[37] These approaches have foregrounded the instability of the conceptual category of the 'revenant', along with other categorisations deployed for ambiguous beings.

The Very Special Dead

The study of our second category of the living dead, that of the 'saint', has flourished as a distinct area of research. Widespread devotion to this holy and virtuous group among the Christian dead has long fascinated medievalists. In the 1970s, the work of Peter Brown transformed our understanding of the roles of these saints in late antique and early medieval society. Brown brought to our attention the social functions of the Christian 'holy man' as a new patron in late antiquity.[38] This patron was intimately involved in the interests, disputes, and power dynamics of local communities. Crucially, this patron did not disappear in death; they lived on as a 'saint', an invisible patron continuing to meet the community's needs.[39] Brown observed that these saints were believed to undergo a very special kind of death and lie in their tombs in very special ways, and thus deserved to be

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thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland', in *Death in Medieval Europe: Death Scripted and Death Choreographed*, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster (London: Routledge, 2017), 40-70.

[35] Claude Lecouteux, *Fantômes et revenants au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Éditions Imago, 1986), 203-209; Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*, trans. Jon E. Graham (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2009).

[36] For 'paranormal' rather than 'supernatural' encounters, see Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd, 'Introduction: The Paranormal Encounter', in *Paranormal Encounters in Iceland 1150-1400*, eds. Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd (Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 3-4.

[37] Ármann Jakobsson, 'Vampires and Watchmen: Categorizing the Mediaeval Icelandic Undead', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 110:3 (2011), 299-300; For the dead in relation to giants, dwarves, and elves, see Lecouteux's discussion of 'revenants déguisés', in *Fantômes et revenants*, 203-219; Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).

[38] Peter Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971), 80-101; Peter Brown, 'Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity', *Early Medieval Europe* 9:1 (2000), 16; See also Peter Brown, *A Life of Learning: Charles Homer Haskins Lecture for 2003. ACLS Occasional Paper* 55 (New York, NY: American Council of Learned Societies, 2003), 12.

[39] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

called 'the very special dead'.[40] The power conferred to the persons, tombs, and relics of these saints was instrumental to local relations. Indeed, the development of cults for these saints has been studied as means of instrumentalizing the power conferred to these persons, tombs, and relics.[41] As such, 'the very special dead' emerge from these discussions as the very desirable dead, who were repeatedly claimed and fought over by the Christian faithful for their patronage.[42]

Cult, however, was also an active site of encounter between the living and the dead. Prayer and liturgical commemoration were believed to link the Christian community on earth with that in heaven.[43] This community of the living and the dead shared responsibility for each other. As Patrick Geary has argued, saints and devotees were bound in reciprocal relationships, in which each owed rights and obligations to the other.[44] In this way, the saint commanded the respect and service of the devotee in return for the working of miracles. For this reason, we might suppose that accounts of posthumous miracles have provided valuable insights into the saints as the living dead. And yet, existing studies on medieval miracle collections have preferred to focus more on the representations of the living devotees than on those of the living dead. For instance, Ronald Finucane and Benedicta Ward, in two of the most influential studies on English miracle collections, examined the social identities and contexts of the pilgrims who came to saints' shrines.[45] More recent studies have maintained this interest in the living by analysing the experiences of those who encouraged, sought, and triggered miracle-working processes.[46] To appreciate the saint as a character within their own miracle story, we have to look to studies on individual saints. These studies, such as those on St Edmund and St Cuthbert by Rebecca Pinner and Christiania Whitehead, respectively, adopt a

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[40] Ibid., 70.
[41] Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988); David Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: OUP, 1989).
[42] Barbara Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994).
[43] Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).
[44] Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 77-115.
[45] Ronald Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, repr. (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); For discussion, see Anne Bailey, '"The Rich and the Poor, the Lesser and the Great": Social Representations of Female Pilgrims in Medieval England', *Cultural and Social History* 11:1 (2014), 9-29.
[46] Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: OUP, 2006); Ruth J. Salter, *Saints, Cure-Seekers and Miraculous Healing in Twelfth-Century England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2021); Tom Lynch, *Making Miracles in Medieval England* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023).

diachronic approach to reveal the evolving representations of saints in narratives about their lives and legends.[47]

The sources used to study medieval saints have been the subject of much debate. Narratives about saints, often known as 'hagiographies', only gained recognition as historical sources around the turn of the early twentieth century.[48] More recently, the term 'hagiography' itself has become a buzzword for modern constructions of genre that obscure the diversity and fluidity of medieval storytelling traditions.[49] Moreover, the very narratives that bring the saints to life have been tangled up with equally contentious constructions like 'folklore' and 'popular culture'. The usefulness of 'popular culture' as a concept has been heavily debated, especially in terms of its dichotomous relationship with 'clerical' or 'elite culture'.[50] The concept of 'popular' and 'elite' persist in some studies of hagiography, although few scholars today would hold that these terms bear any correspondence to distinct social groups.[51] For example, Dominic Alexander's study of saints and animals in medieval miracle stories interpreted elements of these narratives as 'folkloric motifs' and 'popular influences'.[52] This eagerness to identify 'folkloric' elements in medieval narratives is perhaps complimented by a growing interest in the origin stories of modern fairy tales. Graham Anderson and Jan Ziolkowski, among others, have sought to identify precursors to nineteenth-century fairy tales in ancient and medieval

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[47] Rebecca Pinner, *The Cult of St Edmund in Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015); Christiania Whitehead, *The Afterlife of St Cuthbert: Place, Texts and Ascetic Tradition* (Cambridge: CUP, 2020); Charles C. Rozier, *Writing History in the Community of St Cuthbert, c. 700-1130: From Bede to Symeon of Durham* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2020); *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, eds. Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020); *St Dunstan: His Life, Times, and Cult*, eds. Nigel Ramsey, Margaret Sparks, and Tim Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992); Douglas Dales, *Dunstan: Saint and Statesman* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013), 147-158.

[48] Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, 4th edn (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1955); Trans. Donald Attwater, *The Legends of the Saints* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1962).

[49] For a useful survey of different definitions, approaches, and alternatives to 'hagiography', see Anna Taylor, 'Hagiography and Early Medieval History', *Religion Compass* 7 (2013), 1-8; For reference, see contributions to *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. Guy Philippart, especially Michael Lapidge and Rosalind Love, 'The Latin Hagiography of England and Wales (600-1550)', vol. 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 203-325; James Cross, 'English Vernacular Saints' Lives before 1000 A.D.', vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 413-427; E. Gordon Whatley, 'Late Old English Hagiography, ca. 950-1150', vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 429-499.

[50] Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János Bak and Paul Hollingsworth (Cambridge: CUP, 1988); Gábor Klaniczay, '"Popular Culture" in Medieval Hagiography and in Recent Historiography', in *Agiografia e Culture Popolari / Hagiography and Popular Cultures*, ed. Paolo Golinelli (Bologna: CLUEB, 2012), 17-43.

[51] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, 6-21.

[52] Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 9-19.

literature.[53] Taken together, these efforts seek to celebrate vibrancy of medieval storytelling traditions, even if they find very different ways to conceptualise them.

The question remains: what frameworks should we use to study narratives about saints? Folklore studies have provided medievalists with methods for identifying both oral storytelling traditions as well as a common stock of narrative motifs. Most notably, John Blair and Catherine Cubitt have analysed the oscillation of saints' legends between oral and written modes.[54] While these studies have perhaps too readily connected orality with 'popular' devotion, they have advanced our understanding of the complex interactions that shape these narratives.[55] This approach excels at placing individual authors in the context of circulating, contemporary, stories as well as linking individual narratives with the literary repertoire recorded in modern motif indices.[56] However, as Hilary Powell has argued, it would be misleading to conflate folklore with oral culture.[57] Powell suggests that oral storytelling might be more accurately measured through variations to narratives resulting from performance and audience participation. The importance of these oral retellings, the crucial conversations that sustained narrative traditions about the saints, has also been stressed by Rachel Koopmans. For Koopmans, it is the 'personal miracle story', an orally exchanged narrative, imitating those already in circulation, that sustained a saint's cult and maintained a sense of intimacy with the saint as a persona in their own legends.[58] The literary record thus gives concrete forms to spoken stories. When studying narratives about saints, therefore, literary analysis of contexts, motifs, and narratological features becomes the study of wide-ranging participation in mutable, and mutually reinforcing, storytelling traditions.[59]

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[53] Graham Anderson, *Fairytale in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, 2000); Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales from before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Wonderful Lies* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[54] John Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 455-494; Catherine Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography: Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History', in *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, eds. Elizabeth Tyler and Ross Balzaretti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 189-223.
[55] For oral storytelling as 'popular discussion', see Catherine Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints', *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), 83.
[56] John McNamera, 'Bede's Role in Circulating Legend in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 7 (1994), 61-69; John D. Niles, 'Bede's Cædmon, "The Man Who Had No Story" (Irish Tale-Type 2412B)', *Folklore* 117:2 (2006), 141-155.
[57] Hilary Powell, '"Once Upon a Time There Was a Saint…": Re-evaluating Folklore in Anglo-Latin Hagiography', *Folklore* 121:2 (2010), 171-189.
[58] Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 9-46.
[59] Robert Bartlett, 'Medieval Miracle Accounts as Stories', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 82:2 (2017), 113-127.

The task of identifying medieval saints is almost as complex as studying their legends. Robert Bartlett has traced the beginnings of the cult of saints to a divergence in mortuary practices for the ordinary Christian dead and those for saints.[60] In this light, resting-place lists provide useful ways to identify saints honoured with cults at sites in medieval England.[61] And yet, the question of why they, and who else, deserved to receive such special treatment remains open. In his magisterial study of medieval sanctity, André Vauchez used canonisation records to identify the criteria underpinning the saint-making process.[62] While the insights from Vauchez's study are wide-reaching, they have also inspired efforts to explain how saintliness was constructed before the concept was crystallised. By historicising and problematising 'sanctity', scholars are finding different frameworks to discern saints in medieval literature. For instance, Anneke Mulder-Bakker has suggested alternative conceptions of holiness to those set out in canon law that were used during the medieval period as patterns for 'inscribing' saintliness.[63] In a similar way, the 'literariness' of sanctity, as a discourse of holiness, has received attention in efforts to highlight creative contributions to the shaping of saintliness.[64] This increasing sensitivity to saintliness as a possibility, rather than a historical reality, is offering more nuanced understandings of medieval authors and their subjects. Tom Licence has recently examined how anchorites, along with their magical and mystical abilities, were subject to the sanitising lens of monastic authors.[65] In this way, the boundaries of medieval sainthood appear far more unstable than we might think and ultimately depend on an author's attempts to assimilate behaviours to recognisable traditions. Just as narratives about the saints were products of constant dialogue, saintliness itself was a mutually constructed characteristic.

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[60] Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 621-622.
[61] John Blair, 'A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, eds. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 495-565.
[62] André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1988); Trans. Jean Birrell, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).
[63] On saints as power stations, intercessors, idols, and icons, see Anneke Mulder-Bakker, 'The Invention of Saintliness: Texts and Contexts', trans. Myra Scholz, in *The Invention of Saintliness*, ed. Anneke Mulder-Bakker (London: Routledge, 2002), 3-24.
[64] Eva von Contzen, 'Introduction: Sanctity as Literature', in *Sanctity as Literature in Late Medieval Britain*, eds. Eva von Contzen and Anke Bernau (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015), 1-17.
[65] Tom Licence, 'Anchorites, Wise Folk and Magical Practitioners in Twelfth-Century England', *History* 106 (2021), 709-726.

The Ordinary Dead

The third and final category of the living dead is undoubtedly the broadest. If revenants are 'the dangerous dead' and saints are 'the very special dead', then, put simply, 'the ordinary dead' denotes everyone else. The term 'les morts ordinaires', or 'the ordinary dead', was used by Jean-Claude Schmitt in *Les revenants*, the most comprehensive, and influential, study of the returning dead in the Middle Ages to date.[66] Schmitt's study assembled a wide range of manifestations of the returning dead in medieval art and literature. As previously mentioned, 'les revenants' carries a more general meaning in French than its specific use for reanimated corpses, rendering this title as 'ghosts' in English. As such, Schmitt's study concerns the 'ghost' in a general sense that includes revenants but, interestingly, excludes saints. According to Schmitt, the ordinary dead are distinct from those saints who comfort the faithful, defend their sanctuaries, and correct the living.[67] Although revenants can be counted as ghosts in this more general sense, it has become customary to draw a distinction between corporeal revenants (discussed earlier) and incorporeal ghosts.[68] For instance, Robert Swanson has explained the distinction between revenants and ghosts as that between 'returning bodies' and 'returning souls'.[69] The posthumous apparitions of the saints belong to a separate category, according to Swanson, because they are 'very special ghosts', as opposed to 'normal' ghosts.[70] Thus there is a general assumption that the ghosts or souls of this third category are more likely to be determined by incorporeality, normality, and conformity to the very norms that revenants and saints reject.

There is an enduring assumption that the history of the dead is the history of the afterlife. Nowhere is this assumption more evident than in the study of the ordinary dead. Thus far, we have surveyed interpretations of revenants as earthly prisoners and saints as heavenly patrons, but it is the incorporeal ghost that is typically understood as the purgatorial pilgrim. Existing studies of medieval ghost stories have tended to approach

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[66] Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Les revenants: les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994); Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[67] Schmitt, *Les revenants*, 43-45; Schmitt, *Ghosts*, 29-31.
[68] Caciola, 'Wraiths', 44-45; For a useful summary and critique of this widely accepted distinction between revenant and ghost, see Martha McGill, 'Bodies of earth and air: corporeality and spirituality in pre-modern British narratives of the undead', *Journal of Medieval History*, 48:2 (2022), 266-267.
[69] Robert Swanson, 'Ghosts and Ghostbusters in the Middle Ages', in *The Church, the Afterlife and the Fate of the Soul*, eds. Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 155.
[70] Ibid., 169-170.

these narratives with questions about their conceptualisation and representation of the afterlife.[71] Attempts to map out the medieval afterlife, however, have sparked debate. Jacques Le Goff's *La naissance du purgatoire*, 'the birth of purgatory', has greatly influenced and shaped these debates. In this study, Le Goff argued that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed the conceptualisation of a third space between 'Heaven' and 'Hell', known as 'Purgatory'.[72] The formation of purgatory as a space, along with its mechanisms, has dominated subsequent studies, especially those of early medievalists seeking to locate purgatory's origins in earlier centuries.[73] However, the very spatial coherence of the afterlife that underpins these arguments has recently been problematised. Watkins has shown how late medieval vision-narratives were more concerned with states and journeys than with 'spaces', which complicates attempts to study them through a cartographic lens.[74] This reassessment reveals that medieval authors shared not a map of the afterlife but a common stock of narrative tropes and explanatory frameworks. In a similar way, Elizabeth Boyle has stressed the importance of this shared repertoire of literary elements, out of which medieval authors could compose singular afterlife vision-narratives.[75] The malleability of the afterlife blurs familiar boundaries between 'heaven', 'hell', and 'purgatory'. This ontological uncertainty surrounding afterlives and otherworlds has been said to explain their imaginative impact in medieval literature.[76]

Wherever ghosts were believed to return from, there remains another crucial question regarding how they were thought to relate to the once-living person. The incorporeal and immortal human soul lies at the heart of an Augustinian response to the question of postmortem survival. Richard Bowyer's doctoral thesis on 'Visions of the Disembodied Soul in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries' in 1981 assumed this

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[71] Swanson, 'Ghosts and Ghostbusters', 143; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: OUP, 2002); Peter Marshall, *Invisible Worlds: Death, Religion and the Supernatural in England, 1500-1700* (London: SPCK, 2017).
[72] Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981); Trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984); For discussion, see Carl Watkins, 'Landscapes of the dead in the late medieval imagination', *Journal of Medieval History* 48:2 (2022), 250-252; Carl Watkins, 'Sin, Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm: The Evidence of Visions and Ghost Stories', *Past & Present* 175 (2002), 3-33.
[73] Isabel Moreira, *Heaven's Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (New York, NY: OUP, 2010); Isabel Moreira, 'Purgatory's Intercessors: Bishops, Ghosts, and Angry Wives', in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Pollard (Cambridge: CUP, 2020), 133-152.
[74] Watkins, 'Landscapes of the dead', 250-264.
[75] Elizabeth Boyle, 'The Afterlife in the Medieval Celtic-Speaking World', in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Pollard (Cambridge: CUP, 2020), 68.
[76] Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 11-23.

theological starting point.[77] For Bowyer, the motifs used to represent the ghost in medieval literature could be read to reveal theological points about the nature of the human soul. Art historical approaches have provided further insights into ancient and medieval beliefs about the soul's departure from the body and entry into the afterlife.[78] These changing iconographic representations have been said to reveal evolving conceptions about the state of the soul in the afterlife.[79] Although there is a reasonable basis for equating the ghost with the immortal soul, this identification is complicated by multiple and evolving understandings and expressions of the soul. In his seminal study of developing conceptualizations of the soul in ancient Greece, Jan Bremmer outlined different types of soul, such as the 'body soul' and the 'free soul', as well as different understandings of the soul of the living and the soul of the dead, the latter of which became increasingly identified with a form of 'free soul' known as *psychē*.[80] Malcolm Godden's study, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', has also brought conflicting ideas about unitary and multiple centres of consciousness to wider attention.[81] These insights into the complex and contradictory understandings of the soul circulating in the Middle Ages complicate efforts to understand which part of the person was signified by the ghost.

Medieval conceptions of selfhood were complex and contradictory. Ideas about the life course of the human soul and its relationship to the body were fluid during this period.[82] For instance, Caroline Walker Bynum has argued that multiple categories were thought to constitute a person in the Middle Ages, namely, soul (*anima*), body (*corpus*), and spirit (*spiritus*).[83] From examining much earlier English evidence, Leslie Lockett has proposed an alternative fourfold anthropology of body (*lic*), mind (*mod*), life-force

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[77] Richard Bowyer, 'Visions of the Disembodied Soul in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries' (PhD Thesis, University of Exeter, 1981).
[78] Pamela Sheingorn, '"And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest": The Soul's Conveyance to the Afterlife in the Middle Ages', in *Art into Life: Collected Papers from the Kresge Art Museum Medieval Symposia*, eds. Carol Garrett Fisher and Kathleen L. Scott (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 155-182; Moshe Barasch, 'The Departing Soul. The Long Life of a Medieval Creation', *Artibus et Historiae* 26:52 (2005), 13-28.
[79] Deborah Markow, 'The Iconography of the Soul in Medieval Art' (PhD Thesis, New York University, 1983).
[80] Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 73.
[81] Malcolm Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, eds. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 271-298.
[82] Jennifer Elaine Flowers, 'The Journey of Young Souls in Early Medieval England (c.850-c.1050)' (PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2020).
[83] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Why All the Fuss About the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective', *Critical Inquiry* 22:1 (1995), 13.

(*feorh*), and soul (*sawol*, *gast*).[84] The complexities and inconsistencies in these conceptual and linguistic hierarchies should caution us against viewing these models as fixed frameworks.[85] Nevertheless, both Bynum and Lockett draw attention to the centrality of the body in these models, in embodied senses of self and corporeal sites of consciousness. However, the extent to which the body is necessary to conceptualising soul and self has proved contentious.[86] An emphasis on the body raises questions about the extent to which our conceptualization of the incorporeal ghost accurately reflects medieval ideas about postmortem survival. The parts that constitute the person, that survive death, that atone for sins, that think and feel, that retain personality, all seem to become blurred in the figure of the ghost.

Beyond Boundaries and Categories

This survey of existing approaches to studying the living dead reveals an array of dualisms haunting this field. Lines have been drawn, redrawn, and rubbed out between many boundaries, spanning 'pagan' and 'Christian' beliefs, 'popular' and 'elite' cultures, and 'oral' and 'written' traditions. These dichotomies, our historiographical revenants, if you will, return time and again, but have also been thoroughly dissected. As we have seen, scholars have found ways to move beyond not only these categories, but also those used to navigate the Christian afterlife. Previous reassessments of boundaries and categories in this field provide the foundations for this thesis. Inspired by these studies, this thesis sees storytelling about the living dead as a communal, participatory, activity in medieval England. While some aspects of this collaborative effort, most notably, its elided conversations and non-verbal dimensions, remain obscure, the surviving literary record preserves moments in the retellings of these stories. Each retelling strikes a distinct balance between the storyteller's creativity and the audience's credulity. The resulting picture is a culturally diverse stock of narrative patterns that were made synonymous with the narrated phenomenon itself, that is, the living dead.

Our understanding of the living dead in medieval literature, however, remains hindered by enduring boundaries and categories in our analytical frameworks. The

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[84] Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 17-53.
[85] Tatjana Solomonik-Pankrašova, 'Near-synonyms for the concept of soul in the Anglo-Saxon language', *Respectus philologicus* 11 (2007), 181-188.
[86] On soul as embodied entity, see Richard Sugg, *The Smoke of the Soul: Medicine, Physiology, and Religion in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); On soul as disembodied entity, see Abe Davies, *Imagining the Soul in Premodern Literature* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2021).

obstacles to a holistic understanding of the living dead operate on three levels. First, there is the issue of taxonomy, in that the study of the living dead is fragmented into studies on 'revenants', 'saints', and 'ghosts'. Second, there is the persistence of binaries regarding body and soul, corporeal and incorporeal, and material and spiritual. Third, there is the tendency to preserve a distinction between life and death when studying a phenomenon that is, by definition, characterised by both. These frameworks have hitherto determined the examples and explanations for the living dead in medieval studies. This thesis problematises these frameworks to strive for a more holistic study of the living dead that embraces their defiance of language and typology. To clarify my contribution to the study of the living dead, I would like to assess the extent to which previous studies have looked beyond the boundaries and categories with which this thesis is concerned.

Over forty years ago, in 1981, Bowyer pointed out that medieval conceptions of ghosts were far more inclusive than our own since medieval ghosts included revenants, saints, souls, angels, and devils.[87] To study the role of the medieval Church in disseminating ghost stories, Bowyer suggested a typological framework based on the three situations in which ghosts appear: departing ghosts; ghosts in the other world; and returning ghosts. Although Bowyer's study was limited to a sample of late antique and late medieval examples, his approach did transcend ontological categories for the living dead. However, his tripartite narratological framework now seems rather restrictive in its assumption that medieval ghost stories fall under just three basic narrative patterns. For example, there is no place in this typology for the living dead who do not depart at all, who are heard but never seen, or who come back to life to die a second time. More recent reappraisal of scholarly typologies has been provided by Ármann Jakobsson in the context of Old Icelandic studies. In his aptly named 'The Taxonomy of the Non-existent', Jakobsson provides a compelling critique of attempts to classify 'paranormal entities' in the manner of natural species.[88] As we will see, a similar rationale underpins the aims of this thesis to de-taxonomize the living dead of medieval England.

Although revenants, saints, and ghosts tend to be studied as distinct phenomena, medievalists have observed parallels and overlaps between these categories. The most oft-cited overlap is perhaps the common conception of a power expressed through the body, *virtus* or *feorh*, which is thought to explain the apparent vitality of corpses of revenants

[87] Richard Bowyer, 'The Role of the Ghost-Story in Mediaeval Christianity', in *The Folklore of Ghosts*, eds. Hilda R. Ellis Davidson and W.M.S. Russell (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), 177-192.
[88] Ármann Jakobsson, 'The Taxonomy of the Non-existent: Some Medieval Icelandic Concepts of the Paranormal', *Fabula* 54:3-4 (2013), 207.

and saints alike.[89] Caciola, for instance, has explored how the imputation of this powerful *virtus* to saints' relics parallels revenant beliefs.[90] The saints were thought to live on through their relics, just as revenants were thought to live on through their corpses.[91] In addition, overlaps between saints, those 'very special ghosts', and 'normal' ghosts have been acknowledged.[92] In the context of early modern French Catholicism, Kathryn Edwards has contended that saints and ghosts existed as part of a continuum of belief that linked spiritual beings together.[93] The distinction between incorporeal ghosts and corporeal revenants has also been problematised. Martha McGill has argued that it is misleading to distinguish spiritual and physical or material apparitions due to blended elements of spirituality and corporeality.[94] Rather, the living dead are said to display 'spiritual corporeality'.[95] McGill's study suggests how ambiguities expressed in pre-modern bodies can bring us closer to understanding ways of conceptualising ghosts.

The task of moving beyond the dichotomy of corporeal revenants and incorporeal ghosts is evidently intertwined with the second aim of this thesis, that is, dissolving the boundaries between body and soul and related boundaries between matter and spirit. Again, McGill's study provides a compelling reassessment of the tendency to base our analytical frameworks on a binary of corporeality versus spirituality and the extent to which this dualism is needed to conceptualize life, death, and afterlife. The terminology deployed by scholars thus far is revealing on this point. For instance, Bowyer's study on 'disembodied souls' is anchored in the thought of Thomas Aquinas and tests how far the latter's theories on apparitions of angels can be applied to twelfth- and thirteenth-century vision narratives.[96] The concept of the 'separated' or 'disembodied soul' continues to carry particular significance in Thomistic studies, especially in philosophical and theological discussions of identity, self-knowledge, and embodied experience.[97] The dichotomy of 'disembodied' versus 'embodied' persists in studies of the living dead. Most notably, Nancy Caciola's *Afterlives* divides its discussions into parts on 'corporeal revenants' or 'the

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[89] On *virtus*, see Vauchez, *La Sainteté*, 499-518; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 427-443; On *feorh*, see Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 44.
[90] Caciola, *Afterlives*, 243.
[91] On 'living relics', see Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 125.
[92] Swanson, 'Ghosts and Ghostbusters', 169-170.
[93] Kathryn Edwards, 'Distinguishing between Saints and Spirits: Or How to Tell the Difference between the Virgin Mary and Mary the Ghost?', in *Cultural Shifts and Ritual Transformations in Reformation Europe*, eds. Victoria Christman and Marjorie Plummer (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 169-190.
[94] McGill, 'Bodies of earth and air', 265-281.
[95] Ibid., 278.
[96] Bowyer, 'Visions of the Disembodied Soul', 27-39.
[97] Christina Van Dyke, 'I See Dead People: Disembodied Souls and Aquinas's Two-Person Problem', in *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 2, ed. Robert Pasnau (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 25-45.

embodied dead' and 'the disembodied dead'.[98] For Caciola, this dichotomy maps onto regional traditions in northern Europe and the Mediterranean, respectively. The ways in which the living dead combine both traditions is peripheral to such studies. And yet, the limits of this dichotomy have been recognised. To quote Gordon:

> The disembodied dead (in modern parlance, spirits or ghosts) often shared attributes with the embodied dead (the vital corpse or revenant) as well as other, more morally suspect beings such as elves, nightmares, poltergeists, and demons.[99]

These shared attributes between 'the disembodied dead' and 'the embodied dead' warrant a re-examination of the frameworks with which we classify our source material.

There are still uneasy questions concerning how we ought to diagnose persons who exhibit symptoms of both life and death. While its implications are still to be fully explored, there is a scholarly consensus that the boundary between the living and the dead was blurred in the Middle Ages. For instance, Patrick Geary conceptualised the dead as 'an age class' integrated into the fabric of medieval society.[100] The study of metaphorical understandings of death has also helped to blur this boundary. Tom Licence has shown how enclosure signified a type of death for the recluse, whose cell served as their tomb, where they remained at the threshold of the afterlife in both purgatorial suffering and heavenly company.[101] However, the conventional canon of medieval ghost stories is yet to reflect these insights into the mutability of the boundary between life and death. The persistence of this binary leaves certain narratives on the peripheries of studies of the living dead. For instance, tales of resurrection, out-of-body experience, and near-death experience are rarely integrated into our studies on revenants, saints, and ghosts, even though their subjects seem to be in states of living death.

The task of distinguishing the living from the dead in medieval literature has been problematised by Jane Gilbert, whose study on 'living death' in Middle English and French literatures includes persons who were dead in symbolic or subjective senses, because of sin, religious commitment, or mental illness.[102] In this study, Gilbert proposes a gendered distinction between the femininized 'living dead', who return with demands to the living, and the masculinized 'dead-in-life', who foresee or desire to die for a person or cause.[103]

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[98] Caciola, *Afterlives*, 17.
[99] Gordon, 'The vitality of the dead', 158.
[100] Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 36.
[101] Tom Licence, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 123-125.
[102] Gilbert, *Living Death*, 6-7.
[103] Ibid., 215-220.

This gendered model, as Gilbert admits, is based on a highly selective corpus of source material that does not necessarily hold up against a wider textual sample. Nevertheless, the broader remit adopted in Gilbert's study suggests how the boundary between life and death might be surmounted. More recently, Rosanne Gasse has brought a similarly broad criteria to the study of the living dead in Middle English literature. The interface between life and death, according to Gasse's study, ensnares revenants, reanimated and resurrected corpses, corpse brides, otherworld visionaries, recluses enclosed in their cells, as well as 'things that will not die'.[104] These approaches to Middle English literature reveal the instability at the boundary between life and death and point towards a new way of studying the living dead.

In summary, this thesis aims to move beyond the boundaries and categories that hinder our understanding of the living dead in medieval literature. In response to the three frameworks that have hitherto determined and taxonomized the study of the living dead, it dissolves ontological categories of 'revenants', 'saints', and 'ghosts', corporeal and incorporeal categories of 'disembodied' versus 'embodied', and metaphysical categories of the 'living' and the 'dead'. Previous studies have identified problems, parallels, and overlaps across these boundaries and categories, but have fallen short of destabilizing the very language that reinforces them. This comes as no surprise; these conceptual categories are well-established, convenient, means of bringing order to a messy literary record. And yet, the imposition of artificial distinctions and types runs the risk of pushing to the periphery any examples that do not fit neatly into our established categories. By destabilizing these boundaries and categories, this thesis seeks to integrate hitherto neglected evidence that has slipped through the cracks between them. In what follows, I argue that this more holistic approach contributes new connections and a more nuanced understanding of the instability that characterised and empowered the living dead.

Methodology

This is a literary study of the living dead in medieval England. Given the limits of language when conceptualising the living dead, not to mention their non-existence outside of language, the terminology that medieval writers and modern scholars have used to study them is important.[105] Among medievalists, a range of general terms have been used to describe persons who seem to exhibit both life and death: 'ghosts', 'the

[104] Gasse, 'The Living, the Dead, and Those In-between', 155-214.
[105] Jakobsson, 'The Taxonomy of the Non-existent', 207; On medieval terminology for the living dead, see Schmitt, *Les revenants*, 39-43; Schmitt, *Ghosts*, 25-29.

undead', or simply 'the dead'. These terms betray a focus on the absence of life, as though this absence were their defining characteristic. However, it is arguably the presence of both life and death, the mysterious coexistence of two supposedly oppositional concepts, that characterises the living dead. Attempts to isolate 'souls', 'spirits', or 'bodies' are confounded by the inconsistent use and sometimes absence of such terms in medieval narratives. Any one-size-fits-all definition for such terms would be misleading. The concepts of 'soul', 'spirit', and 'body' are best analysed in the context of the individual case studies in which they appear. The term adopted more generally throughout this thesis, that is, 'the living dead', better reflects the various and unsettling combinations of life and death found in medieval literature.

This thesis assembles tales of the living dead to analyse their representations across predominantly Latin, as well as Old English, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English literature. Among these representations of the living dead, there are discernible patterns that indicate common motifs and narrative expectations. I have chosen sources that represent, rather than cover every variant of, literary patterns circulating in medieval England between c. 700-c. 1200. These chronological parameters represent the first five hundred years of surviving writing about the living dead in England, spanning centuries that are often artificially demarcated into 'early' and 'central' medieval periods. My criteria when selecting case studies from across this broad time span included their amount of narrative detail, illustrative deployment of a widespread motif, or evidence of an infrequent motif or variant. These criteria sometimes led me to look beyond the chronological scope of my thesis to track the use, reiteration, or reception of a motif across different texts over time.[106] I have chosen to include some of these comparisons to show connections and enduring patterns across this literary corpus. Limitations of time and words ultimately mean that many stories grappling with the concept of a living death are not discussed here.[107]

Trends across this rich corpus show how individual stories drew from the same wellspring of motifs to craft different tales, meanings, and messages. In this way, this study of narratives about the living dead has much in common with recent studies of afterlife and otherworld narratives. Indeed, the methodology of this thesis owes a great

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[106] For studies that influenced my selection of late medieval analogues, see Simpson, 'Repentant soul or walking corpse?'; Gasse, 'The Living, the Dead, and Those In-between'.
[107] For example, 'fairy' narratives reveal wider contexts in which life and death are defied by ambiguous beings, see James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Sermon materials reveal how living death could be constructed and used in preaching contexts, see Gordon, *Supernatural Encounters*, 130-160; Bowyer, 'Visions of the Disembodied Soul'.

deal to the recent work of Carl Watkins, Elizabeth Boyle, and Aisling Byrne.[108] These studies have illuminated the creative efforts of medieval storytellers that shaped, and were themselves shaped by, a common stock of motifs and narratives. In a similar way, Helen Cooper has drawn attention to the originality and subtlety displayed by medieval authors in their variations on known and recognised motifs and conventions.[109] By isolating and examining the building blocks of these narratives, this thesis builds upon previous anthropological and literary studies that have tracked the habitual use of motifs in storytelling traditions.[110] Inspired by these approaches, this thesis focuses not only on literary patterns, but also on literary variations to analyse how the living dead transformed through retellings. When studying variation, both diachronic and synchronic, this thesis suggests new contexts for applying Powell's argument that variations in literature could provide evidence of oral performances and audience participation.[111] This thesis thus contributes to our understanding of the literary elements associated with the living dead, which were repeated, reworked, and subverted in individual ways, creating mutable and mutually reinforcing storytelling traditions. In doing so, this thesis hopes to capture something of the vibrant storytelling traditions about the living dead that circulated in medieval England.

Outline

This thesis is organised thematically to track patterns in the uses and variants of literary elements in representations of the living dead. Its case studies have been selected for their illustration of these themes and demonstration of their reworkings and retellings. In some cases, a single narrative or person participates in the construction of multiple themes, either because a range of literary elements are combined into a single narrative, as in the case of the fugitives of Drakelow, or a living dead person adopts a range of literary representations, as in the case of Edmund of East Anglia. For this reason, the thesis returns to certain case studies to address the building blocks of their stories in turn. By fragmenting stories in this manner, this thesis offers new connections across a broad

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[108] Watkins, 'Landscapes of the dead', 250-264; Boyle, 'The Afterlife in the Medieval Celtic-Speaking World', 68; Byrne, *Otherworlds*, 11-23.
[109] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 21-22.
[110] Frederic Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1969); Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 vols. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955-1958); L.D. Arnett, 'The Soul: A Study of Past and Present Beliefs', *The American Journal of Psychology* 15:2 (1904), 121-200.
[111] Powell, '"Once Upon a Time"', 182-183.

literary corpus and a fresh insight into the instability that enabled the living dead to transcend not only boundaries and categories, but also literary and linguistic principles.

Each chapter of this thesis analyses a different thematic pattern in narratives about the living dead. This study opens with an examination of the living dead in the shapes and forms of human bodies in chapter one. Chapter two builds on this theme with a shift in focus onto the living dead bodies that remain and the different ways in which they do so. Chapter three explores the rationale for connecting animals to the living dead, before chapter four zooms in to focus on the most frequently deployed creature in these narratives, that is, the dove. Chapter five then investigates how the living dead were thought to have been connected and associated with elements, through not only air, fire, earth, and water, but also light and motion. Finally, chapter six analyses non-visual means of sensing the living dead, through touch, smell, and sound. Throughout these chapters, this thesis aims to embrace the variations and ambiguities in accounts of the living dead and, ultimately, celebrate the unstable literary existence that sustained them.

Chapter 1: Bodies

'Abbot Foldbriht is alive again', a terrified monk whispered into the ear of Abbot Germanus.[112] It is the late tenth century and Germanus, abbot of Winchcombe, in Gloucestershire, had just finished saying Mass. He had been summoned to Foldbriht's monastery at Pershore to administer this ailing abbot's confession and anointing. Germanus had left the Pershore monks chanting psalms and saying prayers around their abbot's corpse. Now, unnerved by the terror in the monk's voice, Germanus changed out of his chasuble and sent for Abbot Ælfheah, probably from nearby Deerhurst, so that they could both uncover the meaning of these words.

Germanus and Ælfheah were faced with a monastic community in chaos. Terrified monks reported that they had been praying over Foldbriht's body when they realised that he had a heartbeat, strong enough to 'suddenly shake off the cross' that lay upon his chest, before they saw 'the man himself get up swiftly in a rage, throwing off the pall and sitting up'.[113] The monks ran. One fled to Germanus to tell him the news, while the others were 'fleeing this way and that, running through passageways and inaccessible places, thinking that he was following them, which was not the case' according to this account's narrator, Byrhtferth of Ramsey.[114] Perhaps it was the frenzy of the monks that led Ælfheah to decide that he would not be the first to enter Foldbriht's room. Germanus shared his concerns for he too 'did not want to approach him without a companion… in case Foldbriht should suddenly attack them'.[115] And so, an argument broke out between the two frightened abbots over which of them would enter the room first. Germanus lost; summoning his courage, he entered, while Ælfheah 'followed with great trepidation'.[116]

Sat upright, just as the monks had said, Foldbriht ordered the two abbots to approach and have their servants place him in a bed. Foldbriht then told them all to leave him, but Germanus refused and instead asked him to relate what he had seen. This moment is the turning point in the narrative. In what follows, Foldbriht describes a

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[112] Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, in *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine*, ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), IV, 8, 114-115, 'Abbas Foldbirhtus uiuit iterum'.
[113] Ibid., 'subito crucem dominicam expelli, illumque uelociter assurgentem cum ira et a se pallium proicientem ac residentem'; For inscribed lead crosses on the chest, see Bartlett, *England*, 597.
[114] Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, IV, 8, 114-115, 'hac illac fugientes, discurrentes per inuia et non in uia, putantes quod se sequeretur (quod haud fuit)'.
[115] Ibid., 'Noluit enim intrare ad eum sine socio… si repente in eis inrumperet'.
[116] Ibid., 'nimio pauore secutus est alter'.

beautiful vision of Christ and Benedict with a host of monks and nuns, a heavenly company that awaits not only Foldbriht, but also his newly reformed community. Foldbriht explains to Germanus that his *spiritus* had been taken from his body so that he could see these things. After his conversation with Germanus, Foldbriht lived for only half a day more. Foldbriht had indeed returned, but not in the way that everyone had feared.

A search for Foldbriht's living dead body in this narrative is confounded by the multiplicity of Foldbriht's manifestations. The Pershore abbot is presented as angry corpse, scary stalker, and heavenly visionary in the space of one story. Each representation of Foldbriht captures an uneasy admixture of life and death, an unstable condition that is thought to have been manifested in these varied ways. The body seems to serve as the primary imaginative site for this living death. It is this complex and unstable concept of the living dead body that is the focus of this first chapter. By delving deeper into the question of what a living dead body was thought to be, this chapter provides a fitting starting point to our discussion of what constituted the living dead.

The case of Abbot Foldbriht of Pershore is a useful opener here for three reasons. First, this case study exemplifies the limits of the boundaries and categories set out in the introduction. A boundary between life and death is elusive in this tale; Foldbriht blurs distinctions between dying body, animated corpse, and resurrected person. Likewise, Foldbriht does not easily fit into categories of 'revenant', 'saint', or 'ghost', even though he could be argued to exhibit qualities associated with all three. Foldbriht's corpse appears to have been reanimated, enlivened with anger and a heartbeat. For Germanus, however, a deathbed vision signifies Foldbriht's worthiness, earning him the appellation 'venerable Foldbriht' (*Foldbyrhte beate*).[117] The sense of Foldbriht's presence also extended beyond his corpse for those monks who ran about thinking that he was following them. Such messiness justifies the holistic approach to studying the living dead adopted in this thesis.

Secondly, this case study introduces some central themes, especially pertinent to chapters one and two. For instance, differences of opinion, between narrators and their sources, are rife in narratives about the living dead. In this case, Byrhtferth rejected the idea that the Pershore monks were being chased, a detail that may illuminate an uneasy relationship between the monks and their abbot. The fact that Foldbriht awakened *cum ira* upon his return from a beautiful, peaceful, vision would seem to support this reading. Byrhtferth also observed that Foldbriht may have 'seemed to be harsh to men'.[118] Even

[117] Ibid., 116-117.
[118] Ibid., 112-113, 'qui durus hominibus uisus est'; Criticism of Foldbriht's severity is more explicit in a later version of this story, see Edmer of Canterbury, *Vita et Miracula S. Oswaldi*, in *Eadmer of*

though Byrhtferth doubted that the monks had actually been chased, the perceived severity of Foldbriht's rule reveals the importance of an individual's personality to attitudes towards their living dead body. Here, a *spiritus* is explicitly said to depart and return and its presence is signalled by both a heartbeat and an angry temper. As such, the *spiritus* appears to represent both animating principle and person, motion and personality. As we shall see over the course of this chapter, the term *spiritus* could denote a range of animating principles, including a soul, spirit, or demon. And yet, in this story, the characteristics of the *spiritus*, that is, how it appears and moves, are elided in favour of the characteristics of the person. The focus upon Foldbriht's anger, Foldbriht's potential to attack his colleagues, and Foldbriht's rumoured monk-hunt about the monastery complicates any attempt to abstract the *spiritus* from the person that comes with it. In this way, Byrhtferth's tale exemplifies some of the difficulties in determining the significance of animating principles to medieval representations of living dead bodies.

Lastly, this story usefully illustrates a readiness among tenth-century monks and abbots to fear the living dead body. Byrhtferth composed this story for his *Vita S. Oswaldi* between 997 and 1002, which makes this tale a relatively early example in the context of the source material assembled in this chapter. Byrhtferth's subject, Oswald, bishop of Worcester, connects these Benedictine communities at Pershore and Winchcombe, having founded/reformed these monasteries, among others. The selection of this Pershore story, with its heavenly vision of Benedict, is thus tied to tenth-century aspirations for monastic reform. Even though the distribution of narratives about the living dead are largely concentrated to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the case of Foldbriht allows us to qualify the idea that interest in the living dead was new to the turn of the millennium.[119] Byrhtferth does not give the impression that he is describing a new belief or fear, rather it may be more accurate to say that he was experimenting with a narrative model that could frame these deeply rooted ideas and behaviours. The deathbed vision seen by Foldbriht appears to imitate aspects of an afterlife vision narrative, similar to that of Dryhthelm, recounted in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.[120] However, unlike Dryhthelm, Foldbriht has not returned to amend his life. Rather, Foldbriht seems to return just to relate his vision, that is, to affirm for his peers the consolations gained through Benedictine reform. The narrative model of the afterlife vision certainly lends

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Canterbury: Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald, eds. Andrew Turner and Bernard Muir, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 18, 252-253.

[119] Schmitt, *Les revenants*, 54; Schmitt, *Ghosts*, 37.

[120] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), V, 12, 488-499 (Hereafter, *HE*).

itself to Byrhtferth's aim to laud the heavenly status of the monks who followed Oswald's, and thus Benedict's, example. This message ultimately takes precedence over elucidating an explanatory framework for Foldbriht's living dead state.

Reported encounters with the living dead are found across a wide range of narrative models and contexts. To understand what a living dead body is, we must situate these reports in the context of what each living dead body was meant to do in its story. Even then, as the example of Foldbriht shows, the answer need not be simple or singular. The different approaches adopted across these texts are best exemplified by the extent to which their writers identified and explained the work of animating principles. For example, we find that animating principles are less central in accounts that aim to educate or mystify their audiences. Scare stories and wonder tales alike afforded less in the way of explanation, most likely to intensify the awe of the living dead body. In contrast, there are tales of living dead bodies that seem to represent attempts to mould witness testimonies according to recognisable explanatory frameworks. Among these examples, there are also more reflective narrations about the appearance and animation of living dead bodies, which reveal how a writer might engage with a range of circulating interpretations to speculate about the cause and effect of these phenomena. By tracking the deployment of living dead bodies across these narrative models, the resulting discussion reveals not only a range of available interpretations, but also diverging views about the need for explanation to make a tale about the living dead worth telling.

Scare Stories

The story of Abbot Foldbriht of Pershore is, admittedly, rather anti-climactic. Byrhtferth initially creates a dramatic narrative, which provides an intimate look into the emotional responses of a monastic community after their abbot's death. Byrhtferth seems to relish this drama, but ultimately ensures that there is a happy ending, one that overshadows the perceived threat of the abbot's return with the heavenly splendour of a vision. In doing so, Byrhtferth redirects the fear in his narrative towards a reverence for Benedictine reform. This fear is nevertheless integral to the story, whether for the entertainment of the audience or the admonishment of the Pershore monks for their misconceptions. Fear is evidently a useful emotion, and it is central to our first sample of texts: scare stories. These narratives were intended to frighten and alarm, drawing upon different literary strands to play upon the fears of their audiences. The unknown is a powerful catalyst for fear in the examples that follow; these narratives abound with uncertainties, such that it often seems unclear whether their characters are alive or dead and whether they will ever be seen

again. Although writers explore the characteristics of their living dead characters, they also omit or obscure certain ideas, especially those about body, soul, and spirit. Whether written to educate or entertain, these scare stories demonstrate the unbounded terror of tales that brought audiences face to face with their darkest fears.

Demonic Abductions

Some of the most frightening stories about the living dead are tales of demonic abduction. Around 1120, William of Malmesbury incorporated a moralising account of such an event into his *Gesta regum Anglorum*. He related how a woman from Berkeley, Gloucestershire, who was skilled in witchcraft, had given her children instructions about how to bury her after her death. She is said to have feared that the earth would not hold her on account of her wickedness in life.[121] Thus, her two children, a monk and a nun, obediently had her body sewn in a deerskin and placed in a stone coffin, which was then fastened with three iron chains and kept in the church for three nights before the burial. The need for these severe measures soon became clear; each night, demons, *demones*, came to the church, breaking through both the locked church door and the iron chains. The demon that came on the third night seemed taller and more frightening than the rest. Calling the woman by name, this demon snapped the last of the chains and kicked off the lid of the coffin. 'Seizing her by the hand', William writes, 'he dragged her out of the church before them all'.[122] The demon set her upon the back of a black horse, upon iron barbs, and with that she was gone, with 'only her piteous cries being heard, for a distance of some four miles, as she begged for help'.[123] The story does not explain what lay in the coffin and what was taken from it beyond the Berkeley witch herself. Whatever fate awaits her with this demonic company, it is one that awaits her whole person, rather than her body, soul, or *spiritus* separately. This wholeness not only obscures the animating principles in her body, but also downplays the signs of her death. In abducting a speaking, crying, woman from her coffin, the demons in this tale seem to take the wicked witch alive. In this way, her fate seems to have been conceptualised in similar terms to those deployed in afterlife visions. For instance, the torments of hell were thought to be seen by Guthlac of Crowland in the

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[121] For the expulsion of wicked bodies from the earth, see Pope Gregory I, *Dialogi*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, in *Les Dialogues de Grégoire le Grand* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978-1980), I, 24; Trans. Odo John Zimmermann, *The Fathers of the Church, a New Translation* (New York, NY: Catholic University of America Press, 1959), 94.

[122] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, in *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings, Vol. 1*, eds. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson, Michael Winterbottom, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), II, 204, 378-379, 'apprehensamque manu palam omnibus ab aecclesia extraxit'.

[123] Ibid., 'Audiebantur tamen clamores per quattuor fere miliaria miserabiles suppetias orantis'.

eighth century when a demonic company burst into his cell, bound him, and dragged him out first into the Fens, and then up through the sky.[124] In further likeness to afterlife accounts of this kind, this scare story fulfils a didactic purpose. The Berkeley witch, as Watkins has suggested, is given a premature resurrection to warn others against following her example.[125] The fear and introspection that William's story was meant to encourage are arguably intensified by this emphasis on the suffering and abduction of the whole person. As such, the demonic abduction of the witch of Berkeley epitomises the conception of the living dead body as a person, a dead person who appears to be identical to or coterminous with their living person.

A similar portrayal of the living dead body in the context of a demonic abduction can be found in Peter of Cornwall's early thirteenth-century *Liber reuelationum*. Like William of Malmesbury, Peter of Cornwall seems to include an account of a demonic abduction for didactic purposes, to provide a moral lesson that encourages his audience to prepare for life after death. Peter's story reached him through Mark, the prior of Lessness, who had heard the tale as a boy at Canterbury and concerns a young man from the parish of Borden. The young man in this story had stolen his father's property and appeared to be so confident in the secrecy of his crime that he attended church while the priest passed excommunication upon the then unknown culprit. However, the story reveals how his crime was not hidden from God. Peter writes that 'in the middle of the night two malignant spirits pulled him out through the wall by his feet, alive and completely naked, apart from a linen nightcap which he had on his head'.[126] The shouts of the demons are said to have been heard by others in the house, who found the linen nightcap caught on a nearby thorn the next day. Like Guthlac, this excommunicated thief seems to have been dragged away by demons through thorns, presumably destined for hell. Unlike Guthlac, however, this abduction of the young man as a whole person is said to reflect 'the fact of possession by Satan both of his body and his soul'.[127] Thus, this demonic abduction resembles that of the Berkeley witch. However, in the absence of a reported death and a coffin, Peter presents an even clearer picture of this abduction as that of a still-living person. Death in this tale seems synonymous with the abduction itself, or rather with the

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[124] Felix of Crowland, *Vita S. Guthlaci*, in *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 31, 100-103.
[125] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, 184.
[126] Peter of Cornwall, *Liber Reuelationum*, in *Peter of Cornwall's Book of Revelations*, eds. Robert Easting and Richard Sharpe (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2013), II, 897, 334-335, 'media nocte duo maligni spiritus per parietem ipsum extraxerunt per pedes uiuum et omnino nudum, preter mitram lineam quam habebat in capite'.
[127] Ibid., 'possessionem Sathane factam tam de corpore ipsius quam de anima'.

excommunication that removed the young man from the community of the faithful. Peter's tale also adds more detail about the itinerary of the demons with the young man in tow. It is said that they travelled to Tilbury, where the demons forced some sailors to ferry their captive across the Thames. This river is cited as the last known location of the young man, a detail which seems especially significant given the significance of river imagery in afterlife journeys. This watery destination leaves open the whereabouts of the young man, letting the minds of Peter's audiences imagine what torments await him beyond the crossing.

Domestic Intruders

Fenlands and watery environs could be dangerous, frightening spaces. While the significance of these mysterious watery spaces will be examined in chapter five, two water-dwellers from Old English literature are worth introducing here as representative examples of another kind of scare story. While demonic abductions dragged living dead bodies away to hazy peripheries, domestic intruders brought the unknown into familiar spaces, violently threatening the safety of a building's inhabitants. *Beowulf* presents two intruders at Heorot, the hall of the Danish King Hrothgar: Grendel and his mother. Mystery shrouds these two characters; darkness seems to envelop Grendel, who is described as a 'sceadu-genga' (shadow-walker), emerging from the Fens to attack the occupants of Heorot.[128] And yet, when Grendel appears, he also seems recognisable, having 'on weres wæstmum wræc-lastas træd' (trod paths of exile in the form of a man).[129] The ontological interpretation of this character is notoriously contentious; Grendel has been studied as an outlaw, a *draugr*, a devil, a monster, a giant, and an allegory.[130] This range of readings, criss-crossing social and ontological boundaries in attempts to capture the otherness of Grendelkin, epitomise the poet's portrayal of Grendel and his mother as 'ellor-gæstas' (other-spirits), two 'micle mearc-stapan' (great boundary-walkers).[131] Demon, monster, and human seem to dissolve in these two characters. Just as excommunication had expelled the young thief at Borden from their community, the exile of Grendel and his mother seems to explain their otherness as a kind of death by exclusion from the living. The man-eating violence of Grendel, to whom we shall return in chapter two, illustrates fears about the nefarious nocturnal agents that threatened medieval

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[128] *Beowulf*, in *The Beowulf Manuscript: Complete Texts and The Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. and trans. R.D. Fulk, *DOML* 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 132-133, 703a.
[129] Ibid., 174-175, 1312.
[130] Jennifer Neville, *Representations of the Natural World in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 78-79; See also Orchard, 'Grettir', 152-168.
[131] *Beowulf*, 174-175, 1347-1349a.

households.[132] The element of the unknown intensified these fears and, in turn, amplified the protagonist's heroism in defeating these two terrifying antagonists.

Like accounts of demonic abduction, stories about domestic intruders could also convey moralising messages to medieval audiences. *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, a Franciscan chronicle, revised and interpolated in the fourteenth century at the Augustinian priory of Lanercost, Cumbria, recounts a moral tale about a monk at Paisley, in Scotland, who was excommunicated for acts of sacrilege.[133] This narrative relates how the monk had been buried, but then seen at night, in the monastery, before he was next seen by day attacking the household of Sir Duncan de Insula in Clydesdale, about four miles from Paisley. The form in which the monk appeared is said to 'foreshadow the appearance of the damned at the final resurrection'.[134] Just as the witch of Berkeley seemed whole, through some (re)union of body and soul, this Paisley monk anticipates the appearance of a resurrected body. The chronicler describes this appearance as 'a bodily shape (whether natural or aerial is uncertain, but it was hideous, gross and tangible)'.[135] Thus, the substance of this living dead body is left uncertain, complicated by its ability to turn all the arrows and pitch forks that the household drove into it to ash. As a result, the narrative focuses more on the unsettling appearance and behaviour of the monk. In this shape, for instance, the monk is said to 'settle on the highest parts of the dwellings or store houses'.[136] There are numerous parallels for this choice of location in Old Icelandic saga literature, in which the living dead were said to torment inhabitants from their rooftops.[137]

However, the monk was not kept outside this household's dwellings for long. He is said to have entered when Sir Duncan and his household were sat around the hearth, which, as Gordon has argued, may indicate perceptions about the smoke vent as an entry

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[132] Stephen Gordon, 'Domestic Magic and the Walking Dead in Medieval England: A Diachronic Approach', in *The Materiality of Magic: An Artefactual Investigation into Ritual Practices and Popular Beliefs*, eds. Ceri Houlbrook and Natalie Armitage (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 72-75.
[133] A.G. Little, 'The authorship of the Lanercost Chronicle', *EHR* 31 (1916), 269-279.
[134] *Chronicon de Lanercost, 1201-1346*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh: The Bannatyne Club, 1839), 163-164, 'damnatorum speciem in die ultimæ resurrectionis valeat præmonstrare'; Trans. Herbert Maxwell, *The Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272-1346* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1913), 118-119.
[135] Ibid., 'Assumpto siquidem corpore, incertum utrum naturali an aereo, tetro tamen, grosso et palpabili'.
[136] Ibid., 'in summitatibus domorum vel thesaurorum bladi residere'.
[137] Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, including 49 Tales*, 5 vols. (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997), see especially *Eyrbyggja saga*, trans. Judy Quinn, as 'The Saga of the People of Eyri', V, 34, 173-174; *Grettis saga*, trans. Bernard Scudder, as 'The Saga of Grettir the Strong', II, 32-35, 102-107; *Flóamanna saga*, trans. Paul Acker, as 'The Saga of the People of Floi', III, 13, 280.

point for this intruder.[138] Sir Duncan's eldest son proceeds to fight the monk, while all others flee, but, unlike Beowulf, this young man is found dead the next day. The chronicler concludes that 'if it be true that a demon has no power over anybody except one who leads the life of a hog, it is easy to understand why that young man came to such an end'.[139] By implicating this young man in the monk's diabolic crimes, the story makes a moral exemplum of his death, a warning that such sacrilegious conspiracies come back to haunt their collaborators. In a way, there is no resolution to this story; the monk is never said to have been defeated. And yet, his purpose, that is, the reason for his appearance, is shown to have been fulfilled in the murder of those complicit in his crimes.

Fireside Fears

The scare stories studied thus far have stressed the moralising and entertaining functions of living dead victims and adversaries in medieval literature. In addition, a scare story could also provide an exemplum for what to do, and not do, during or after an encounter with the living dead. Miracle and exempla collections often make use of scare stories for this function, in order to not just warn the faithful, but also temper their fears with strategies to cope with living dead threats. A story about a girl from Essex called Alice serves as an illustrative case for how such collections deployed living dead bodies to this end. Her story was recorded around the end of the twelfth century, in a collection of miracle stories associated with the hand of James the Apostle at Reading Abbey. Alice is said to have been tending sheep on Good Friday, when:

> Cui redeunti apparuit et occurrit quedam phantastica effigies habens faciem quasi hominis, aspectum et speciem tanquam mortui in funus et sepultiuam preparati. Quo uiso mulier expauit et contremuit, gelidusque stetit circum precordia sanguis. Phantasma migrans ocius pertransivit.
>
> On her way back there appeared in front of her a ghastly figure with a face like a man's and the appearance and form as though of a dead man prepared for his funeral and burial. When she saw it, the damsel was terrified and began to tremble, and the blood froze round her heart. The phantom very quickly left her and disappeared.[140]

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[138] Gordon, 'Domestic Magic', 71.
[139] *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 163-164, 'Quod si verum est quod dæmonem in neminem potestatem accipit, nisi qui porci more vixerit, conjici facillime potest cur juvenis iste tali fato finieret'.
[140] *Miracula S. Jacobi*, in Gloucester, Gloucester Cathedral Library, MS 1, fols. 172r-172v, VIII; Trans. Brian Kemp, 'The miracles of the hand of St James translated with an introduction', *Berkshire Archaeological Society* 65 (1970), 9.

This encounter with an unknown living dead figure is fleeting and frightening. Its manifestation embodies that crucial tension within the living dead body as a concept that encompasses bodily shape, individual likeness, and decaying cadaver at once. The language chosen by the narrator concentrates on the outer, potentially illusory, appearance of this figure; it is an *effigies* (image), a *species* (likeness), and *phantasma* (phantom or illusion). Like the Paisley monk, the substance of this living dead body is unclear, and remains unexplored. Unlike Sir Duncan's eldest son, however, Alice seems to have done nothing to deserve this fright. Her introduction as a clerk's daughter, tending sheep on Good Friday, casts her as an innocent victim, emblematic of any faithful Christian who might be assailed by such an illusion at any time.

Despite the liturgical setting for this story, this image of a man prepared for burial is no Christlike figure. Alice fled home after this terrifying encounter where, 'catching sight of some fire, she threw it in her face'.[141] This disturbed reaction to the sight of fire is said to have been a symptom of a madness that gripped Alice after she saw that figure.[142] The relationship between fire and the living dead will be explored further in chapter five, but its mention here reveals the perceived effects of its light and heat on those who met the living dead. Alice's reaction resembles that of Albero, a lay brother, reported to have witnessed a spooky shadow near the lavatory in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*.[143] Caesarius writes that Albero fell seriously ill after he looked upon the bakehouse furnace on the way back from the lavatory; the human mind, according to Caesarius, is unable to acclimatise to such a sudden contrast of darkness and light as that created by this juxtaposition of shadow and fire.[144] Both Alice and Albero suffer from the combination of figure and fire. When reading these stories, medieval audiences were thus reminded of that which they must not do, under any circumstances, after such unsettling encounters. This message was conveyed even more explicitly in a later story, written around 1400, by a monk at Byland Abbey. Among the Yorkshire tales collected by this monk, one concerned a tailor from Ampleforth, called Snowball, who met a shapeshifter on the road on his way home from Gilling. This shapeshifter is said to have

[141] Ibid., 'ignemas aspiciens in faciem corruit'.
[142] Claire Trenery, 'Miracles for the Mad: Representations of Madness in English Miracle Collections from the Long Twelfth Century', PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London (2016), 247-253.
[143] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. Henry von Essen Scott and Charles Cooke Swinton Bland with George Gordon Coulton, 2 vols. (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1929), V, 28, 355-357.
[144] Ibid.

left Snowball with a warning: 'look not on a wood fire for this night at least'.[145] We are not told whether Snowball followed this instruction, but he fell ill for several days, just as he had after his last encounter with the shapeshifter. The fears that surface across these stories thus seem in part educational, warning others what not to do after seeing a living dead body.

Returning then to Alice, who is said to have lost her reason and thrown fire into her face, there remains the question of what she, and by extension her story's audience, could do in this predicament. The cure according to this miracle collector was simple: the miracle-working power of James' hand relic. As the narrative unfolds, Alice's mental and physical health worsen and she embarks on a pilgrimage to shrines in search of a cure. The hand of James the Apostle mediates a healing power that enables Alice to completely recover. As such, the living dead figure seen by Alice on that Good Friday is juxtaposed with another living dead personality, an apostle no less, who was thought to have been present at Reading Abbey. When altercations with the living dead, such as the murderous attacks of the Paisley monk, were hoped to be avoided, the holier, heaven-bound, living dead could intervene.

Wonder Tales

The problem-solving potential of these living dead holy people transfigured them into sources of hope as well as fear. The means by which certain living dead bodies, housed in shrines and churches across medieval England, mediated life-giving and healing powers were wonderfully mysterious. Their potency was sustained by ineffability, an ambiguous quality that could be conceived as divine. Medieval wonder tales construct wonder-reactions in response to miracles, mysteries, or paradoxes in order to defy or obscure explanation.[146] As opposed to explaining living dead bodies or isolating animating principles, wonder tales preserve elements of the unknown to heighten the mystery that surrounds their living dead subjects. This element of the unknown maintains a degree of fear, indeed a due reverence, towards the living dead. The wonder tales assembled here present living dead bodies as death-defying persons, who enjoy life as a reward, sometimes under very ambiguous circumstances.

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[145] M.R. James, 'Twelve Medieval Ghost-Stories', *EHR* 37:147 (1922), II, 418, 'ne respicias ignem materialem ista nocte ad minus' (Hereafter, *TMGS*); Trans. A.J. Grant, 'Twelve Medieval Ghost Stories', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 27 (1924).
[146] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Wonder', *The American Historical Review* 102:1 (1997), 12.

Dubious Doctors

The case of Swithun, the ninth-century bishop of Winchester, serves as an illustrative example of the living dead body as site of wonder. The earliest stories concerning this bishop were composed in the tenth century. Miracles recounted at Swithun's tomb at Winchester were collected by Lantfred in the 970s in his *Translatio et Miracvla S. Swithvni*. One of Lantfred's stories illuminates how the bishop appeared to a paralysed man through a series of strange and varied experiences. When the bishop first visited this sick man, he appeared as 'a man of radiant appearance, appropriately dressed in episcopal raiment, venerable because of his snowy-white hair, and wearing golden sandals on his feet as well as a radiant diadem on his head'.[147] At first, the paralytic refused to speak to this beautifully dressed man because he was too afraid. Eventually, Swithun instructs him to seek healing from God at his tomb, where the paralytic obediently spends three days and nights. On the third night, Swithun is said to have appeared again, in the same way as before, in the same garments, and instructed the paralytic to ask those around him, a blind woman and a neighbour, to leave. While alone at the tomb, the paralytic looked up towards the western tower of the church to see:

> uirum mirae celsitudinis quasi iubar fulgentem solis in cacumine stantem prescripte pyramidis, in manibus funem aureum tenens per quem pedetemptim prefulgidam minutatimque complicatam deorsum misit tunicam - que, mox ut terram attigit, tam diu ambulauit donec ad sancti tugurium peruenit. Quo dum peruenisset, sarcofagum sancti intrauit et postea non comparuit.
>
> A man of marvellous height shining like the sun's splendour and standing at the very top of the aforementioned spire, who held in his hands a golden rope, by means of which he gradually and little by little lowered his shining and folded tunic – which, as soon as it touched the ground, walked (*ambulauit*) far enough so that it reached the shrine structure built over the saint's tomb. When it arrived there, it went inside the saint's tomb and did not appear afterwards.[148]

The man atop the western tower receives no further comment in this narrative. Like Swithun, he appears to be a radiant *uir* but there is no indication that this tunic-dangling character looked like the ninth-century bishop. As this man suspends his tunic from the

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[147] Lantfred of Winchester, *Translatio et Miracvla S. Swithvni*, in *The Cult of St Swithun*, ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge. *Winchester Studies* 4.ii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 3, 280-281, 'uir quidam ualde splendidus, pontificalibus ornamentis decenter preditus, niuea canitie uenerandus sandaliisque aureis calciatus, necne prefulgido diademate coronatus'.
[148] Ibid., 282-283.

spire by a golden rope, we could infer that the man was thought to have removed an article of his clothing, perhaps his episcopal vestments, to send it into the tomb below. Once it reaches the ground, however, the tunic seems to display an agency of its own, such that it *ambulauit* (walked) into Swithun's tomb. The behaviour of this clothing could be compared with other miracle stories, such as Osbern's passing reference to Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury (d. 988) suspending his garment by a column of light.[149] Alternatively, this image of a moving cloth may also find a much later parallel in the Byland monk's account of another Yorkshire shapeshifter, seen by one William of Bradeforth, that departed 'like a revolving piece of canvas with four corners and kept on turning'.[150] And yet, this tale at Swithun's tomb is decidedly different from these examples for its interest in the mechanics by which the tunic is suspended, that is, by the golden rope, operated by the man in the spire.[151] The story reminds us that the power of clothing is intimately connected to the bodies that carry it and imbue it with their power.

Clothing continues to play a decisive role in Lantfred's narrative. Once the tunic enters the tomb, Lantfred deploys a series of images associated with resurrection, from a stone cross that bows down to an earthquake felt around the tomb. The paralytic witnesses all this, before he suddenly starts to feel someone tugging on one of his paralysed legs. This sensation signals to the man that he has been healed, but at a peculiar cost; 'the shoe of his foot – miraculously! – was pulled off by heavenly agency, and afterwards, though looked for by many, was nowhere to be found'.[152] Lantfred concludes that this man had been cured by God through the merit of Bishop Swithun. Once again, this story betrays an interest in the workings of the events that it reports. The healing of the paralytic is accompanied by the loss of his shoe, as if his shoe had to be removed to administer the cure or had symbolically represented the removed paralysis.[153] The man does not see who tugged on his leg and took his shoe, but Swithun remains an ever-present suspect.

The search for a living dead body in this miracle story reveals that it is far from simple or stable. The initial, somewhat formulaic, representation of Swithun as a radiant

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[149] Osbern of Canterbury, *Miracula S. Dunstani*, in *Memorials of St Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs, *RS* 63 (London: Longman, 1874), 26, 160.
[150] *TMGS*, VIII, 419, 'ad instar cuiusdam canvas reuoluentis quatuor angulis et volutabat'.
[151] Golden cords symbolise good deeds in the prophetic account of Abbess Æthelburh of Barking's ascension, see *HE*, IV, 9, 360-361.
[152] Lantfred, *Translatio et Miracvla*, 3, 282-283, 'Ac subtalaris (mirum!) pedis ipsius celitus est abstractus, et postea a multis quesitus nusquam est repertus'.
[153] On shoes and the living dead, see also the Old Icelandic concept of *Helskór* (Hel-shoes), in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, trans. Martin Regal, as 'Gisli Sursson's Saga', in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, ed. Hreinsson, II, 14.

bishop seems to represent his timeless, heavenly, appearance. In contrast, the man in the spire cuts a more ambiguous figure, located within the church but of no immediate relevance to the healing miracle itself. It remains unclear whether this visible man should be understood as identical to the unseen agent who removes the man's shoe. Finally, there is the tomb itself, a geo-spatial marker for Swithun's body that otherwise adopts various forms throughout this story. As a result, the case of Swithun reveals the complexity of the living dead body and the wonder inspired by its unpredictability.

As the peculiarities in the Swithun story suggest, doubts and uncertainties could surround the bodies of even the most dependable living dead persons. The ambiguities presented by living dead bodies are demonstrated most effectively in a story recorded among the miracles of Edmund, ninth-century king of East Anglia, in the 1090s. Herman, an archdeacon and monk at Bury St Edmunds, included in his miracle collection the tale of a disabled woman who came to the church at Bury to seek Edmund's healing. The woman lay in the church, alone, except for one Ælfgyfa, a noblewoman from Essex, who was spending the night in vigils. That night, according to Herman's account, Edmund 'leaves the casket of his saintly repose, in the form of a man reverently attired, radiant with the enveloping radiance of celestial brilliance'.[154] The radiant figure of Edmund resembles that of Swithun, during his initial appearances to the paralytic. However, unlike Swithun, Edmund is, and remains throughout this story, silent. He unlocks the doors to the sanctuary and heads west, 'looking this way and that'.[155] His stealthy perambulation complete, Herman writes that 'the nightwalker (*nocturnus itinerator*) returns to his shrine, but on the way back he becomes heaven's agent by setting in motion a miracle to cure his wretched suppliant'.[156] The healing miracle is administered when Edmund makes the sign of the cross over the woman, but it comes with great pain as her limbs stretch out. She cries out in pain and Ælfgyfa looks across, cowering at what she sees. The woman's shouts rouse the sacrist, Brunstan, who comes in fear of an intruder. Herman reports that Brunstan 'sees the curtain, which was hanging in front of the saint's litter, move, as if

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[154] Herman the Archdeacon, *Miracula S. Eadmundi*, in *Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: Miracles of St Edmund*, ed. and trans. Tom Licence, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014), 21, 46-47, 'Egreditur... de locello sue sancte pausationis in modum uiri habitus uenerabilis, fulgorando se obeunte celestis claritatis fulgore'; Herman's story is retold by Goscelin in his revised miracle collection, see Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Miracula S. Eadmundi*, in *Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: Miracles of St Edmund*, ed. and trans. Tom Licence, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014), I, 7, 194-197.

[155] Herman, *Miracula*, 21, 46-47, 'circumspectiue'.

[156] Ibid., 48-49, 'nocturnus itinerator quo uenerat deintus reuertitur eo, sed in reuersione diuinus fit operator, futurus sue pauperis mirificus adiutor'.

someone were entering'.[157] Brunstan also checks the doors and discovers that they have been unlocked, so Ælfgyfa tells him, by no other hand but Edmund's.

The miraculous lens through which this story is told unsurprisingly concentrates on Edmund's healing power. And yet, Herman suggests that Edmund's intent was far from obvious to these witnesses. Edmund's silence ensures that his devotees remain uncertain, his purpose unspoken. When Edmund leaves his casket and wanders through the church, his focus is less on the woman lying on the floor and more on taking in his surroundings. The signs of Edmund's presence, namely unlocked doors and moving curtains, further reinforce the sense of mystery that surrounds this encounter. While Edmund can clearly interact with the church architecture and furnishings around him, Herman provides no commentary on what he is. As in the case of Swithun, there is no mention of a *spiritus*, a body, or a soul, only an appearance. Moreover, it is only when this figure starts to return to his casket that Herman even introduces his miracle-working power. In this way, Herman creates suspense in his miracle story, suspending his audience's faith in Edmund's benevolence, if only for a short time. Even then, the healing miracle itself comes with intense pain for the woman; it is shouts of pain, not exclamations of joy, that alert Ælfgyfa and Brunstan to Edmund's presence.

Edmund evidently plays a pivotal role in producing healing through pain. His potentially harmful intent seems to be implied by Herman's appellation for Edmund as a *nocturnus itinerator* (nightwalker). This Latin phrase finds interesting resonances when compared to similar Old English collocations.[158] For instance, Edmund the *nocturnus itinerator* seems reminiscent of Grendel the *sceadu-genga*, 'shadow-walker', discussed earlier. Moreover, as Gordon has argued, the *sceadu-ganga* bears linguistic and conceptual similarities to another Old English term, which looks like a literal translation for our *nocturnus itinerator*: the *nihtgengum*, 'nightwalker' or 'night-visitor'.[159] Old English medical manuals used this term to denote a nightmare or its cause and advise remedies, such as betony, to protect against it.[160] In this context, the suspense created by Herman seems to cast Edmund in the role of a nocturnal-turned-heavenly agent. This blurring of nightmare and vision, sickness and health, reveals how an ambulatory living dead body

[157] Ibid., 'Videt acsi in ingressu cuiusdam moueri cortinam que ante sancti appendebat lecticam'.
[158] Hall, *Elves*, 126-129.
[159] Gordon, 'Medical Condition', 438.
[160] For remedies against *nihtgengum* and *nihtgengan*, see the Old English medical manuals in *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, ed. and trans. Thomas Oswald Cockayne, 3 vols., repr. (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), especially the *Herbarium*, vol. 1, 1, 70-71; *Leechbook III*, vol. 2, 1, 306-307; *Leechbook III*, vol. 2, 61, 344-345.

was thought to have the capacity for both harm and healing. As Herman seems to have realised, the imaginative potential of the living dead lay in the grey area between the two.

Once and Future Kings

Although these accounts present Swithun and Edmund as men, they also understand that these living dead persons are fundamentally different from their witnesses. Both Swithun and Edmund stand out, through their radiant attire or eery silence. While it is Edmund's role as doctor, rather than East Anglian king, that dominates Herman's story, kings also stand out among wonder tales as living dead subjects with the potential to reintegrate into the company of their witnesses and followers. This royal rehabilitation could be understood as a resurrection, an ineffable process, modelled upon the kingship of the resurrected Christ. A relatively early instance of resurrection in medieval England concerns Eardwulf, once ealdorman and twice king of Northumbria, first between 796 and 806 and a second time after 808. Eardwulf's story was composed around the turn of the millennium, when Byrhtferth of Ramsey was writing historical material, which would later be incorporated into Symeon of Durham's *Historia regum* in the twelfth century. Among the familiar narratives in this history, Byrhtferth also incorporated stories that have not been found in any other source; the tale of Ealdorman Eardwulf is one such story.

It is said that in 790, before his accession to the Northumbrian throne, Eardwulf was captured and taken to Ripon. On the orders of the recently restored King Æthelred I of Northumbria, Eardwulf is said to have been 'killed there outside the gate of the monastery'.[161] The monks of Ripon took his body to their church to the sound of chanting and placed it under a tent outside. However, Byrhtferth then reports that 'after midnight he was found alive in the church'.[162] A few chapters later Byrhtferth narrates that Eardwulf was consecrated king at York in 796. Byrhtferth preserves a politically charged story, in which life and death carry political significance in both the defiance of one king's orders and the preservation of one who would be king. Alcuin, writing to Eardwulf in the year of his accession, seems to have been aware of some version of this tale for he writes that Eardwulf had been 'delivered from present death'.[163] For Alcuin, Eardwulf's preservation had come from God, who had saved him for a purpose. While Byrhtferth is less explicit than Alcuin in explaining Eardwulf's resurrection through divine power, the movement of

[161] Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Historia Regum*, ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2022) III, 21, 90-91, 'ibique occidi iussus extra portam monasterii a rege praephato'.
[162] Ibid., 'post mediam noctem uiuus est in ecclesia inuentus'.
[163] Alcuin, *Epistolae*, in *Epistolae Karolini Aevi II*, ed. Ernst Diimmler, *MGH* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 108, 14-16, 'de morte liberavit praesenti'.

Eardwulf into the church from the tent outside appears to signify the act of divine incorporation that has restored him to the earthly community of the faithful, the very community that he has been ordained to rule.

The resurrection of Eardwulf towards the end of the eighth century, a time of great political instability for Northumbria, reveals the ideological threat of a living dead king who returns to rule. Of all living dead leaders in medieval legend, few rival King Arthur in fame, longevity, and anticipated return. William of Malmesbury had described an historical Arthur as a warlike hero from the fifth century. William dismisses idle talk of Arthur's return, observing that 'Arthur's grave, however, is nowhere to be found, whence come the traditional old wives' tales that he may yet return'.[164] This absence of Arthur's grave in part sustained an idea that he had not died. One of the earliest and most famous exponents of this idea was Geoffrey of Monmouth. Writing in the twelfth century, Geoffrey narrated, or translated, so he claimed, from an unknown vernacular source, that after the battle of Camlann 'Arthur himself, our renowned King, was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to'.[165] The healing of Arthur's mortal wounds after his final battle obscures, or even removes, the event of his death. Geoffrey added greater detail in his *Vita Merlini* where he introduced the lady Morgan, who is said to have been able to treat Arthur's wounds so long as he stayed at Avalon under her care.[166] Arthur's condition between this legendary last battle and the twelfth century is thus left open to interpretation.

However, doubts surrounding the veracity of these claims emerged in the textual transmission of Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britannie*. For instance, its late-twelfth-century editor closed the account of Arthur's last battle with the phrase 'May his soul rest in peace' (*Anima eius in pace quiescat*), a phrase that was absent from the earlier reworking of Geoffrey's *Historia*, completed sometime before 1155.[167] Arthur's soul is commended, like many souls of the dead, to an eternal rest that undermines the prospect of his survival and return. The refutation of King Arthur's return became a divisive, ethnically inflected,

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[164] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, III, 287, 520-521, 'Sed Arturis sepulchrum nusquam uisitur, unde antiquitas neniarum adhuc eum uenturum fabulatur'.
[165] Taken from the 'Vulgate Version', see Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britannie*, in *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984-1991), I, 178, 132, 'Set et inclitus ille rex Arturus letaliter uulneratus est; qui illinc ad sananda uulnera sua in insulam Auallonis euectus'; Trans. Lewis Thorpe, *The History of the Kings of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), XI, 2, 261.
[166] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini*, ed. and trans. Basil Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), 102-103, 930-941.
[167] For the 'First Variant Version', see Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britannie*, in *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Wright, II, 178, 173-174.

rhetorical device in post-Conquest histories.[168] Anglo-Norman writers discredited Arthur's return as a hope of *Britones*, which had the potential to undermine English dynastic ambitions to suppress the Welsh people.[169] The volatility of the idea of Arthur's return is perhaps best illustrated by a story recorded in the *De miraculis S. Mariae Laudunensis de gestis*, a twelfth-century account of the relic tours of the canons of Laon written by a monk called Herman. French canons are said to have travelled through Cornwall, where one among their company, called Hangello, found himself in an argument with a local who claimed that Arthur still lived.[170] When an armed crowd rushed into the church, their altercation almost came to bloodshed until Algardus the priest intervened. The idea of the return of a king could pose a very real threat to peace and political stability.

Across scattered references to Arthur, his death and survival are refuted in turn. The task of reconciling these opposing viewpoints was not an easy one. When Wace translated Geoffrey's *Historia* into French verse in the 1150s, in his *Roman de Brut*, he chose to leave the verdict with Merlin, who 'said of Arthur, rightly, that his death would be doubtful'.[171] Uncertainty still surrounded Arthur's fate, but Wace allowed for doubt itself to carry an element of truth, when authenticated through prophecy. Drawing heavily on Wace's poem, the oldest surviving prose *Brut*, written in Anglo-Norman around the end of the thirteenth century, repeated these doubts, which arguably helped to inspire the proliferation of Arthur in medieval literature, for Merlin 'said that his death would be doubtful, and he spoke truly, because ever since men have doubted and will doubt whether he is alive or dead'.[172] These doubts demonstrate that Arthur's return was not conceived as a resurrection ordained by God, as in the case of Eardwulf. Instead, it resembles a timeless but doubtful survival, ordained by a much more ambiguous agent.

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[168] Daniel Helbert, '"an Arður sculde 3ete cum": The Prophetic Hope in Twelfth-Century Britain', *Arthuriana* 26:1 (2016), 88.
[169] Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, in *Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon: Historia Anglorum: The history of the English People*, ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford: OUP, 1996), VIII, 580-581; William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett, *RS* 82, 4 vols. (London: Longman, 1885), I, 18 (Hereafter, *HRA*); Trans. Joseph Stevenson, *The Church Historians of England, vol. 4, pt. 2* (London: Seeley, 1861).
[170] Herman of Laon, *De Miraculis S. Mariae Laudunensis de Gestis*, *PL* 156:983, II, 16; J.S.P. Tatlock, 'The English Journey of the Laon Canons', *Speculum* 8:4 (1933), 454-455.
[171] Wace, *Roman de Brut*, in *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British*, ed. and trans. Judith Weiss, repr. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 334-335, 13285-13286, 'Merlin dist d'Arthur, si ot dreit, / Que sa mort dutuse serreit'.
[172] *The Oldest Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicle: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. Julia Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 178-179, 2023-2024, 'il dit qe sa mort serroit dotous, e il dit verite, qar lem ad pus tute temps dote / e dotera sil soit mort ou vifs'.

Wonderful Women

As we have seen, one version of Geoffrey's account of Arthur ends with Morgan treating his wounds at Avalon. Morgan was presented in a range of different ways in medieval romance, but it is her twelfth-century representation as 'Morganda fatata', Morgan the Fay, that links her to other wonderful, death-defying women.[173] This designation of Morgan as *fatata* comes from Gervase of Tilbury's account of Arthur's conveyance to Avalon.[174] Its use immediately suggests that Morgan was ordained, or even fated, to heal Arthur. The term seems to grapple with a conception of ordination outside that of God, which comes from this lady's magical abilities. This ambiguous character resembles an otherworldly, 'fairy', figure who follows their own laws of logic and thereby exists beyond natural laws of life and death.[175]

Walter Map, also writing for a twelfth-century court audience, provided further examples of such fated female agents. In one account, he describes how a knight of Lesser Britain, or Brittany, in mourning long after the death of his wife, found her again one night 'in a great company of women'.[176] The knight was afraid and 'when he saw her whom he had buried, alive again, he could not trust his eyes, and doubted what could be done by fate (*a fatis*)'.[177] Once again, death is defied through the company of wonderful women. As in the case of King Arthur, the survival of this wife is shrouded with doubt. The concept of *fatum* (fate), as opposed to, say, *gratia* (grace), disguises how this woman has been sustained for so long after death. Unlike Arthur, however, this woman does indeed return; she is seized by her husband, who takes her home and lives with her once more. When they have children, their descendants are said to have been called 'Filii mortue' (the sons of the dead mother). This wife can bear children, which, as Walter Map observes, defies the laws of nature. As such, these women seem to live and sustain life by different laws. Given that the fates linked to both Arthur and this knight's wife are explicitly connected with Breton beliefs or contexts, the connection between fate and alternate laws of living death seem to have been styled according to specific cultural parameters. Their fated

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[173] Wade, *Fairies*, 9-38.
[174] Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, in *Gervase of Tilbury: Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, eds. and trans. S.E. Banks and J.W. Binns, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), II, 17, 428-429.
[175] For definitions and medieval terms for fairies, see Wade, *Fairies*, 1-5.
[176] Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, in *Walter Map: De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M.R. James, revised by C.N.L. Brooke, and R.A.B. Mynors, *OMT*, repr. (Oxford: OUP, 2002), IV, 8, 344-345, 'in magno feminarum cetu'.
[177] Ibid., 'cum rediuiuam uideat quam scpelierat, non credit oculis, dubius quid a fatis agatur'.

survivals are presented as representatives of an 'other' tradition, that existed alongside nocturnal agents and divine resurrections.

Elsewhere, Walter Map adds that this Breton knight recovered his wife by 'snatching her out of a dance'.[178] The image of a dancing company of women recurs in Walter's *De nugis*, finding its most extensive descriptions in the story of Eadric Wild, lord of Lydbury North, Shropshire. This lord is said to have come across a drinking-house at the edge of the forest when he returned from hunting. Having noticed a light inside, Eadric looked in to see 'a great dance of numbers of noble ladies'.[179] Walter Map describes how these tall beautiful women 'were circling with airy motion and gay gesture, and from their subdued voices singing in solemn harmony a delicate sound came to his ears; but their words he could not understand'.[180] The use of the verb *circuire* here indicates that the dance involved circular, turning, movements. The otherness of the women is also intensified by their unintelligible speech. Nevertheless, like the Breton knight, Eadric captures one of the women and marries her, begetting children until the woman vanishes when Eadric offends her. This woman is described as having a 'fairy nature', *fatalitatis*, which connects her to our other examples of fated women.

While none of the women in this Shropshire story are said to have died, their appearances share patterns with stories about the living dead. Like the recurring capture motif, the dancing movements of these women also link them to encounters with the living dead. For instance, a legend associated with Archbishop Dunstan relates how he came across one such company in the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary at St Augustine's, Canterbury. The earliest account of this encounter, written in the 990s by an author known only as B., bears some similarities to Walter Map's Shropshire story. B. narrates how Dunstan looked through an opening in the chapel to find it filled with light. Inside the chapel, it is said that 'bands of virgins were wheeling around in a dance'.[181] B.'s use of the verb *gyrare* resembles Walter's choice of *circuire*, both describing a rotating, turning, movement performed by a female company.[182] Furthermore, there is something familiar about this behaviour as the Canterbury virgins are said to alternate and repeat their verses 'in the manner of mortal girls' (*more humanarum uirginum*). By implication, these wonderful women exhibit similar behaviours that their narrators choose to construe

[178] Ibid., II, 13, 160-161, 'a chorea redibuisse raptam'.
[179] Ibid., II, 12, 154-155, 'multarum nobilium feminarum maximam coream uidit'.
[180] Ibid., 'Circuibant leui motu gestuque iocundo, et castigata uoce, reuerendo concentu sonus audiebatur exilis, at non erat sermo earum intelligibilis'.
[181] B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, in *The Early Lives of St Dunstan*, eds. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 36, 100-101, 'uirgineas turmas in choro gyranti'.
[182] On circular graveyard dances, see Caciola, 'Wraiths', 45.

as fatalistic or divine. It is most likely Dunstan's holiness that enables him, unlike Eadric, to understand and commit to memory the words that the virgins sing. B.'s account thus seems to represent a sanitised version of an encounter with a company of dancing women.

These circular dancing movements, however, found no place in the later accounts of this story. Byrhtferth of Ramsey gives the impression that Dunstan did not see anything in the chapel but simply heard a beautiful hymn, sung by the souls of those buried in that church.[183] William of Malmesbury also seems to have found another version of this story, transforming it into a vision of the Virgin Mary enthroned, surrounding by virgins, who join her in song.[184] The omission of dance from other versions of this story might suggest that the whirling movements of these virgins created ambiguous, perhaps unwelcome, connections with fated dance troops, such as those described by Walter Map. Byrhtferth and William seem to have opted for calm stillness, stressing the song, rather than the dance, of the chapel *chorea*. As such, these variations seem to indicate perceived tensions in the relationship between divine power and these dancing women, whose companies seemed to uphold laws and languages for life of their own.

Tricky Testimonies

Doubt was not always the preferred solution when dealing with the living dead. The need to react appropriately to the living dead when they were encountered intensified a desire for certainty. Many of the case studies discussed thus far have focused upon the appearances of living dead persons, but tales of the living dead disagreed on the reliability of such appearances. Appearances, after all, could be deceiving.[185] This tension between enthusiasm and scepticism towards appearances manifested itself in many ways, but ultimately invited explanations that could authenticate or discredit the appearance. The examples assembled below reflect the varieties of opinion towards appearances as well as the reasons for believing or doubting them. Unlike scare stories and wonder tales, the stories under discussion here problematise the appearances of living dead bodies to entertain the possibility of tricks and illusions. The extent to which eye-witness testimony could be trusted emerges as a recurring theme among these examples. As we shall see, for

[183] Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, V, 7, 162-163.
[184] William of Malmesbury, *Vita S. Dunstani archiepiscopi*, in *William of Malmesbury: Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus, and Indract*, eds. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), II, 28, 286-287.
[185] On Augustinian and Gregorian exhortations for prudence with visions and dreams, see Jesse Keskiaho, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages: The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400–900* (Cambridge: CUP, 2015), 94-103.

some medieval writers, interpretations voiced by percipients needed to be moulded, or even disproven, to fit into their own explanatory frameworks for the living dead.

Familiar Faces

One of the most reliable appearances of living dead bodies were those of loved ones. Understandably, the appearances of these bodies were most familiar to those who had known the person best and thus felt confident in their ability to recognise their family and friends. The *Liber Eliensis* provides an illustrative example of such confidence between two monks at Ely towards the end of the twelfth century. It is said that these two men were received into the monastery during their boyhood. The older of the two brothers served as a priest at Ely but later died of a fever. After he had been buried, this priest is said to have appeared to his friend in the porticus of Paul the Apostle. While the younger brother was initially stunned, he was reassured by his friend's calm expression and reassuring words: 'You are not to be afraid, thinking I am dead! I am alive and extremely happy'.[186] This alone is enough to convince the brother, who 'realizing that what he had seen was in no way a spectre (*fantasma*), without any fear of the dead man, took him by the hand and, with a friendly gesture, made him sit down beside him'.[187] This reaction to the living dead is one of familiarity, in which familiar behaviour is justified by a familiar appearance. And yet, we are told that this percipient must first dispel any chance that this appearance was a *fantasma*, that is, a 'spectre' or an 'illusion'. The illusory connotations of *fantasma* betray a caution against trusting appearances alone. Although this possibility is mentioned, it is quickly dismissed by the percipient, who seems eager to take his friend's hand once more and chat with him as they once did. Nor is the brother misguided. Sitting with his friend, the living dead priest shares secrets with him about the glory of their community's founder and patron, Æthelthryth, in heaven. The comfort of a familiar face could thus dispel fears of the living dead.

The limits of perception, however, were revealed on occasions when family and friends were no longer able to recognise one another after death. For instance, Walter Map introduces a Northumberland knight who failed to recognise his own father. This knight was sat alone after dinner when his long dead father appeared wearing a ragged shroud. It is said that the knight 'thought the appearance was a devil and drove it back from the

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[186] *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E.O. Blake, *Camden 3rd series*, vol. 92 (London: Offices of The Royal Historical Society, 1962), III, 93, 343, 'Ne verearis me mortuum estimando! vivo ego et valde letus existo'; Trans. Janet Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the seventh century to the twelfth* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 422.
[187] Ibid., 'intelligens frater ille nequaquam esse fantasma, quod viderat, nil veritus de mortuo per manum accepit eum et familiariter simul consedere facit'.

threshold'.[188] The son evidently expected a *demonium* based on this appearance. In response, the father reassures his son that 'pater tuus sum' (I am your father) and explains that he has appeared to his son to secure absolution from a priest to remedy his excommunication. This example highlights how the appearance of the living dead may seem transformed, to the point of being unrecognisable, even in the eyes of loved ones.[189]

The deceptiveness of appearances could be as detrimental to the living dead, who returned in need of help, as it could be to percipients. Evidently, the father's excommunication had rendered his appearance like that of a demon in the eyes of his son. However, by absolving the father and escorting him to the grave, the community are able to respond appropriately to the appearance. The manner of the father's departure seems to confirm that the proper solution had been found. It is said that the father then went 'to his grave and sank into it, and it closed over him of its own accord'.[190] In this way, the earth seems to receive the father, just as the community have accepted him back into the fold of the faithful. While the narrative gave no comment on the nature or substance of the body beyond its clothing, the body that appeared to the knight in his house seems to collapse with the geo-spatial location of the corpse in the ground. As such, the distinction between the living dead body as mental image and ambulant corpse seems to blur in this father's arrival and departure.

Expository Demons

The task of interpreting bodies, as both substance and image, was not simple. The complexities of this task are exemplified by conflicting accounts of the death of Sheriff Leofstan, found in the Bury miracle collections of Herman and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin. According to Herman, Leofstan had become enraged when an accused woman fled and claimed sanctuary at Edmund's shrine at Bury. When his servants tried to drag her from the premises, it is said that Leofstan was possessed by a demon, consumed by a madness that distracted his servants and freed the woman. Herman hints that this was not the last that the locals heard of Leofstan for the sheriff was 'possessed by a demon in life, and then similarly possessed as a corpse in death'.[191] It is implied that this demonic possession

[188] Walter, *De nugis*, II, 30, 206-207, 'Ille demonium ratus ipsum a limine repulit'.
[189] For another instance of delayed recognition in the case of a deceased parent, see Reginald of Durham, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, in *The Life and Miracles of Saint Godric, Hermit of Finchale*, ed. and trans. Margaret Coombe, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2022), 54, 224-225.
[190] Walter, *De nugis*, II, 30, 206-207, 'ad foueam ueniens incidit, que sponte super eum clausa est'.
[191] Herman, *Miracula*, 3, 12-13, 'tum uiuus possessus a demone, tum itidem possidetur cadauer exanime'.

explains why Leofstan was 'not long held down by the grave's embrace'.[192] In response, his body was sewn in a calf's skin and sunk to the bottom of a lake. The treatment of Leofstan's body resembles that of the Berkeley witch, who was also sewn into an animal skin. However, it is demonic possession, as opposed to demonic abduction, that warrants this treatment. In this way, Herman's account presents a diabolically animated substance as the living dead body of Leofstan.

When Goscelin came to retell this story in his miracle collection, he seems to have reached a different conclusion. Goscelin made slight changes in his version of the story; for instance, Goscelin provided more details about Leofstan's postmortem exploits, reporting that 'after he was buried he began troubling the locals in the night, doubtless to bemoan his own unrest'.[193] At this point, Leofstan seems to resemble the Northumberland knight's father, lamenting his own condition rather than enacting the plots of a demon. However, Goscelin then adds that 'it is permissible to let on it was not him but a demon in his likeness that went about frightening those less learned in the faith and above all those deluded by phantasms'.[194] Herman's demonic interpretation seems to intrude on Goscelin's representation of a pitiable Leofstan. Nevertheless, Goscelin does not allow his story to turn into one of demonic possession. Instead, Goscelin suggests that *prestigiis*, 'tricks' or 'illusions', have deluded the locals into thinking that Leofstan is among them. A more learned observer, presumably Goscelin himself, instead perceives that a demon has assumed Leofstan's likeness. The shapeshifting power of a demon, adopting likenesses to deceive the faithful, thus displaces Goscelin's notion of Leofstan in anguish.

Neither of Goscelin's theories fit easily with the treatment of Leofstan's body. Herman's explanation, that is, the demonic possession of Leofstan's corpse, had implied that containment in a sack at the bottom of a lake was an effective way to prevent the possessed corpse from rising again. In contrast, neither the laments of Leofstan himself nor the illusions of a demon readily supply a logic to make this treatment effective. On the contrary, a demon's illusory mental images would surely be unaffected by the state of the corpse and a refusal to help Leofstan would seem ill-advised for the faithful. This disjuncture between narrator and narrative highlights a distance between observer and percipient, commentary and testimony. The range of explanatory frameworks introduced

[192] Ibid., 'nec diu sinu retentus sepulture mergitur in stagnum'.
[193] Goscelin, *Miracula S. Eadmundi*, I, 3, 144-145, 'traditusque sepulture, cepit nocturnis horis in uicinia commanentes inquietare, per hoc nimirum propriam et ipse protestans inquietudinem'.
[194] Ibid., 'cum ut fateri licet non ipse sed demon in eius effigie minus eruditos in fide et eos quam maxime qui prestigiis falluntur dementaret'.

in Herman's and Goscelin's respective accounts reveal how different conclusions about the nature and cause of the living dead body could be based upon the same testimonies.

The difference between a demon in the likeness of a body and a demon in a body was obscure, at best. Their similarity extended beyond their common denominator of an external, demonic, agent to their portrayal of seemingly identical appearances. It is perhaps for this reason that demonic likeness and demonic possession were sometimes collapsed as interpretations of living dead bodies. The tale of the Drakelow fugitives demonstrates how ideas about demonic likeness and possession were fused to construct the living dead body. This story can be found in Geoffrey's life of Modwenna, written at her monastery at Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire, in the early twelfth century. Geoffrey sought to relate the social upheaval that the Burton monks had endured, with the help of their seventh-century patron, at the hand of a local lord called Roger the Poitevin. The instigators of this conflict were two peasants, who had fled to Roger's jurisdiction at Drakelow from that of the monastery at Stapenhill. While divine vengeance is reported to have settled this conflict, the two peasants serve as representatives of the social, spiritual, and environmental sickness that ravaged Drakelow in its wake.[195] The representations of the two fugitives after their burial at Stapenhill fuse ideas about demonic likeness and possession. For instance, Geoffrey describes how these fugitives initially appeared 'carrying on their shoulders the wooden coffins in which they had been buried'.[196] From the outset, therefore, the imagined and geo-spatial bodies of the fugitives are collapsed into one image. Their appearance at Drakelow creates a visual link to their corpses and their supposed resting-place at Stapenhill. In this form, the fugitives are said to appear 'in the shape of men' (*tanquam speciem hominum*) as well as 'in the likenesses' (*quasi similitudinem*) of animals, like bears and dogs. The emphasis on outer appearances, *species* and *similitudo*, which included animal forms, indicates the understanding of these living dead bodies as demonic likenesses.

However, unlike Goscelin, Geoffrey shows that this understanding was thought to be compatible with that of demonic possession. The corpses of the fugitives, to which we will return in chapter two, were exhumed and mutilated, so that their hearts could be burned. According to Geoffrey, from the pyre upon which the hearts burned, the people heard a cracking noise and saw 'an evil spirit in the form of a crow' emerge, flying away.[197]

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[195] On the multiple levels of sickness in this story, see Gordon, '"Agite, agite et uenite!"', 196-197.
[196] Geoffrey of Burton, *Vita S. Moduenne virginis*, in *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett, *OMT* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 47, 194-195, 'archas ligneas in quibus sepulti fuerant quasi super colla portantes'.
[197] Ibid., 196-197, 'malignum spiritum tanquam coruum'.

Thus, the hearts of the fugitives, taken from their buried bodies, are shown to have contained an evil spirit within. This demon is, once again, in the likeness of an animal, a crow on this occasion, and seems responsible for the earlier instances of shapeshifting. Its occupation of the corpse itself, however, suggests that demonic possession, the presence of a demon inside the body, explained the appearances of the fugitives around Drakelow.

The coexistence of these explanatory frameworks in the Drakelow story reveal how different available interpretations did not necessarily equate alternative interpretations. Geoffrey arguably used everything at his disposal to craft this story and it is this extensive use of literary elements that warrants further discussion of the Drakelow fugitives in later chapters. For now, the multiple ways in which these living dead bodies were understood are presented as compatible. Geoffrey further complicates this picture in his conclusion to the tale. Just as the evil spirit is seen, flying from their hearts, Geoffrey writes that 'both the disease and the phantoms ceased' (*cessauerunt simul et mortalitas et phantasia*). Geoffrey's final word on the Drakelow fugitives, with their *phantasia*, 'illusions' or 'apparitions', echoes the possible, but dismissed, understanding of the Ely priest as a *fantasma* as well as Goscelin's interpretation of Leofstan's appearances as *prestigiis*.[198] These patterns show how some medieval writers understood the interplay between testimony and imagination. Construed as diabolic illusions, these mental images qualified the nature of these living dead threats. Geoffrey may have viewed this illusory interpretation as one of many explanatory frameworks, but another writer could find in it the means to discredit eye-witness testimonies about the living dead altogether.

Discrediting Ideas

William of Malmesbury had mixed feelings about the living dead. As we have seen, William adopted very different approaches in his accounts of the Berkeley witch and King Arthur. It is another living dead king that once again fuels William's scepticism. King Alfred (d. 899) had been buried in the cathedral, at Old Minster, in Winchester, where he awaited the completion of New Minster. 'Not long after', William writes, 'the deluded canons maintained that the king's ghost (*manes*) returned to his dead body and wandered at night through their lodgings'.[199] William is adamant that this story is 'nonsense' or 'idle talk' (*nenia*), as is a belief, which William claims is held by English people, 'that the corpse of a criminal after death is possessed by a demon, and walks'.[200] William's opinion here

[198] For *fantasma* and *fantasia*, see Walter, *De nugis*, II, 13, 160-161.
[199] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 124, 196-197, 'mox pro deliramento canonicorum, dicentium regios manes resumpto cadauere noctibus per domos oberrare'.
[200] Ibid., 'nequam hominis cadauer post mortem demone agente discurrere'.

seems critical of the interpretations advanced in stories about Leofstan and the Drakelow fugitives. Although William heavily condemns belief in these tales, his decision to address, rather than ignore, them hints at their popularity. William selects two explanatory frameworks, that is, two animating principles, for living dead bodies to discredit: the returning *manes* and the possessing demon. The *manes* seems to operate as a *spiritus* or *anima*, an immortal part of a person, which may have implicitly explained interpretations of living dead bodies as troubled persons, as seen in the cases of Leofstan and the Northumberland father. While William rejects the idea of demonic possession, he does not give a verdict on demonic likeness as a possible explanation for these reports. In fact, the *deliramentum* of the Winchester canons appears to leave open the possibility of a trick or illusion. In this way, William refuses to allow his audience to fall for this trick. And yet, he ensures that these seemingly harmless nocturnal wanderings are feared, situated in the context of violent accounts of possessed criminals with which his audiences were familiar. Despite the silent, benign, wanderings of this long dead king, William evidently perceived ideas about his return, like that of Arthur, as a threat to the integrity and authenticity of his history.

Speculations

Over the course of this chapter, it has become clear that medieval writers had access to a wealth of interpretative frameworks to explain appearances of living dead bodies. Some writers, like Geoffrey, evidently relished the creative potential of this variety. Others, like Goscelin and William of Malmesbury, seem to have more discerningly selected, shaped, or refuted such explanations for their audiences. Among the writers who sought to explain reports of living dead bodies, there were also those who adopted more reflective approaches in attempts to uncover the cause, effect, and meaning behind these phenomena. William, a canon of the Augustinian priory at Newburgh, serves as a prime example of this approach. Book V of his *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, finished c. 1198, incorporated four detailed narratives about the living dead based on reports circulating in Yorkshire around the time of writing. William of Newburgh's narratives represent a more speculative narrative model, through which writers could engage with the coexisting ideas about living dead bodies. In some cases, narratives in this mode even included an advisory character, a spokesperson designed to voice the range of available interpretations known to the writer.

Narrative Logic

William of Newburgh introduced reports of living dead bodies with a much less disparaging tone than that conveyed by William of Malmesbury above. For William of Newburgh, these widespread reports were mysterious but meaningful, as opposed to idle talk. Each report is styled to follow its own narrative logic. When William of Newburgh reflected on the credibility of the stories that he had assembled, he concluded that:

> Sane quod mortuorum cadavera de sepulchris egredientia nescio quo spiritu ad viventium vel terrorem vel perniciem circumferantur, et ad eadem sepulchra sponte se illis aperientia revertantur, non facile in fidem reciperetur nisi et crebra nostri temporis exempla suppeterent et testimonia abundarent.
>
> It would not be easy to believe that the corpses of the dead should (I know not by what spirit) leave their graves and wander about to the terror or destruction of the living, and again return to the grave, which of its own accord spontaneously opens to receive them, were it not for the frequent examples and abundant testimonies for these events occurring in our own times.[201]

By recounting tales of these ambulant corpses, William explored how sin, disease, and social transgression had afflicted the local communities where these bodies and their effects had been reported.[202] Such abundant testimonies provided William with opportunities to speculate as to *quo spiritu* moved these cadavers. Indeed, William had evidently formed a view that living dead bodies were animated or possessed corpses, not likenesses or illusions. William presents this view halfway through his series of narratives. Thus, the story that immediately follows it is the third of William's four narratives, that of the *Hundeprest*, 'The Hounds' Priest', from Melrose Abbey. This tale reveals the inferences that William made to create the internal logic for his accounts about living dead bodies.

The *Hundeprest* is said to have been one lady's chaplain, who had acquired a reputation, and name, for himself based on his love of hunting. After his death, he left his grave at Melrose at night to wander the grounds of the monastery, and beyond. At first, William relates how he lingered around his former mistress's bedchamber, to which we will return in chapter six. However, his mistress enlisted the help of a priest who, with his three companions, spent the night in the graveyard to await the living dead chaplain. The three companions left after midnight, at which point William writes that 'the devil,

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[201] *HRA*, V, 24, 477.
[202] Gordon, 'Social monsters', 447.

imagining that he had found the right moment for breaking his courage, incontinently roused up his own chosen vessel, who appeared to have reposed longer than usual'.[203] The series of events, that is, the departure of the companions and the appearance of the living dead body, are connected by William, who infers from this that a devil, *diabolus*, had been watching and waiting for this moment. By implication, the devil that had misled this chaplain to inappropriate pursuits, like hunting, seems to remain in the corpse's vicinity. The rationale here resembles that deployed by Herman in his account of Leofstan, as those under the Devil's power remain as such.

And yet, William speculates further about the unseen movements in the tale. The chaplain's corpse is said to rest in its grave while a devil lingers nearby, until he makes it 'his vessel' (*vas proprium*). By forestalling the devil, the companions are said to have afforded the corpse a longer period of rest, a detail that reinforces its passiveness. Having been animated by the devil, the ambulant corpse rushes at the priest to strike him. After their struggle, and in keeping with William's introductory remarks, the diabolically possessed corpse returns to its grave, which opens and closes to receive it. The destruction of the devil's vessel, the corpse, thus becomes essential to disempowering this devil. For this reason, the corpse is burned in its entirety and its ashes are scattered. In this way, William creates an internal logic in his narrative to support the subsequent actions.

In contrast, the first of the four stories recorded by William did not result in the cremation of a corpse. This contrasting end represents the different interpretation applied to this living dead body, as presented in William's account. Unlike the diabolically possessed *Hundeprest*, this living dead husband seems to have been a soul in need of aid, like the Northumberland father.[204] For William, as unsure as he claimed to be about the spirits that moved these corpses, this contrasting end surely presented an opportunity to differentiate between animation and possession. By comparing this account to that of the *Hundeprest*, I would like to assess the extent to which William thought he could perceive, and perhaps communicate, this difference as well as how he attempted to do so.

At first glance, the living dead husband from Buckinghamshire seems to share characteristics with the *Hundeprest*. Both, for instance, are first reported near or in women's bedchambers. While the *Hundeprest* had been heard by his lady, this husband is said to have tried to sleep with his wife on three successive nights. Like the lady near

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[203] *HRA*, V, 24, 479, 'aptum se tempus ut fiduciam hominis frangeret invenisse diabolus æstimans, illico vas proprium, quod solito diutius quievisse videbatur, excitavit'.
[204] On the intensifying desire in the twelfth century to reinterpret the living dead as souls in need of aid, see Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, 185-189.

Melrose, the Buckinghamshire wife also enlisted the help of others to keep watch and deter her husband. Once rejected by his kin and neighbours in this manner, the living dead husband seems to have brought his rage upon their animals, 'as their wildness and unwonted movements testified'.[205] This detail reveals a peculiar feature in the early stages of this case, that is, no one seems to have seen the living dead husband. When relating this initial string of encounters, William writes that the husband was present, *adesse*, without commenting on his appearance. As we shall see in chapter six, presence could be sensed in ways other than sight. However, it is the appearances, or lack thereof, of the Buckinghamshire husband that I would argue are fundamental to William's speculations about animated, rather than possessed, corpses.

This living dead husband does eventually appear but under very peculiar circumstances. William describes how the husband started to wander about during the day but could only be seen by a few people. When the husband encountered a large group of people, William explains that 'he would appear to one or two only though at the same time his presence was not concealed from the rest'.[206] Here, the difference between appearance and presence is made explicit by William. While Goscelin and William of Malmesbury seem to have been concerned about illusory images that deluded the eyes and minds of their witnesses, William of Newburgh shows that the people of Buckinghamshire recognised a living dead presence by means other than sight.

After the husband had been buried on the eve of the Lord's Ascension, the first explicit reference to his grave opening comes once the people of Buckinghamshire had received permission from Bishop Hugh of Lincoln to open it. It is Bishop Hugh who provides advice on how they should respond in this situation. While advisors to the bishop agreed that cremation of the corpse usually reassured communities experiencing similar troubles, as in the case at Melrose, Hugh advises against this. Instead, the bishop orders for the grave to be opened and a scroll of absolution placed on the corpse's chest. As in the case of the Northumberland father, the grant of absolution stresses the connection between the living dead body and the benefits afforded to the soul. However, this first opening of the grave is unique among William's narratives for another reason. As William wrote in his summary of these phenomena, the exit from and return to the grave are distinguishing features in his conception of ambulant corpses. Following these parameters, the *Hundeprest* is described as *tumulo exiens*, coming out of the mound.

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[205] *HRA*, V, 22, 474, 'quod ipsorum animalium efferatio et motus insoliti declarabant'.
[206] Ibid., 475, 'uni tantum vel duobus conspicuus erat, cum tamen et ceteros ejus præsentia non lateret'.

Likewise, the living dead reported at Berwick and Anant, which will be discussed more below, are both said to leave, *egredior*, their respective graves. In contrast, the Buckinghamshire husband is never said to come out of his grave. In this way, the Buckinghamshire story fits uneasily in William's general framework. Walter Map's account of the Northumberland father returning to and sinking into his grave indicates that this omission does not reflect a widespread distinction for animated corpses. Rather, the omission of the husband's exit from his grave reinforces the ambiguities in his often-unseen presence in William's story. The limited appearances of this living dead husband seem to have given William cause to doubt, or at least obscure, the fact that he had even left the grave at all. For William, this possibility does not negate the reality of the experiences reported by the people of Buckinghamshire. Instead, the differences sustained in this account reveal how William speculated as to why a different resolution was needed in this instance.

The Work of the Devil

The remaining two accounts of living dead bodies in William's *Historia* explain their reports of ambulant corpses by means of demonic agents. Although this explanation resembles that given for the *Hundeprest*, William chooses to use different terminology in these two instances. For example, William relates how a wealthy man from Berwick, who had lived a sinful life, left his tomb at night 'by the contrivance, as it is believed, of Satan' (*operatione, ut creditur, Sathanæ*).[207] In a similar way to the story of the *Hundeprest*, the local community agreed that the solution would be to exhume, dismember, and burn the corpse. However, by identifying this agent as Satan, rather than the *diabolus* that entered the *Hundeprest*, William seems to draw an ontological distinction. While the *diabolus* might more broadly refer to a devil as well as the Devil, *Satan* seems to identify this agent more emphatically as the Devil. This slight difference may reflect William's speculations about the relative wickedness of these living dead characters. As such, while a love of hunting subjected the *Hundeprest* to the temptations of a devil, the sins of this Berwick man were so great that they bound him to the Devil.

Likewise, a fugitive from York, who took refuge at the castle of Anant, is said to have appeared again with the Devil's help. William described how this sinful man, having died without confession after catching his cheating wife with her lover, had been given Christian burial but was said 'to leave his grave by the handiwork of Satan' (*operatione*

[207] Ibid., V, 23, 476.

Sathanæ de sepulchro egrediens).[208] Once again, the *operatio Sathanæ* works as the explanation for the corpse's ability to walk. This rationale appears to pinpoint the agent, but the nature of the Devil's work seems vague. Unlike the *Hundeprest* story, there is no reference to the corpse as a vessel. Rather, *operatio*, 'performance' or 'influence', stresses the agency of Satan while obscuring how the corpse was moved. This Satanic power over the bodies at Berwick and Anant seems reminiscent of the Devil's possession of those diabolically abducted bodies at Berkeley and Borden. The cremation of the corpse remains the solution to removing this locus of demonic power, perhaps before the Devil came to claim it.

Narrative Resolution

William of Newburgh was not alone in crafting narratives that speculated about the agents behind and countermeasures for the living dead. As we have seen, absolution, cremation, and mutilation were common endings to such stories. The course of these resolutions, however, did not always run smooth. Like Bishop Hugh of Lincoln, Gilbert Foliot, bishop of Hereford, is said to have been approached for advice on how to resolve local trouble with a living dead man. Walter Map narrates how a knight called William Laudun told Gilbert about a Welshman, who left his grave each night, calling his villagers by name, so that one by one they fell sick and died. In response, Gilbert reportedly said:

> Potestatem forsitan dedit Dominus angelo illius perditi malo, ut in corpore illo mortuo se exagitet. Attamen effodiatur corpus illud, et collo reciso fossorio conspergatur ipsum et fossa magna aqua benedicta, et reponatur.
>
> Perhaps the Lord has given power to the evil angel of that lost one to move about in the dead corpse. However, let the body be exhumed, cut the neck through with a spade, and sprinkle the body and the grave well with holy water, and replace it.[209]

There is little certainty in the bishop's words, until he gives the permission to exhume the corpse that the knight presumably wanted. When Walter Map related the bishop's thoughts on this ambulant corpse, he speculated about a connection between God, an evil angel, and the *perditus*, 'lost one', himself. The emphasis on God's power here contrasts William of Newburgh's focus on Satan's power. Instead of enjoying power over the corpse, the evil angel in this story seems subject to God's will and a sign of the Welshman's damnation. However, like the *diabolus* that chose its moment to move its vessel, the

[208] Ibid., V, 24, 480.
[209] Walter, *De nugis*, II, 27, 202-203.

Hundeprest, this evil angel appears to belong to the Welshman. In this way, Walter Map suggests that the evil angel that tempted him into sin is then permitted to inhabit and move his corpse.

Despite the bishop's careful consideration, his instructions proved to be ineffective. Even after exhuming, decapitating, and blessing the body, William Laudun heard the Welshman return to the village, this time calling his name. The inefficacy of these countermeasures is exemplified by the fact that the Welshman, when the knight encountered him, appears to have still had his head. This reattachment of the head after decapitation proves to be significant as the story unfolds. Upon hearing his own name, the knight chased the *demon* back to the grave, where he 'clave his head to the neck' using his sword.[210] In doing so, the knight put an end to this demonic possession. It remains unclear why only the second decapitation was thought to have made this corpse no longer inhabitable to the demon. Furthermore, Walter Map does not explain how the head came to be once more fused to the body to be struck off this second time. It stands to reason that, if God could permit an evil angel to enter the corpse, perhaps God could also permit head and body to fuse or enable the evil angel to bring about this reunion.

The living dead body emerges from this discussion as a complex and unstable concept. In many ways, living dead bodies seem to represent vague combinations of ideas about personalities, appearances, and corpses. These ideas seem to have informed one another, creating a range of manifestations of living dead bodies, from benevolent nightwalkers to evil cadaverous likenesses. The range of manifestations surveyed in this chapter have revealed living dead bodies as persons, coterminous with their living selves, as well as resurrected bodies, ambulant corpses, and ambiguous nocturnal agents. Medieval storytellers deployed a variety of explanatory frameworks to justify these representations, which included demonic abduction, resurrection, divine intervention, ambiguous (female) intervention, reanimation, demonic possession, and demonic likeness. While some accounts present these manifestations and explanations in tension with one another, others demonstrate how they could also be fused, working in tandem with one another, to create complex representations of the living dead. Demonic readings have certainly predominated across these case studies, a pattern that may reflect the usefulness

[210] Ibid., 'percussit in caput collo tenus'.

of demonic explanations as deserved, but avoidable, ends for those who fail to reject the influences of demons. Walter Map's Welshman exemplifies the fate of those whose heads are turned by demonic temptations. Just as the hearts of the Drakelow fugitives had been given over to an evil spirit, the Welshman's head seems to have been the location of his evil angel. These anatomically located spirits reveal an interest in locating, as well as identifying, animating principles. To understand the localised, life-sustaining, forces at work in living dead bodies, we must embark on a more focused study on their remains.

Chapter 2: Remains

Bodies were evidently thought to exhibit living death in manifold ways. Having examined the appearances of living dead bodies in chapter one, this chapter shifts our focus onto living dead remains. These remains can be understood as synonymous with corpses. As we saw in chapter one, the body was a vessel, which could be altered, in grisly ways, to affect its receptiveness to external agents. This chapter builds upon our discussion in chapter one by more closely examining the states and symptoms of living dead remains to investigate how and where signs of life were detected. The varying degrees of interest in animating principles seen in chapter one, however, remind us that these life forces were probably more easily detected, than identified.

This question of agency is confounded by the possibility that an animating principle had remained, rather than departed and returned. After all, the once living body had been moved by an internal agent; this animating, life-sustaining, force, or at least some of its residues, may have remained with the body. Veneration of contact relics, objects that had touched sanctified bodies, testified to belief in the continued existence of such life forces.[211] The Latin *virtus*, or the Old English *feorh*, often seem to denote this life force, but it was also connected to, and even conflated with, *spiritus* and *anima*.[212] Despite varied ways of expressing this life force, there seems to have been a common consensus that it permeated bodies and all their parts with a divisible and traceable potency.

It is the locations of life forces, in the blood, bodies, and fragments of the living dead, that emerge as central themes throughout this chapter. The following discussion begins by examining how human remains betrayed the presence of life forces. In contrast to the examples studied in chapter one, these residual energies seem to have generated more restricted kinds of animation among the living dead. The role of the blood in carrying and sustaining these life forces around the body is central to the concept of residual life. This chapter then proceeds to investigate how fragments of the body were believed to contain condensed or isolated life forces. The subject of fragmentation raises questions about why certain body parts, like the head, were favoured locations for these life forces. And yet, the body was more than the sum of its parts; its porousness meant that the life forces it retained could also be imbued in objects and spaces. For this reason,

[211] Tom Licence, 'The Cult of St Edmund', in *Bury St Edmunds and the Norman Conquest*, ed. Tom Licence (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 107-109.
[212] Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 43-50.

this chapter lastly examines encounters with the living dead that tied their appearances to certain locations. In doing so, the closing discussion draws together our findings from chapters one and two to assess how medieval representations of the living dead depended upon related conceptions of bodily appearances and remains.

Residues

The characteristics and behaviours exhibited by corpses often inspired medieval representations of the living dead. By drawing on shared knowledge about the processes of death, storytellers could choose whether to present human remains in authentic or subversive ways. Medieval writers, as we have partly seen in chapter one, experimented with biological facts, from gross bodily appearances to returning heartbeats. One visible transformation in a corpse is onset by the settling of the blood, which causes discolouration and eventually discharge of blood.[213] Descriptions of human remains in medieval stories interpreted these visible changes in diverging ways. For instance, the unsettling sight of leaking blood could be interpreted as a kind of response from a corpse to its witness, implicating the latter in its dissolution.[214] When trying to understand how corpses exhibited both life and death, medieval writers looked for the blood still moving through its limbs and spurting from its orifices. Related to these visible changes, there were also reports of moving corpses, whose external movements were products of internal movements. These inner life forces seem residual in the sense that limited movement characterises these corpses, in a way that contrasts the livelier wanderings of the bodies encountered in chapter one. Instead, the following examples present corpses as relatively still, sleeping even, with the occasional jolt, lurch, and wriggle that was sure to keep devotees and doubters alike on their toes.

Flesh and Blood

In 1104, the Benedictine monks at Durham translated the remains of Cuthbert, their seventh-century patron, to their newly built cathedral. Under the direction of Prior Turgot, the monks inspecting the corpse reportedly found it as free from decay in 1104 as it had been in 698, just eleven years after Cuthbert's death.[215] When writing a *libellus* for his community's patron between 1165 and 1172, Reginald of Durham provided an account of

[213] Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination*, 50.
[214] On cruentation, see Winston Black, 'Animated Corpses and Bodies with Power in the Scholastic Age', in *Death in Medieval Europe*, ed. Joelle Rollo-Koster (London: Routledge, 2016), 83-84.
[215] *Vita S. Cuthberti*, in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), IV, 14, 130-131.

this 1104 translation with great detail. Reginald described how 'all the limbs were firm, flexible, and whole as was becoming for a perfect man; the sinews were flexible, the veins were full of moisture and pliable, the softness of the flesh was sweet; these things show how he was more living in the flesh than dead in the body'.[216] It is the coexistence of living flesh and dead body that warrants further discussion. As Reginald shows, Cuthbert is a perfect example of this paradox and the body with which we shall open this discussion.

For Reginald and the Durham monks, Cuthbert's corpse represents an ideal living dead body: *solida, flexuosa, et integra* (firm, flexible, and whole). Flexibility in particular seems to characterise Cuthbert's soft flesh and pliable limbs, subverting the *rigor mortis* that audiences would presumably have recognised and expected in corpses. The firmness, but not stiffness, of the flesh proved for this Durham audience that the corpse was resisting decay. As a result, Cuthbert seems clean and whole, living in the flesh (*viventem in carne*). Evidence of decay was often a far more terrifying sight. An interesting contrast can be drawn between Cuthbert's flesh and that described in one of the stories recounted by the Byland monk in the fourteenth century.

> Dicitur quod quedam mulier cepit quendam spiritum et portauit in domum quandam super dorsum suum in presencia hominum quorum vnus retulit quod vidit manus mulieris demergentes in carne spiritus profunde, quasi caro eiusdem spiritus esset putrida et non solida sed fantastica.
>
> It is said that a certain woman laid hold of a spirit and carried it on her back into a certain house in the presence of some men, one of whom reported that he saw the hands of the woman sink deeply into the flesh of the spirit as though the flesh were rotten and not solid but imaginary.[217]

Unlike Cuthbert, living in the flesh, the 'flesh of the spirit' (*in carne spiritus*) in the Byland story is *putrida et non solida*. The process of putrefaction has disintegrated the flesh, such that the woman's hands seem to sink into it. The tangibility of this flesh seems contradictory, at once whole enough to be carried and yet so dissoluble that a hand can pass through it. Moreover, as its wholeness disintegrates, the very existence of the flesh is

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[216] Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de admirandis Beati Cuthberti virtutibus quae novellis patratae sunt temporibus*, ed. James Raine (London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1835), XLI, 86, 'Menbra vero omnia solida, flexuosa, et integra, qualia virum perfectum decent; nervis sinuosa, venis roriferis plicabilia, carnis mollitie suavia, qualia potius, viventem in carne, quam defunctum in corpore, exhibent'.

[217] *TMGS*, V, 418-419.

problematised, qualified by its *fantastica* quality. Conversely, Cuthbert can be said to seem more real, more present, through the wholeness and firmness of his flesh.

The characteristics of Cuthbert's corpse, according to Reginald, are the result of life force infused into his blood. Earlier in his *Libellus*, when relating one of Cuthbert's miracles, Reginald explains that 'the seat of the soul is in the softness of the blood; however, the blood is infused with the breath of life'.[218] The concept of 'the seat of the soul' (*sedes animae*) does more than just locate the soul in this instance.[219] After all, the location of Cuthbert's soul has since been complicated by his reception into heaven. As such, the blood's soul-carrying function is accompanied by its infusion with 'the breath of life' (*spiraculo vitæ*). To clarify the agent responsible for the corpse's condition, Reginald stresses that 'his flesh is made flexible only by the infusion of blood in an incredible manner'.[220] Infused blood, that is, blood soaked with the divine force breathed into creation, is thought to have been moving in Cuthbert's corpse and thereby enabling it to resist processes associated with death. Reginald recognised the ambiguities and contradictions that the corpse's state presented to the Durham community for 'we cannot prove that blessed Cuthbert is dead… nor can we presume to call him alive'.[221]

The many miracles worked by Cuthbert at Durham according to Reginald's *Libellus* demonstrate the significance of this living dead corpse for their community. Furthermore, Cuthbert's corpse was not alone in receiving the attention and devotion of the Durham monks. Reginald was soon reminded of what he had learned from Cuthbert's corpse when he came to write about that of a hermit called Godric, whom Reginald and his fellow monks had often visited at Finchale. Reginald closes his account of the aged hermit's death with the observation that his skin colour remained the same colour as it had been in his youth.[222] A miracle story then follows, in which the monks who had already prepared the corpse for burial were compelled by Godric's more noble clients to furnish them with relics. Having sewn the corpse in cloth and tightly bound its arms, the monks saw that only Godric's feet remained bare. For this reason, they decided to cut the corpse's toenails to give to these pious devotees. However, when a monk began to cut the

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[218] Reginald, *Libellus*, XIX, 39, 'Sedes quidem animæ in sanguinis mollicie est; sanguis vero nisi cum spiraculo vitæ infusus est'.
[219] On blood as *sedes animæ*, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 161-163.
[220] Reginald, *Libellus*, XIX, 39, 'caro ejus flexibilis non nisi ex sanguinis infusione modo incredibili comperitur'.
[221] Ibid., 'Nec et mortuum ergo Beatum Cuthbertum comprobare possumus… nec viventem eum profiteri præsumimus'.
[222] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 169, 556-557.

nails, Reginald reports that 'blood flowed immediately, as if from a living man, and a spurt of blood splashed the hands of the man who was doing the cutting, although the dead body had already cooled for a long time'.[223] Just as Cuthbert's blood carried a life force through his limbs, Godric's blood still moves to the extremities of his body, right down to his toes, with a powerful movement that stuns the monks. Reginald seems fascinated by the time-transcending freshness of this blood, explaining that Godric had died at daybreak, but the blood spurted out at dusk, and then was still fresh from the wound the next morning when Godric was due to be interred in his tomb. This leakage of blood is presented as an incredible sign, but its meaning seems to have been unclear. Those who saw the fresh wound are said to have been filled with both wonder and fear 'because they knew that there was evident in this event either a miracle or a judgement from God'.[224] The reason for the appearance of blood is construed as divine, but potentially unsafe if it is a sign of God's judgment on the presumption of the monks and the devotees. This uneasy reaction may reflect the contradictions in the bleeding corpse, which collapses characteristics of life and death into a single image. Reports of blood issuing from corpses recur across tales of the living dead and the examples that follow allow us to explore the range of interpretations available for this unsettling event.

If we return to William of Newburgh's tale of the Anant fugitive, whose nocturnal wanderings by Satan's power had warranted the exhumation and cremation of his corpse, we find a striking contrast in the interpretation of the bleeding corpse. This corpse is said to have been dug up by two brothers, whose father had died from the disease brought by the living dead fugitive. When the two brothers started digging in the cemetery, they were soon struck by the corpse's close proximity to the surface, amidst torn pieces of the cloth in which it had been wrapped. At this point, William describes the corpse (*cadaver*) as enormous, 'with its countenance beyond measure reddened and turgid'.[225] The stiffness and discolouration of the corpse are immediate indicators of its vulnerability to biological processes. Motivated by vengeance for their late father, the two men struck at this corpse, inflicting a wound 'out of which', William writes, 'incontinently flowed such a stream of blood, that it might have been taken for a bloodsucker (*sanguisuga*) filled with the blood of many persons'.[226] Blood issues from the fugitive's corpse just as it did from that of Godric. However, while there was no doubt that Godric's blood was his own, the blood

[223] Ibid., 170, 560-561, 'Nam statim, utpote de homine uiuente, sanguis erupit, incidentisque manus cruoris unda respersit, quamuis corpus emortuum antea diutissime refrigidatum fuerit'.
[224] Ibid., 'quia miraculum uel Dei iudicium in hoc opere apparuisse comperti sunt'.
[225] *HRA*, V, 24, 481, 'facie rubenti turgentique supra modum'.
[226] Ibid., 'ex quo tantus continuo sanguis effluxit ut intelligeretur sanguisuga fuisse multorum'.

that flowed out of the fugitive's corpse was reportedly stolen blood, blood that had been sucked out of other people. In denying the corpse this blood, William once again seems to allude to power taken from external agents, just as he did when he identified Satan as responsible for the corpse's wanderings.

Heart and Head

The source of evil, however, was also more precisely located in the body of the Anant fugitive. William relates how one of the brothers said that the corpse would not burn unless they removed its heart. The other brother proceeded to thrust his hand into the wounded side of the corpse, ripping out the heart, before tearing it into pieces. All the issues with this corpse, its stolen blood, its wanderings, and its disease, subsequently appear to have been associated with its heart. There are multiple ways in which the heart may have been considered accountable for these events. First, this action may reflect twelfth-century conceptions about the heart's role in producing outflows of blood, albeit long before William Harvey came to describe the circulation of the blood around the body in the seventeenth century.[227] Second, there was also a tradition of identifying the heart, rather than the blood, as the *sedes animae*, and thus the source of movement and sensation.[228] The idea that a life force remained in the corpse is neither expressed nor rejected in the narrative. William perceives the work of Satan but falls short of accusing the Devil of compelling this corpse to suck people's blood. These demonic and vital agencies need not necessarily have been in tension; Satan may have plausibly interacted, or interfered, with residual life forces in the corpse, just as God could be responsible for the miracle or judgment signified by Godric's blood. Such interaction relates to the final way in which the heart may have been understood, that is, as the most susceptible part of the body to external influence. The open, porous, qualities of the heart may have facilitated movements of not only internal life forces but also external agents, which infiltrated the heart as easily as they spread out from it.[229] These contexts may have informed and reinforced this crucial idea that a corpse's animation could be isolated and removed through its heart.

Geoffrey of Burton drew primarily from this third and final understanding of the heart, as the porous part of the body, in which external agents could reside, in his story about the Drakelow fugitives. As mentioned in chapter one, the hearts of these living

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[227] Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart* (London: Yale University Press, 2010), 2.
[228] Ibid., 21.
[229] Ibid., 50-56.

dead fugitives were taken to Dodecrossefora/Dodefreseford, where their burning hearts released an evil spirit with a great cracking sound. The cremation of these hearts, much like the utter destruction of the heart in the Anant case, illustrates how this body part could be made no longer inhabitable for its external, demonic, agent. When the two corpses were exhumed at their original home of Stapenhill, they displayed similar characteristics to the corpses discussed thus far. Geoffrey describes that the corpses were found 'intact, but the linen cloths over their faces were stained with blood'.[230] Unlike the corpse at Anant, these corpses are not said to be stiff or discoloured. Furthermore, while blood issued from their mouths, reddening the cloths, it is unclear whether this blood was thought to have been their own or drank from the people at Drakelow. We could infer from the wholeness of the corpses that the blood was perceived as their own. Like Cuthbert, the Stapenhill corpses are *integer*, whole and undecayed, as if blood is still coursing through them, suspending the deterioration of their flesh, and leaking from their mouths.

However, unlike Cuthbert, the wholeness of the Stapenhill corpses is undesirable. As we have seen, the removal of the hearts, and thereby the evil spirit, ended both the wholeness and the demonic possession of these corpses. And yet, a further measure was deemed necessary to terminate their living death. The locals not only tore out the hearts, but also 'cut off the men's heads and placed them in the graves between their legs', before recovering the bodies with earth.[231] The decapitation of these corpses identifies their heads as factors in their condition and behaviour. Unlike the hearts, these heads were neither burned nor revealed to contain an evil spirit. Rather, the stained cloths and undecayed flesh had proved that blood was flowing in these corpses, reaching their heads. This outflow of blood evidently needed to be interrupted to disempower these corpses. By severing their necks and relocating the heads between their legs, the locals felt reassured that the reburied corpses had lost the cause of their movement. As mentioned earlier in the context of the Anant case, a coexistence of evil spirits and life forces may have been detected in these corpses, warranting diverging treatments of heart and head to disrupt both agents.

A focus on the blood that flows to the heart and the head also appeared in stories about the corpse of Edith. At just twenty-three years old, Edith, the daughter of King Edgar, died in 984 at the monastic community of Wilton, where she had been raised with

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[230] Geoffrey, *Vita S. Moduenne*, 47, 196-197, 'integros, pannis tamen lineis super ora deformissime cruentatis'.
[231] Ibid., 'abscisa capita in ipsis tumulis posuerunt inter ipsorum crura'.

her mother, Wulfthryth, since her infancy. Edith's corpse was translated c. 997, and the miracles that took place afterwards were collected by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin c. 1080. The first miracle following the translation testified to the flow of blood in Edith's corpse. A monk called Eadwulf came to Wilton from Glastonbury to take a relic from Edith's clothing. While cutting a piece of her tunic, from its folds on her chest, Eadwulf accidently grazed the corpse with his knife. Goscelin reports that 'immediately a torrent of blood gushed out, as though it were pouring from a living vein, and stained with its rosy colour the snow-white garments and the paved floor'.[232] This outflow, as if from a *uiua uena*, is located near the heart since Eadwulf had chosen to cut the fabric gathered at Edith's chest (*pectore*). Furthermore, the striking details of reddened cloth, reminiscent of the Stapenhill corpses, and the blood-stained floor visualise the extension of Edith's blood into the objects and architecture around it.

While devotees like Eadwulf certainly hoped that Edith's relics and resting place had been imbued with her life force, this visible diffusion was too much to bear. Indeed, the spilling of blood in consecrated buildings threatened the cleanliness and holiness of the space itself.[233] Overwhelmed, Eadwulf fell to the floor in tears at the sight of this bloodshed. Having wept in penance for his presumption, he then stood up to find that the blood had gone, having 'returned to its proper body'.[234] In this way, Edith's bloodshed mirrors that of Godric since it serves as both miracle and judgment. Unlike Godric's ever wounded toe, however, the movement of Edith's blood is reversible, such that this outflow of blood can be diverted back into the corpse. The removal of the blood stains from the church floor and white garments seem to symbolise a return to purity, for building and penitent alike. Despite the undeniable power in Edith's blood, Goscelin warns her devotees that its rightful place resided within the corpse.

By confining Edith's blood to her corpse, her inner life forces could be imagined as extending to all the parts of her body through her blood. The evidence of this spread of vital energy abounded in accounts of Edith's animate corpse.[235] Immediately after telling

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[232] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, ed. André Wilmart, in 'La légende de Ste Édith en prose et vers par le moine Goscelin', *AB* 56 (1938), 2, 270-271, 'Extimplo sanguinis unda, acsi de uiua uena elicita, prorupit uestesque niuales ac pauimentum rosis suis respersit'; Trans. Michael Wright and Kathleen Loncar, in *Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius*, ed. Stephanie Hollis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 2, 72.
[233] On bloodshed and the desecration of churches, see Daniel Thiery, *Polluting the Sacred: Violence, Faith, and the 'Civilizing' of Parishioners in Late Medieval England* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 48-52.
[234] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 2, 270-271, 'in suum corpus resedit'.
[235] For Edith launching herself from her tomb, as far as the waist, in response to King Cnut's doubts about her holiness, see William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, in *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: The History of the English Bishops, Vol. 1*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), II, 87, 298-301.

Eadwulf's story, Goscelin adds a tale about one of the women at Wilton who tried to cut off part of Edith's headband. Goscelin relates how the Wilton women say that Edith's 'living head lifted itself against her and terrified the presumptuous woman with threatening anger'.[236] Edith's lively, if limited, movement here stands out among the more passive corpses examined thus far. While Godric and the corpses at Anant and Stapenhill bled, they were not reported to move. This contrast seems especially odd in the Anant account; once uncovered, the corpse, which had been said to leave its grave, does not move, let alone try to drink the blood of the brothers who had come to destroy it. And yet, the movement of Edith's 'living head' (*uitale caput*) locates her life force in the head, in a way that not only condemns her devotee's intentions, but also echoes the special treatment shown towards the heads buried at the Stapenhill. The relationship between head and life force will be discussed in more detail below. For the purposes of this discussion, I would like to examine further evidence of animate corpses that show how, through the blood, residual life forces were detected in all parts of the body.

Animate Corpses

There is a story about William of Malmesbury that claims he personally witnessed a moving corpse. This account does not come from William himself, but from a fourteenth-century legendary, compiled by John of Tynemouth, under its entry for the Welsh monk Caradoc (d. 1124). According to this account, William travelled to St Davids, Pembrokeshire, when Caradoc's corpse, which had been found undecayed, was being translated. It is said that William sought to cut off one of Caradoc's fingers to take away with him as a relic. However, just as William tried to do this, Caradoc 'as if feeling the cutting of his limbs, gathered his fingers into a fist, turned over his palm, and drew his hand back into his sleeve'.[237] The behaviour of Caradoc's corpse is interpreted as a sign of his displeasure, in a similar way to the cases of Godric and Edith. The movement in Caradoc's corpse extends all the way to his fingers, enabling them to close in on themselves and withdraw from their pious assailant. This action is presented as deliberate, indicative of the source of motion and sensation that has remained in Caradoc's corpse.

William of Malmesbury never mentions this experience. However, William was no stranger to failed relic-making attempts. For instance, among the now lost Old English material about Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, by a Worcester monk and chaplain called

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[236] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 2, 271, 'illud uitale caput se contra erexisse ac presumtricem minaci indignatione absterruisse'.
[237] *De sancto Carodoco heremita*, *NLA*, vol. 1, 176, 'quasi sentiens membrorum abscisionem, collectis in volam digitis et simul in palmam replicatis, manum manica subtraxit'.

Coleman, William found an interesting story about the late bishop's ring. William translated this story into Latin, relating how the ring that the bishop had received upon his episcopal consecration often fell off on account of his abstinence. After the bishop's death, William writes that someone tried to take away this ring from the undecayed body as a keepsake but found that it no longer came off. Their plans are said to have been 'foiled by the knotted joints and the firmness of skin and sinew'.[238] The changes in the corpse's physiology, perhaps signs of *rigor mortis*, are once again interpreted as responses to a devotee's presumption. The focus upon fingers in these two instances indicates that hands, as well as heads and hearts, were closely examined to infer the judgments from living dead corpses.

Thus far, the movements of living dead corpses have been limited to particular body parts. However, there is an illuminating example of an entire corpse moving in its coffin. The corpse of Bishop Wulsin (d. 1002) was buried at Sherborne and translated on two separate occasions. One of Wulsin's successors, Bishop Herman, Goscelin's patron, commissioned a *Vita* to be written in Wulsin's honour. In the absence of pre-existing written material, Goscelin assembled stories and testimonies from the monks at Sherborne to include in the *Vita* between 1078 and 1080. Among these stories, Goscelin incorporated a tale about Wulsin's very first burial at Sherborne that located residues of movement in his corpse. Goscelin narrates that Wulsin had instructed his monks that there was a sarcophagus prepared for him at Sherborne, where he wished to be buried. However, after the bishop's death, the monks brought his body to this sarcophagus and found that the corpse was too long. Goscelin tells us that the sight of the bishop's shoulders and neck hanging out over the edge of the coffin greatly agitated the monks, who had put their faith in the bishop's instructions despite their doubts about the size of the sarcophagus. And yet, their faith had not been misplaced. Goscelin writes that:

> repente fit sonus in tumba ultroque se mouit uitalis gleba et intra breuem caueam quicquid supererat attraxit duroque lapide quasi harena uel niue cedente uel quasi in lectulo a sompno expergefactus toto corpore se intro defunctus extendit.
>
> Suddenly there was a noise in the tomb, the living corpse moved on its own and drew inside the short hollow all the parts which had been sticking out, and as if

[238] William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani*, in *William of Malmesbury: Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus, and Indract*, eds. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), III, 22, 144-145, 'sic nodositas articulorum, sic pellis et neruorum integritas omne deludebat ingenium'.

> just waking from sleep on a bed the dead man stretched out his whole body within the hard stone, which yielded like sand or snow.[239]

A *uitalis gleba*, or 'living lump', stirs in its coffin, rearranging itself to fit the stone structure. There is an uneasy silence in this story surrounding the source of this life and movement. Instead, Goscelin reassures his audience that such happenings can be read about elsewhere, directing them to the example of King Sebbi in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. However, Goscelin's comparison is somewhat strained. Bede had indeed told a similar story, in which Sebbi's corpse was too long for his sarcophagus.[240] However, in Bede's story, attendants chipped away at the stone coffin, adding another two inches to its length. The miracle in Bede's narrative concerns the sarcophagus alone, which is suddenly found to be not only the right length, but four inches longer than the corpse. In other words, Sebbi's corpse is never said to have moved or stretched. In contrast, Wulsin's corpse is likened to a body waking from sleep. Goscelin's attempt to link this story with one found in Bede's *Historia* suggests that he felt obligated to justify his report of this *uitalis gleba* with the revered authority of Bede.

Goscelin's anticipation of scepticism may have been stirred by the disjuncture between this representation of Wulsin's remains and their appearance during their more recent translations. When Bishop Ælfwold II of Sherborne translated the remains of Wulsin in 1050, Goscelin reports that the bones of Wulsin were washed and placed in a chest.[241] The transformation of *gleba* (clod) into *ossa* (bones) comes without comment from Goscelin. Unlike Cuthbert, whose bodily integrity is said to have endured over four hundred years, Wulsin's remains have undergone skeletonization within fifty years of his death. This transformation is unsurprising from a biological standpoint, but potentially destabilizing for an argument for a resident life force. The skeletal corpse lacks flesh and, perhaps more importantly, blood, which so often seemed to be the principal mover of life forces. For Goscelin, and the Sherborne monks, Wulsin is visibly no longer flesh and blood. Thus, the idea that his corpse had or still carried life forces became strained. The deterioration of this once animate corpse raises the thorny idea that even an undecayed

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[239] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita S. Wlsini episcopi et confessoris*, in 'The Life of Saint Wulsin of Sherborne, by Goscelin', ed. C.H. Talbot, *Revue Bénédictine* 69 (1959), 9, 78-79; Trans. Rosalind Love, 'The Life of St Wulfsige of Sherborne by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin', in *St Wulfsige and Sherborne: Essays to Celebrate the Millennium of the Benedictine Abbey, 998-1998*, eds. Katherine Barker, David Hinton and Alan Hunt (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 9, 109.
[240] *HE*, IV, 11, 366-369.
[241] Goscelin, *Vita S. Wlsini*, 18, 83.

corpse might one day expire, a problem that Goscelin would have to tackle again about ten years later.

Around 1087-1088, Goscelin was commissioned to write another *Vita* in honour of Wærburh (d. 700), the daughter of the Mercian King Wulfhere who joined the monastic community at Ely. Goscelin learned, perhaps drawing from stories shared among the women of Ely in the eleventh century, that Wærburh's corpse had been found undecayed when elevated at Hanbury just nine years after her death. Goscelin relates that the people of Hanbury 'all expected that – as is the way with the human state – all the flesh would have fallen away so that only the bare bones would remain; but instead the virgin was found to be quite intact, as if sleeping in a soft bed'.[242] In this way, Wærburh's intact corpse seems to have resembled that of Cuthbert, Godric, and Edith, subverting the expectations of the people of Hanbury. However, this undecayed condition did not last. In Wærburh's case, decay appears to have been delayed rather than averted. Goscelin narrates that Wærburh's corpse remained undecayed until the time of the Danish attacks, when her corpse dissolved to avoid their faithless touch. While Goscelin recognises the apparent contradiction, that God preserved some for over four hundred years but not others, he ultimately concludes that 'although there was regard for God's great grace in the intact body of blessed Wærburh, yet greater hope for eternal renewal resides in her now decayed body'.[243] Returning to the issue of corpse expiration then, Goscelin addresses its circumstances and meanings more directly. The dissolution of Wærburh's corpse is thus intertwined with a longer story of unrest and displacement for her devotees. Here, decay is shown to juxtapose Wærburh's deserved reward, proving that renewal and resurrection await her and all the faithful in the future.

For Goscelin, and his audiences, the expiration of Wulsin's and Wærburh's corpses could not come at the cost of their life forces. After all, their remains were still hoped to possess miracle-working power. And yet, life forces had evidently become much harder to detect in their bloodless, skeletal, remains. In the case of Wulsin, the continued mediation of this life force seems to have been performed by substituting blood with water; the bones of Wulsin and Juthwara were both washed in the same water, which was said to have become a source of healing on account of their *iunctae uirtutes*, 'combined

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[242] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita S. Werburge*, in *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely*, ed. Rosalind Love, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 11, 48-49, 'cum putaretur ab omnibus more humane conditionis tota caro defluxisse et tantum nuda ossa superesse; inuenta est potius uirgo integerrima quasi in dulci stratu obdormire'.
[243] Ibid., 12, 50-51, 'Magne itaque gratie Dei respectus erat in beate Werburge corpore solido, sed maior spes eterne renouationis restat in iam consumpto'.

powers'.[244] This practice suggests that a life force had indeed remained in their bones, but was accessed by devotees through a fluid. In other instances, the (re)location of a life force following the disintegration of a once undecayed corpse seems to have been isolated or reduced to a single body part.[245] The case of Guthlac of Crowland (d. 714) illustrates this point. Although Felix had reported that Guthlac's corpse was still undecayed a year after his death, in 1136 the Crowland monks discovered a fragmented corpse.[246] When they translated Guthlac's remains, one Crowland monk narrated how 'a monk of great esteem led the way, carrying the head of the man of God in a reliquary embellished with crystals and pearls'.[247] The disintegration of Guthlac's corpse, albeit a far cry from the ideal, intact, body epitomised by Cuthbert, resulted in the prioritisation of his fragmented remains. By leading the procession with Guthlac's head, the Crowland monks honoured this part of his corpse above all others. It is to these fragments, these isolated locations of disconnected life forces, that we now turn.

Fragments

The divisible nature of the life force is evident from the enduring appeal of body parts as their carriers or containers. In discussing the residues of life remaining in corpses, we have encountered the most frequently deployed parts of the body in connection with life forces, namely, heads, hearts, and hands. As we saw in the Anant and Drakelow stories, the porous hearts of the living dead were believed to be especially susceptible to both external and internal movements. Hands, meanwhile, seem to have indicated a continued internal flow of blood, which carried life force to the very extremities of the corpse. Among the various parts of the body, however, the head appears to have been the most frequently deployed fragment to represent or isolate the life force. The following examples represent a sample of fragmented life forces, which reflect the prominence of the head as the locus of life. These stories illustrate the varied ways of interpreting the head and its relationship with the body as a whole. The question of locating life forces leads us to consider the extent to which headless bodies could be said to exhibit life. In its analysis of

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[244] Goscelin, *Vita S. Wlsini*, 21, 84.
[245] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), 271.
[246] Felix, *Vita S. Guthlaci*, 51, 160-161; Tom Licence, 'The Cult of St Guthlac after the Norman Conquest', in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, eds. Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020), 396-398.
[247] *Translatio cum miraculis*, in 'The Twelfth-Century Translation and Miracles of St Guthlac', ed. and trans. Richard Sharpe, in *Guthlac: Crowland's Saint*, eds. Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2020), 7, 522-523, 'magne estimationis monachus preibat, capud uiri Dei intra pixidem cristallis et margaritis distinctam baiulans'.

fragments, this next discussion inevitability continues to explore the theme of wholeness, introduced in our discussion of residues, to investigate the loci and concentrations of life forces within the corpse.

Severed Heads

Our search for residual life forces introduced us to various *sedes animae*, including the heart and the blood. However, the head was also believed to be a potential location for the soul.[248] Among the variant legends of Margaret, or Marina, the virgin martyr of Antioch, there is a revealing conflation of soul and severed head. Tales of Margaret's trials and triumphs at the hand of Olibrius, a Roman prefect under Emperor Diocletian, became increasingly popular in post-Conquest England. Three Old English lives, along with an account in the *Old English Martyrology*, survive as vernacular adaptations of the Latin and Greek accounts.[249] A wide array of variant source texts resulted in contrasting, yet coexisting, accounts of Margaret's life and martyrdom. One detail, among others, stands out as a changing element in these accounts; the variant accounts of Margaret's death disagree as to the shape in which she was received into heaven. For example, one of the Old English lives, the early-twelfth century version found in Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 303 (CCCC), writes that, after Margaret's execution, angels came down and took Margaret's 'sawla' (soul) with them to heaven.[250] In contrast, a ninth-century Latin *Passio*, in Saint-Omer, Bibl. mun., 202 (O), written in France but later in circulation in England, reported that the angels had come down and taken Margaret's *corpus*, that is, her body, into their embrace to ascend into the heavens.[251] These two seemingly contradictory accounts of ascension and assumption diverge on the form in which Margaret entered heaven.

A third variation on this account introduces the head into this discussion. The legends of Margaret agree that she was beheaded for her Christian faith. An eleventh-century Old English version, found in Cotton MS Tiberius A. iii (T), reveals the importance of Margaret's severed head after her martyrdom. According to this T version:

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[248] On locations of the soul in the body, see Esther Cohen, 'The Meaning of the Head in High Medieval Culture', in *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Catrien Santing, Barbara Baert, and Anita Traninger (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 64-69.
[249] On the legend's transmission, see Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis, 'Introduction', in *The Old English Lives of St Margaret* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 7-71.
[250] 'The Old English Life of St Margaret in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 303', ed. and trans. Clayton and Magennis, in *The Old English Lives of St Margaret*, 23, 170-171.
[251] 'Appendix 2: The Latin *Passio S. Margaretae* in Paris, BN, lat. 5574', ed. Clayton and Magennis, in *The Old English Lives of St Margaret*, 23, 216-217; Note that a substantial lacuna at fol. 31v in Paris, BN, lat. 5574 led the editors to use Saint-Omer, Bibl. mun., 202, fols. 19v-20r, for this passage.

> Ða coman twelf englas and genaman hire heafod on hire fædmum and hi sungon and cwædon: 'Ðu halga, þu halga, þu halga, Drihten God, weoroda Wuldorkynincg, fulle syndon heofonas and eorþan þines wuldres'. And þus singende hi hit gesætton on neorxnawonge.
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> Then twelve angels came and took her head in their embrace, and they sang, proclaiming, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, glorious King of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory'. And thus singing they placed it in paradise.[252]

The underlining of 'twelf' for deletion reveals the correcting hand of the second of T's two late eleventh-century revisors. As Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis have argued, both the number of angels and the conveyance of the head reveal the influence of Greek accounts of Margaret's martyrdom, mediated through Latin translations available to this Old English writer.[253] In disseminating this variant, this writer reveals the perceived receptiveness of their audience to this idea that angels had come down to convey the martyr's head into heaven, even if a later revisor had reasons to question the number of angels required to do so. In a similar way, the *Old English Martyrology* also repeated the detail that Margaret's, or Marina's, head had been taken to heaven, where it seems to remain to this day.

> Ond ða ne wæs hire heafad no on eorðan gemeted, ac is wen þæt englas mid him hit læddan to Godes neorxnawonge; se lichoma elles is geseted on Antiochia ceastre.
>
> And then her head was never found on earth, but the angels probably took it with them to God's paradise; apart from that, the body is located in the city of Antioch.[254]

The place of the head in paradise is presented as an expectation or likelihood, *wen*, given its absence in Antioch. This placement certainly elevates the significance of the head, but its relationship with immortality seems obscure. On the one hand, the head could be understood as a substitute for the soul, a conflation of the two concepts, perhaps supported by a belief that the soul resided in the head. On the other hand, the head could

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[252] For unrevised text, see 'Appendix 1: The A-text of Cotton Tiberius A. iii', ed. Clayton and Magennis, in *The Old English Lives of St Margaret*, 23, 190; For revised text, see 'The Old English Life of St Margaret in Cotton Tiberius A. iii (composite text)', ed. and trans. Clayton and Magennis, in *The Old English Lives of St Margaret*, 23, 136-137 (Hereafter, Tiberius A. iii).
[253] 'Acta S. Marinae', ed. Hermann Usener, in *Festschrift zur fünften Säcularfeier der Carl-Ruprechts-Universität zu Heidelberg* (Bonn: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei von Carl Georgi, 1886), 45.
[254] *The Old English Martyrology: Edition, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Christine Rauer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 122, 134-135.

be understood as a disconnected fragment of the corpse, a mark of her violent manner of death, severed from both its vital blood and watchful devotees. Even in the head's absence, the T version reports that sick people were healed when they touched Margaret's headless body.[255] In all this, while the text never explains the movements of Margaret's soul or life force, there are signs that life has both departed and remained, sustaining her paradoxical multilocation in heaven and on earth.

Margaret's head, whilst presented as the most important fragment of her body, remains passive throughout these accounts. It is carried by angels and placed in heaven. The extent to which a severed head possessed an agency or power is more readily apparent in the famous example of King Edmund's head. Like Margaret, Edmund was said to have been beheaded, martyred in Christ's name at the hands of his Danish foes c. 870. Abbo of Fleury, when relating this story in the 980s, described how the king's head had been struck off and then taken into the woods at Hægelisdun by the Danes. For Abbo, this action reflected an attempt to deprive the faithful of their king's intact body.[256] Furthermore, in the wider uses of post mortem decapitation, this attempt to separate head from body also seems to anticipate or deter the restlessness, or even retribution, of this violently killed king.[257] The perceived power of Edmund's wholeness is exemplified by the reactions of his people. Likened to *vespillones*, 'corpse-searchers' or 'grave-robbers', the faithful in Abbo's story set out to search the woods.

Edmund's head, however, appears to have retained a mind of its own. Abbo narrates that 'the head of the holy king, far removed from the body to which it belonged, broke into utterance without assistance from the vocal chords, or aid from the arteries proceeding from the heart'.[258] Abbo's description of the head's ability to speak accentuates the wonder of this event, through its detachment from vocal chords and flowing blood, and highlights the centrality of the miracle to the narrative.[259] To explain the manner of

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[255] Tiberius A. iii, 23, 136-137.
[256] Abbo of Fleury, *Passio S. Eadmundi regis et martyris*, in *Three Lives of English Saints*, ed. Michael Winterbottom (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972), 11; Trans. Francis Hervey, *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi: The Garland of Saint Edmund, King and Martyr* (London: John Murray, 1907).
[257] For suppressing the living dead in Danish contexts by means of decapitating and impaling, see the tale of Asvith and Asmund, Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, in *Saxo Grammaticus: Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes, Vol. 1*, ed. and trans. Karsten Friis-Jensen, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), V, 11, 338-339.
[258] Abbo, *Passio*, 12, 81, 'Quippe caput sancti regis, longius remotum a suo corpore, prorupit in uocem absque fibrarum opitulatione aut arteriarum precordiali munere'.
[259] Mark Faulkner, '"Like a Virgin": the Reheading of St Edmund and Monastic Reform in late-tenth-century England', in *Heads will Roll: decapitation in the medieval and early modern imagination*, eds. Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 44.

the severed head's speech, Abbo writes that 'the chords of the dead man's tongue vibrated within the passages of the jaws'.[260] Edmund's *lingua* and *fauces* possess limited movement, locating the faculty of speech in the head itself. These limited movements also seem to result in a limited form of speech. Abbo reports that Edmund's head called out 'her, her, her' (Here, Here, Here) to guide the search parties to its location. This fragment of Old English speech contributes to Edmund's image as a specifically East Anglian king.[261] And yet, this speech may also reflect expectations about the manner in which the living dead were believed to speak. Edmund's, or rather his head's, repetition of three short, breathy, sounds appears to echo the noises reportedly heard in the fourteenth century by William of Bradeforth. According to the Byland monk, William heard a voice crying out 'how, how, how' on three separate occasions, before encountering what he believed to be a *spiritus* in need of his help.[262] In a similar way, Godric of Finchale had been said to encounter an evil spirit in the likeness of a great, green-skinned, man in the orchard one day, who screeched 'hach, hach, hach' in revulsion at the name of God.[263] These patterns seem to indicate expectations surrounding repetitive and restricted faculties of speech, such that Edmund's head is shown to retain only a fraction of the power that Edmund had in life.

Nevertheless, thanks to its cries, Edmund's head was found, resting between the paws of a wolf, to which we will return in chapter three. Reunited, head and body were interred together in a small chapel. And yet, the reconciliation of this fragmented corpse was still to come. When Edmund's remains were translated, Abbo writes that his corpse was discovered to be *sanum et incolume*, 'sound and whole', as if the head had become reattached to its body, evinced only by a thin red crease around his neck.[264] This claim to wholeness differs from that of Cuthbert, Godric, and Edith, all of whom died peacefully, with their bodies already intact. Rather, the wonderful fusing of head and body in the case of Edmund seems to resemble the example of the Welshman in Walter Map's story about William Laudun, discussed at the end of chapter one. In fact, there are multiple parallels for reattached heads in medieval literature. For instance, the head and body of the Welsh virgin martyr Winefride, or Gwenfrewi, were said to have been rejoined through the intercession of her uncle Beuno. In the 1130s, Winefride's remains were translated from Gwytherin in Wales to Shrewsbury, where Prior Robert composed a *Vita* to narrate the events of her life and death before her arrival at Shrewsbury. Robert's account relates how

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[260] Abbo, *Passio*, 12, 81, 'Palpitabat mortuae linguae plectrum infra meatus faucium'.
[261] Pinner, *The Cult of St Edmund*, 44.
[262] *TMGS*, VIII, 419.
[263] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 135, 446-447; Another spirit says 'mete, mete, mete' at 102, 372-373.
[264] Abbo, *Passio*, 14, 82.

Winefride was resurrected when her uncle prayed over her decapitated corpse, such that Winefride spent many years afterwards in holy orders, bearing only a slender white line around her neck as proof of her decapitation.[265] Likewise, the Crowland monks, perhaps a little disillusioned with the fragmentation of their founder's, Guthlac's, corpse, eagerly told Orderic Vitalis about another whole, incorrupt, corpse in their possession, that of Earl Waltheof.[266] Waltheof had been beheaded on account of his rebellion against King William I in 1075. Orderic reports that, like Edmund, the earl's severed head had been heard to say a fragment of speech, the last line of the Lord's Prayer, at his execution.[267] In further similarity to Edmund, Waltheof's undecayed head and body were reportedly found rejoined on the occasion of his translation under Abbot Ingulf of Crowland.[268] Just as Edmund and Winefride bore lines where head and neck had fused, Orderic also related that a thin red mark remained the only evidence of Waltheof's execution. The discernible patterns across these examples of reattached heads reveal the vital and imaginative power of wholeness, especially when visualised as the return of the head to the body. The fates that await these reconciled bodies vary, including resurrection (Winefride), incorruption (Edmund and Waltheof), and second decapitation (Walter Map's Welshman). And yet, their shared focus upon these reattached heads connects movement, speech, and life with this body part above all others.

Headless Bodies

Thus far, headless bodies have seemed decidedly lifeless. The examples of Edmund and Winefride in particular appear to highlight the helplessness of headless bodies, whose wonderful powers are only revealed after the reattachment of their heads. And yet, the case of Margaret necessitated that some healing, life-giving, force had remained in Antioch with her headless body. The power dynamics between severed head and headless body are more directly addressed in tales of head-carriers, also known as cephalophores. The legendary cephalophoric walks of Juthwara provide illustrative examples of a headless, but still animated, corpse. As mentioned earlier, Juthwara's bones were washed with those of Wulsin, for whose *Vita* Goscelin consulted a *passionalis*, a passional, so that he could construct an account about Wulsin's holy companion. Goscelin narrated:

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[265] Robert of Shrewsbury, *Vita S. Wenefrede*, ed. David Callander, Seintiau, last modified 10 February 2023, <www.welshsaints.ac.uk/theedition/>, 5, 16-17.
[266] Licence, 'The Cult of St Guthlac', 392-393.
[267] Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ælcclesiastica*, in *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, *OMT*, vol. 2 (Oxford: OUP, 1969-1980), IV, 322-323.
[268] Ibid., 346-347.

> ubi quondam ut in eius passionali relatum est decollata a fratre memoratur post caput abscisum trunco corpore cucurrisse et illud utrisque palmulis in collem, unde deciderat, reuexisse.
>
> Once upon a time she was beheaded there by her brother, as is related in the account of her Passion, and after her head had been cut off, her mutilated body is said to have run after it and with both hands to have put it back on to the neck from which it had fallen.[269]

Unlike the examples examined thus far, this *truncus corpus*, 'mutilated body', is said to run and pick up its head. By implication, Juthwara's headless body remains animated, seemingly by a life force that not only moves her limbs, but also enables her to locate her head. Juthwara's reattachment of her own head evidently did not last, given that only her bones were translated from Halstock to Sherborne by Bishop Ælfwold. And yet, this action of self-reattachment reiterates a longing for wholeness in the face of fragmentation.

Another version of Juthwara's story brings a different emphasis to the role of the head-carrier.[270] John of Tynemouth's fourteenth-century legendary preserves a written account of this version, in which Juthwara places her head not onto her neck but onto an altar. It is said that, having been beheaded by her brother, Bana, when she left church, 'the holy virgin, taking her own head into her hands, picked it up off the ground, and carried it with smooth steps into the church from which she had come to the wonder of all'.[271] A headless body once again moves, even though the body is not made whole. Its movement, however, is emphatically harmless; the *inoffenso gradu* (smooth steps) of the head-carrier introduce a calmness that juxtaposes the violence of Juthwara's death. By carrying her head back into the church, Juthwara appears to act as the custodian of her own relic, choosing the location and manner of her veneration.[272] In John's account, this choice is abstracted from Juthwara's resting place since he omits any mention of Halstock and Sherborne. And yet, the potency of this idea, that Juthwara chose her resting place, was not lost on the artists who illuminated the Sherborne Missal around the beginning of the fifteenth century. The miniature (see Figure 1) shows the scenes of her decapitation and

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[269] Goscelin, *Vita S. Wlsini*, 21, 84.
[270] On the West Country legends of Juthwara, Sativola, and Urith, see Powell, '"Once Upon a Time"', 180-182.
[271] *De sancta Iuthwara virgine et martire*, *NLA*, vol. 2, 99, 'virgo sancta caput proprium suis manibus accipiens, de terra leuauit, et in ecclesiam vnde exierat, mirantibus cunctis, inoffenso gradu portauit'.
[272] Scott B. Montgomery, 'Securing the Sacred Head: Cephalophory and Relic Claims', in *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Catrien Santing, Barbara Baert, and Anita Traninger (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 80-82.

her cephalophoric presentation before the church altar. For the Sherborne monks, whose eleventh-century predecessors had removed Juthwara's remains from Halstock, the head-carrier's decision-making power needed to be clearly placed upon the altar to justify their monastery's possession of her relics.

Figure 1. The Martyrdom of Juthwara the Cephalophore, BL, Add MS 74236, p. 489, c.1399-c.1407 © British Library Board.

The animation of Juthwara's headless body thus seems purposeful and reassuring. Juthwara's decapitation creates a head relic that she herself elevates and identifies for devotion. In this way, the head-carrier draws attention to the importance of their head. The total absence of a head, however, could perform an inverse, terrifying, function. A revealing contrast can be drawn here with a headless body encountered by the women of Markyate in the twelfth century. Their prioress, Christina, also known as Theodora, is said to have experienced many visions and encounters. Christina's biographer, a monk of St Albans, recounted how, on one occasion, a demon grew so enraged at Christina's perseverance that he schemed to frighten her by assuming a 'monstrous body' (*monstruosus corpus*).[273] When Christina and her nuns were preparing for Matins, it is said that 'they saw a body without a head, for the devil had lost his head, God, sitting in the cloister near the entrance to the oratory'.[274] At the sight of this headless body, the terrified nuns clung to Christina's garments, hid under benches, and fell to the ground in fear. Afraid but resolute, Christina is then said to have 'thrust out that monstrous phantom' (*fantasticum illud monstrum eiecit*). These monstrous and illusory characteristics resemble those exhibited in other representations of living dead bodies as

[273] *De S. Theodora, virgine, quae et Christina dicitur*, in *The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth Century Recluse*, ed. and trans. C.H. Talbot (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 78, 178-179.
[274] Ibid., 'vident corpus sed sine capite verum enim caput Deum amiserat secus ostium oratorii in claustro sedere'.

demonic likenesses, discussed in chapter one. However, this encounter has a particularly unsettling effect on Christina, who felt *horror plus solito*, that is, more horror than she was accustomed to, for a long time afterwards. The absence of a head is here construed as a reflection of the demon's damned, godless, condition. This interpretation identifies the head with God and stresses the horror of an unruled, rebellious, body. And yet, Christina's biographer has perhaps also downplayed the grotesque aspects of a headless body's appearance. In a society where people witnessed beheadings, of criminals, for instance, the appearance of a headless body was more likely to trigger trauma responses from percipients. The fear and revulsion expressed by the Markyate women indicate the imaginative potential contained within such horrors.

When examining the relationships between heads and headless bodies in medieval literature, it is useful to pay attention to the ways in which heads are reportedly treated. The Sherborne Missal miniature presents Juthwara carrying her own head with reverence, supporting its weight from below, in the manner that may have imitated how head relics were typically carried during processions, as perhaps the head of Guthlac had been carried at Crowland. A different emphasis can be inferred from the treatment of another severed head in medieval literature, that is, the head of the Green Knight of Arthurian legend. The fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* relates how a mysterious Green Knight interrupted the court at Camelot on New Year's Day with a challenge: an exchange of blows.[275] In response, Gawain cut off the Green Knight's head, which then fell to the ground and 'fele hit foyned wyth her fete bere hit forth roled' (bounced back and forth by the boots of the guests).[276] In kicking the Green Knight's head, whether in ignorance or mockery, there is a clear absence of reverence among Arthur's courtiers. Their reaction contributes to the overarching impression that these members of court do not understand the risk and responsibility at stake in this challenge.[277] Like the heads of Edmund and Waltheof, the Green Knight's head, held aloft by his headless body, retains powers of thought and speech, addressing the court and reminding Gawain of his promise.

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[275] Sheri Ann Strite, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: To Behead or Not to Behead – That is a Question', *Philological Quarterly* 70:1 (1991), 9.
[276] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Complete works of the Pearl poet*, trans. Casey Finch and eds. Malcolm Andrew, Ronald Waldron, and Clifford Peterson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 228-229, 428.
[277] J.J. Anderson, 'The Three Judgments and the Ethos of Chivalry in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *The Chaucer Review* 24:4 (1990), 341-344.

Cursed Fragments

Held out to Arthur's court, the Green Knight's head appears to have been a portent or warning, a reminder of Gawain's unnecessary use of force to chop off the head rather than deliver the promised 'stroke'.[278] The *Gawain*-poet reveals towards the end of the text that the severed head, like the headless body in the Markyate story, had an explicitly female target audience, namely, Queen Guinevere.[279] Unlike Christina, however, Guinevere's reaction goes unnoticed. In fact, missed cues and flawed decisions surround this severed head, reinforcing the poet's construction of a tragic court, ignorant of Camelot's future downfall. A portentous reading of the Green Knight's head links it to examples of cursed heads that brought death or ruin to those who looked upon them.[280]

Cursed body parts can be found elsewhere, such as in the legend of the cursed carolers. Goscelin incorporated a version of this legend, derived from one of the carolers, Theoderic. According to Goscelin, Theoderic and his companions had gathered to sing and dance outside the church at Colbek, or Kölbigk, where they were joined by Ava, the daughter of Rodbert, the parish priest. Ava's father is said to have commanded them to stop, but his order became a curse that forced them to dance for a whole year. Thus, engaged in what Theoderic describes as a *rotatis*, 'turned about', movement, the carolers seem to perform circling movements similar to those of the dancing women seen in chapter one.[281] However, unlike Walter Map's tales of women removed from such companies, Azonis, Ava's brother, is unable to remove his sister from the dance. Instead, when he seizes her arm, Goscelin writes that 'her whole arm went with him, the whole limb came away in his hand as he pulled it, while she with the rest of her body remained inseparable from her companions' dance'.[282] The swift severance of Ava's arm seems to present her as a disintegrating body, susceptible to fragmentation. And yet, the dancing movements that the rest of her body performs subvert ideas about wholeness and animation, which are reinforced by the fact that 'not a drop of blood dripped from the wrenched-off arm'.[283] In contrast to blood-spurting corpses, the seemingly still-living body

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[278] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Complete works of the Pearl poet*, 222-223, 287.
[279] Ibid., 318-319, 2459-2462.
[280] For the Gorgon portent born from a grave, see Walter, *De nugis*, IV, 12, 366-367.
[281] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 16, 290; On bodily movement in the carole dance, see Rebecca Straple-Sovers, 'Kinesic analysis: A theoretical approach to reading bodily movement in literature', in *The Cursed Carolers in Context*, eds. Lynneth Miller Renberg and Bradley Phillis (London: Routledge, 2021), 21-38.
[282] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 16, 289, 'totum brachium sequutum est, suaque compage auulsum in manum trahentis ultro recessit, atque illa cum reliquo corpore sociali choro inseparabilis adhesit'.
[283] Ibid., 'exausto brachio nulla unquam gutta sanguinis effluxit'.

of Ava exhibits no blood flow. This absence of blood from a wounded, but still moving, body seems to obscure Ava's living dead state during this cursed dance.

Ava's wretchedness is further revealed when Rodbert tries to bury her severed arm. On the day after it was buried, Ava's arm is said to have been discovered on the ground, seemingly expelled from its burial place. This attempted and rejected burial is repeated three times, as if the earth could not contain the cursed limb. Ava's condition remains ambiguous until Christmas Eve, a year later, when the dancing company were thrown to the floor of the church and all but Ava awoke. The cursed dance, the bloodless wound, and the ejected arm complicate the picture of Ava's death. On the one hand, Ava may be said to have started exhibiting characteristics of death from the moment she joined the wretched dance, as if she died in committing this sin. On the other hand, Ava's body and arm can be said to reject stillness and rest throughout the story, as if some vital power sustained their movements. Moreover, Ava's arm continues to act as an ambiguous sign of life and death after the curse is lifted. Having failed to bury his daughter's arm, Rodbert is said to have fearfully hidden the severed limb in the church. After Rodbert's death, Goscelin reports that Henry II, Holy Roman Emperor, ordered this *insepelibilis bracchium*, that is, this burial-defying arm, 'to be hung up in the church, transformed by gold and silver into a demonstration of the mighty works of God'.[284] This beautiful display and elevation of Ava's arm stylises her limb in the likeness of an arm relic.[285] In this way, Ava's arm is given a more preeminent position than her head, as the arm represented both the sin and the wonder for which she became known.

Images of flowing blood, severed heads, and unusual limbs have recurred throughout this discussion of residual and fragmented life forces. Before discussing how these life forces extended out from the body, it is useful to see how one story brought these images together. As mentioned in chapter one, *Beowulf* introduces a dangerous nocturnal agent called Grendel as the enemy of Heorot. Grendel's attacks represent a violation of the buildings, laws, and bodies of Heorot. On one occasion, Grendel is said to have grabbed a sleeping man and 'blod edrum dranc' (drank the arterial blood), before completely devouring his body.[286] This grotesque consumption of blood, as well as flesh and bone, seems to connect Grendel with the Anant *sanguisuga*, as if Grendel is stealing

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[284] Ibid., 290-291, 'auro argentoque fabricatum ad exemplum Dei magnalium in eclesia iussit dependere'.
[285] For the display of King Oswald's right arm in the church at Peterborough, see Reginald of Durham, *Vita S. Oswaldi regis et martyris*, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia: Historiae Ecclesiae Dunhelmensis*, ed. Thomas Arnold, *RS* 75, repr. (New York: CUP, 2012), 48, 374-375.
[286] *Beowulf*, 11, 134-135, 742b.

blood from others that fills and strengthens him. As in the Anant story, this blood-drinking assailant is also dispatched by the fragmentation of his body. In the subsequent duel with Grendel, Beowulf takes hold of Grendel's arm and tears it from his body. The blow is fatal for Grendel, who retreats to the lake, to which we will return in chapter five. Like Ava, the severed arm of Grendel is said to have been displayed, visible to noble companions who 'ofer heanne hrof hand sceawedon' (observed the hand over the high roof).[287] This hand evidently serves as a trophy, but also represents Grendel's strength, his weapon even, and thus acts as the most relevant fragment of his body for his victor to keep. Unlike Ava, however, Grendel's arm is 'under heolfre' (covered in blood), revealing a blood-filled body and perhaps the results of his blood-drinking habits.[288]

Retribution serves as a crucial motivator in *Beowulf*. Just as Beowulf had exacted vengeance for his consumed companion, Grendel's mother retaliated against the possession and display of her son's arm at Heorot. Grendel's mother is said to have selected a victim from Heorot's company, Hrothgar's counsellor, Æschere, and displayed his severed head on a cliff for Hrothgar and his companions to find.[289] In his second fighting episode, Beowulf sets out to rid Heorot of its assailants and enters their underwater hall, where the mother awaits and Grendel lies wounded, 'aldorleasne' (lifeless), from his fight with Beowulf.[290] The battle that follows between Beowulf and Grendel's mother continues to follow the apparent terms of their blood-feud through the exchange of body parts; Beowulf emerges victorious from the hall with Grendel's severed head. This decapitation of Grendel's lifeless body may be said to mirror those instances of postmortem fragmentation at Anant and Drakelow.

Blood retains a prominent place in each of Beowulf's encounters with Grendel and his mother. In the second fight, with Grendel's mother, Beowulf witnesses the incredible, destructive, power in their blood. The poem presents its hero as initially disadvantaged in the fight since his own sword was useless against Grendel's mother. However, a giant sword becomes his weapon, which he musters all his strength to wield and sever the heads of both mother and son. Having beheaded them, Beowulf saw that 'sweord ær gemealt' (the sword had melted).[291] The poet marvels that 'wæs þæt blod to þæs hat, ættren ellor-gæst se þær inne swealt' (the blood was that hot, the alien spirit that poisonous which

[287] Ibid., 14, 150-151, 983.
[288] Ibid., 19, 172-173, 1302b.
[289] Ibid., 21, 178-179; James Paz, 'Æschere's Head, Grendel's Mother, and the Sword That Isn't a Sword: Unreadable Things in *Beowulf*', *Exemplaria* 25:3 (2013), 231-251.
[290] *Beowulf*, 23, 190-191, 1587a.
[291] Ibid., 192-193, 1615b.

died therein).[292] *Beowulf* thus reveals that blood was thought to have both a transformative quality, in that the blood transforms the sword into just a hilt, as well as a receptive quality, in that the blood carries some kind of poison or cursed power around the bodies of these nocturnal assailants. Where an absence of blood reinforced the deadness of Ava, its efflorescence intensifies the potent vitality of this mother and son.

Locations

This study of remains has revealed life forces located in the heads, hearts, hands and above all the blood of living dead corpses. In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to investigate how these life forces were thought to extend out from the body. The bleeding body of Grendel draws attention to this relationship between bodies and locations. For instance, after his fight with Beowulf, Grendel is said to have dragged himself back to his underwater home, 'ðær wæs on blode brim weallende' (there the water boiled with blood).[293] The lake becomes stained, heated even, by the blood gushing from Grendel's wound. In a similar way, the story of Edith and Eadwulf indicated the vibrancy with which blood visualised an outer flow of life forces that temporarily seeped into clothing and stained the church floor. This idea that spaces may receive and hold life-carrying forces, becoming imbued with their vital powers, is discussed further here. In doing so, this section examines the relationship between life forces and the locations in which they were thought to remain. These spatially located encounters with the living dead draw together the themes of bodily appearance and life force that have recurred throughout chapters one and two. As such, the following discussion analyses the grounds upon which the living dead were believed to remain and the circumstances in which they were encountered.

Sites of Conflict

The abbey of St Martin at Battle exemplifies the power of investing a location with blood. Built on the site of the Battle of Hastings by William the Conqueror, the abbey was both symbolically and spatially founded upon bloodshed. The monastic buildings were not the only reminder of this bloodshed. William of Newburgh reported that the spot within the monastery at which there had been the most bloodshed 'sweats real and seemingly fresh blood whenever there is a slight shower of rain'.[294] For William, the blood that is

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[292] Ibid., 1616b-1617.
[293] Ibid., 13, 142-143, 847.
[294] William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, in *The History of English Affairs: Book 1*, ed. and trans. Peter Walsh and Michael Kennedy (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988), I, 1, 40-41, 'si forte modico imbre maduerit, verum sanguinem et quasi recentem exsudat'.

reportedly seen at Battle is as real and fresh, *verum et quasi recentem*, as it had been at the Battle of Hastings over a hundred years previously. The enduring freshness of this blood seems to stress the inefficacy of William the Conqueror's penance for neither monastic foundation nor rain can suppress the reappearance of this bloodshed. William of Newburgh also hints at the lives lost in the traces of this blood; he writes that 'the voice of all that Christian blood is still crying out to God from the earth, which opened its mouth and received that blood at the hands of brother-Christians'.[295] In connecting blood with voice, *vox*, William appeals to the humanity of those slain at Battle, those who have been received into the earth but by their blood still speak to the living.

Blood spilled upon a battlefield could give the site great power. For instance, Bede recounts miracles that were said to have occurred at the site of the Battle of Maserfelth, where King Oswald of Northumbria was killed in battle against King Penda of Merica c. 642. One of these miracle stories describes how a single post wonderfully remained untouched when a house burned down. It is said that a bag of soil taken from Maserfelth hung on this post, which survived the fire 'because the soil had been taken from that very place where Oswald's blood had been spilt'.[296] The life forces infused in the blood thus appears to have been extended to the soil and then the post, as if contact with the blood has transmitted its life-carrying and life-sustaining power. This belief was so widely shared, so Bede claims, that a hole the depth of a man's height was gradually made at Maserfelth as people continuously took soil from the spot where Oswald was thought to have been slain.[297]

While the sites of Battle and Maserfelth indicate the potent effusions of vitally infused blood, these spatially imbued life forces could also to give rise to appearances of living dead bodies. In the early eighth century, an anonymous Whitby author related the events of the Battle of Hatfield Chase c. 633, including the death of King Edwin of Northumbria and the translation of his remains to the author's monastery. According to this Whitby author, the priest who had recovered the king's remains, a man called Trimma, lived for a time near the battlefield. At Hatfield Chase, Trimma is said to have 'frequently seen the spirits of four of the slain, who were undoubtedly baptized people, coming in splendid array to visit their own bodies'.[298] The site of the slain corpses is thus

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[295] Ibid., 'adhuc vox tanti sanguinis Christiani clamet ad Deum de terra, quae aperuit os suum et suscepit eundem sanguinem de manibus fratrum, id est Christianorum'.
[296] *HE*, III, 10, 244-245, 'quia de illo loco adsumtus erat puluis, ubi regis Osualdi sanguis fuerat effusus'.
[297] Ibid., III, 9, 242-243.
[298] *Liber beati et laudabilis viri Gregorii pape urbis Rome de vita atque eius virtutibus*, in *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave

connected to the appearance of these beautiful *spiritus*. And yet, these *spiritus* do not enter or reanimate their bodies. The idea that these *spiritus* have come solely to visit their own bodies, *sua corpora visitasse*, may represent an outsider's view of the moment when soul and body met after death, a meeting that was dramatically reenacted in the Old English *Soul and Body* poems.[299] Although this narrative does not mention *animae* or explain why these *spiritus* wanted to visit their *corpora*, its localized encounter indicates that there were residual ties justifying or sustaining intersections between appearances and remains.

Life forces bound to these locations seem to correspond with sites of violence and trauma. After all, battlefields are, by definition, sites of conflict. In a similar way, life forces seem to be tied more broadly to other kinds of conflict in medieval society. For example, the stories surrounding a thirteenth-century land dispute in Lindsey reveal the binding forces in play during localised conflicts. *The Chronicle of Lanercost* describes how a priory, called Marchby, had fraudulently bribed twelve jurors to pass a claim to land in their favour in 1289. While the monks of Marchby priory ploughed their claimed land illegally, however, their bribed jurors were soon punished. The chronicle-writer relates how the twelve jurors died, one by one, and each was rewarded with a cruel fate.

> Nam apparuit postea fere per duos annos in eodem rure carruca ignea, candens ut æs calidum, stimulatorem habens teterrimum spiritum, et mortuos eo ordine ibi subjugatos agitabat ad tractum quo viventes excitaverat ad dolum.
>
> For about two years afterwards there appeared in that country a fiery plough, glowing like hot brass, having a most foul fiend as driver, who drove the dead men, harnessed to the ground where he had incited them to guile when living.[300]

In this way, the jurors appear after their deaths in the roles, but not explicitly the shapes, of oxen, revealing their culpability in the illegal ploughing of that land. The chronicle-writer reinforces the significance of their guilt by adding that this plough always appeared at the hour of noon, that is, the time of day when litigations were brought before judges. As well as temporally bound to their crime, however, the jurors are also spatially bound to the very tract of land, *ad tractum*, that was involved in their case. As such, the

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(Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 19, 104-105, 'crebro se iam vidisse spiritus interfectorum iiii, per nimirum baptizatorum, splendide venientes sua corpora visitasse'.

[299] On the body's silence, see Davies, *Imagining the Soul*, 70-72.

[300] *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 125-126.

determining factor for these appearances of the living dead is the place embroiled in their crimes, having condemned themselves to death through their sins.

The chronicle-writer seems to have felt compelled to include this story in his work on account of its manifold witnesses. In fact, the living dead jurors of Lindsey seem to have become something of a local attraction; 'those coming to behold the spectacle were warned to be careful for their safety; nor did they know for whom were reserved those yokes which they perceived to be empty'.[301] Repeating, temporally and spatially bound, appearances seem to have enabled an ever-increasing audience to witness this event. The mention of empty yokes, awaiting their not-yet-dead owners, however, also presents an opportunity to read this story in the context of another widely attested spectacle, namely, the wild hunt. This concept of a wandering living dead company appeared in many local variations.[302] For instance, Orderic Vitalis provided an extensive account of Walchelin the priest's encounter with such a company in Bonneval in the diocese of Lisieux. Among the Bonneval riders, many of whom Walchelin recognises as those who had recently died, he is also said to have seen horses and mules belonging to those who were still alive.[303] Like the empty yokes awaiting the remaining jurors, these appointed places in eternal companies represent promises, or threats, in accordance with their sins.

While the torments of the jurors reveal their transgression, the message that their appearances are meant to convey is oddly delayed in the story. The turning point in the narrative comes two years after the first appearance of the plough, when Alan of Hotoft, the prior's advocate in the dispute, and thus the man most responsible for the crime, died. Soon afterwards, Alan is said to have been driving the plough, silently displacing the *teterrimum spiritus* as the plough driver, who leads the jurors in their suffering just as he led them into sin. It is Alan who first addresses the audience that has gathered to watch them; he explains that their suffering will only end when the verdict they passed is revoked. Arguably, this more didactic, cautionary, message comes too late. Although Alan implores his witnesses to ensure that their crime is undone, the story ends with no resolution. The jurors are never said to be freed or helped by their avid audience. As a result, the jurors seem doomed to forever reap what they had sowed.

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[301] Ibid., 'Alloquebatur vero advenientes ad spectaculum ut sibi præcaverent; et quæ juga, cum cernerent vacua, quibus reservarentur innotescebant'.
[302] Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, 215-220.
[303] Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ælcclesiastica*, vol. 4, VIII, 17, 240-241.

Procession Routes

Another wandering company, sharing elements of the wild hunt tradition, is said to have been witnessed as a procession crossing a crossroads. This company appears in William of Malmesbury's account of the young Roman man who finds himself betrothed to a statue of Venus.[304] In William's version of the story, the ring-betrothal is undone when the young man, following the advice of a priest called Palumbus, seeks out a nocturnal procession at a crossroads (*quadrivium*). The priest warns the young man that 'shapes will pass by of people of either sex, of every age and every degree and every class; some on horseback, some on foot'.[305] Everything happens as Palumbus describes. The implication seems to be that the priest has seen this procession before, and thus knows the time, place, and manner of their appearances. Like the jurors of Lindsey, these 'human shapes', *figurae hominum*, are tied to a specific place.

However, the reason for this procession's appearance at this specific crossroads is left unexplained by William. This element in the story certainly seems to reflect an expectation that crossroads were an appropriate or even a likely place to encounter the living dead. A contributing factor to this expectation may have been the use of crossroads as a place of burial for excluded corpses.[306] The Drakelow story could be said to affirm this practice since the locals are said to have taken the hearts of the Stapenhill corpses to *Dodecrossefora* before burning them. *Dodecrosse*, potentially Horninglow Cross at the junction of Rolleston, Horninglow, and Stretton, may represent another crossing that served as a safe place to disposing of the fugitives' remains.[307] Further evidence of the crossroads as both burial place and site of living dead appearances can be found in the Old English homilies of Ælfric. When describing the contemporary customs of *wiccan*, sorcerers or witches, around the turn of the millennium, Ælfric observed that:

> Gyt farað wiccan to wega gelæton, and to hæþenum byrgelsum mid heora gedwimore, and clipiað to ðam deofle, and he cymð hym to on þæs mannes gelicnysse þe þær lið bebyrged, swylce he of deaðe arise; ac heo ne mæg þæt don, þæt se deada arise þurh hyre drycræft.[308]

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[304] On the variants of this legend, see Paull Franklin Baum, 'The Young Man Betrothed to a Statue', *PMLA* 34 (1919), 538-539.
[305] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 205, 382-383, 'Transient ibi figurae hominum utriusque sexus, omnis aetatis, omnis gradus, omnis postremo conditionis; quidam equites, quidam pedites'.
[306] Blair, 'The Dangerous Dead', 552-553.
[307] Ibid., 558.
[308] Ælfric, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection, Vol. 2*, ed. John Pope, *EETS*, 2 vols. *OS* 259-260 (London: OUP, 1967-1968), 29, 796, 118-123.

> Witches still go to crossroads and heathen burials with their delusive magic; and call to the devil; and he comes to them in the likeness of the man who is buried there, as if he arise from death; but she cannot bring it about that the dead arise through her magic.[309]

By grouping together *wega gelæton* and *hæþenum byrgelsum*, Ælfric suggests that the remains buried at either place were known to be linked to appearances of living dead bodies. While Ælfric is careful to deny the possibility of necromancy, he accepts that the likeness chosen by the devil is that of the man 'þe þær lið bebyrged' (who is buried there). As we saw in chapter one, the distinction between demonic likenesses and demonic possession could be difficult to draw when confronted with a living dead body, especially if the appearance is located the site of its burial. In light of the potent ties between remains and appearances, crossroad burials may have served as a useful strategy to bind potentially malign bodies at a safe distance from local communities.[310]

Having examined locations characterised by conflict and exclusion, it is worth turning to the more peaceful, but no less busy, locations tied to the living dead. The churchyard and the crypt were the more common, and more desirable, resting places for human remains. These sites were intimately involved in negotiations of inclusion and exclusion, exemplified by the example of Ava's severed arm, spat out from the Colbek churchyard. Those who were received into these locations were understood to have been received into a community and processions served as one of the most vivid expressions of community. The nocturnal processions seen at the church of Evesham offer representative examples of these spatially bound living dead communities. Two priors of Evesham, Dominic and Thomas, contributed to our surviving account of these processions. Dominic included the accounts in his twelfth-century *Vita et Miracula S. Ecgwini* before Thomas of Marlborough, sometime between 1218 and 1229, abbreviated the stories for his *Historia abbatiae de Evesham*. The processions were reportedly seen by a monk of Coventry called Sperckulf, who often visited Evesham. It was on the night of the festival of Evesham's founder, Bishop Ecgwine of Worcester (d. 717), that Sperckulf first saw a procession.

Sperckulf was sat alone in the crypt, reciting psalms, when the doors to the crypt suddenly shut, a heavenly light filled the place, and he 'saw a mighty procession of holy

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[309] Alexandra Sanmark, 'Living On: Ancestors and the Soul', in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, eds. Alex Sanmark, Sarah Semple, and Martin Carver (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 173.
[310] Gordon, 'Domestic Magic', 79-80.

spirits'.[311] These *sanctorum spiritus* were dressed in white and included boys, youths, and white-haired elders, followed by a *persona*, or person, dressed in episcopal robes, who performed the office of Matins. Like the company at the crossroads, the living dead at Evesham appear in the form of a nocturnal procession.[312] This procession, however, performs a liturgical role, contributing to the devotions shared by the Evesham community. The setting of this encounter seems to suggest a connection between appearances in the crypt and the remains interred therein.[313] And yet, such processions were not confined to the crypt. Sperckulf is said to have encountered another procession in the church at Evesham, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. As in the previous story, the doors are the first indication of the procession's arrival. While the doors to the crypt are said to have shut, closing Sperckulf in, on this second occasion the doors to the church open of their own accord, before a procession advances towards him. The leaders of this procession are identified as Bishop Ecgwine and the Virgin Mary and, like the previous encounter, their appearance fulfils a liturgical function. Sperckulf watches the bishop perform Mass but is then struck with uncertainty. Thomas gives Sperckulf an inner monologue, which presents the monk's interrogation of what he sees before him:

> Quid est istud uidere? Num sensum meum perdidi? Putasne istius ecclesie monachi hie suum officium peragunt? Set hie neminem recognosco ex illis. An spiritus sunt uel corpora que uideo? Nonne hie quidam assunt, quos diu ex hac luce subtractos intelligo.
>
> What is this I am seeing? Surely I have not lost my senses? Are the monks of this church carrying out their duties here, do you think? But I do not recognize any of them here. Are they spirits or bodies that I see? Surely, there are some of these here whom I know departed this life long ago?[314]

The questions racing through Sperckulf's mind initially suggest that this procession is almost indistinguishable from those performed by the Evesham monks in the course of their duties.[315] As Sperckulf begins to recognise some among them whom he knows to have died, however, he voices a familiar question that permeates the stories encountered

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[311] Thomas of Marlborough, *Historia abbatiae de Evesham*, in *Thomas of Marlborough: History of the Abbey of Evesham*, eds. and trans. Jane Sayers and Leslie Watkiss, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), II, 84, 96-97, 'ecce conspicit processionem quam maximam sanctorum spirituum'.
[312] On elect and damned processions, see Schmitt, *Les revenants*, 130-131; Schmitt, *Ghosts*, 107-108.
[313] For a living dead sub-prior in the crypt at Holy Trinity, London, see Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 204, 260-263.
[314] Thomas, *Historia abbatiae*, II, 85, 98-101.
[315] For another monastic nocturnal procession, see Ædiluulf, *De abbatibus*, ed. Alistair Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 21, 662-691.

across chapters one and two: *An spiritus sunt uel corpora que uideo?* Given that Sperckulf knows some of the members of this procession, and perhaps knows that they are buried in their churchyard at Evesham, his question addresses the uncertainties raised by conflating living dead appearances and burial places.

Transcendent Spaces

In recognising the Evesham monks in the nocturnal procession, Sperckulf seems to see an overlap of church and heaven, a blurring of living and dead congregations. The church space thus seems to transcend time in its refraction of a timeless, eternal, community. The uncanniness of such time-transcending encounters within churches is exemplified by a story about Earl Leofric of Mercia (d. 1057), related among the late-eleventh-century Old English narratives known collectively as the *Visio Leofrici*. The anonymous author tells us that Leofric found himself locked out of the church at Christ Church, Canterbury, leading him to say his customary prayers outside the church door. As Leofric prayed, however, the church door suddenly opened and, upon entering the church, he 'saw very clearly that he himself stood in the middle of the floor, clothed with mass-[robes], with his arms stretched out, and he wore a green chasuble which was shining brightly, and he wondered very much at that'.[316] The church space is thus shown to hold an image of Leofric himself, an impression reflecting the intensity of his devotion. Leofric's encounter with himself is both a familiar and altered appearance; his appearance is recognisable but transformed through the dress of a mass-priest, a position that Leofric never held.[317] Unlike the battlefields and crossroads discussed earlier, such appearances in transcendent church spaces are not determined by manners of death, but rather by ways of life, tying prayers and devotions to sacred spaces.

In a similar way, chapels and oratories also received and maintained appearances of the living dead based on their habitual devotions. The chapel at Throckenholt, for instance, is said to have revealed the perpetual prayers of its twelfth-century hermit, Godric.[318] In Godric's *Vita*, probably written by Thurstan Dod, the hermit was seen in his

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[316] *Visio Leofrici*, in 'The Vision of Leofric: Manuscript, Text and Context', ed. and trans. Peter Stokes, *Review of English Studies* 63:261 (2012), 549, 'Ða geseah he full gewisslice þæt he stod on middan \þære/ flore aþenedum earmum mid mæsse gescrydd 7 hæfde grene mæssehacelan on him beorhte scinende, 7 he þæs swyðe wundrode'.

[317] For another identical body, or doppelgänger, see Walter, *De nugis*, II, 14, 160-163.

[318] For similar tales of living dead orants, see *Liber Eliensis*, III, 43, 282-283; Folcard of Saint-Bertin, *Vita S. Johannis, episcopi Eboracensis*, in *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. James Raine, *RS* 71 (London: Longman, 1886), I, 11, 257-258; Trans. Susan Wilson, *The Life and After-Life of St John of Beverley: The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 11, 154-155.

oratory by the writer one night. Thurstan Dod narrates how he first 'saw beneath the chapel an intense light which filled or illuminated the whole cemetery with its splendour'.[319] Like the Evesham stories, light floods this site of interred remains, introducing an element into this nocturnal setting, one that will be discussed further in chapter five. When Thurstan peers through a hole into the oratory, he reportedly saw a white-haired old man praying before the altar. At this point, Thurstan 'realised that although Brother Godric had entered the way of all flesh he would not have deserted that place in death where in life he had suffered so much for Christ'.[320] Godric is thus understood to remain in prayer in his oratory even after his death. In contrast to ploughing jurors and wandering companies, the hermit seems static, fixed in his orant position. Thurstan seems to imply that while this appearance seemed temporary to him, the presence that it revealed transcends that moment. By his 'wakeful eyes' (*oculi vigilantes*), Thurstan has been able to glimpse Godric's constant presence. This realisation reveals how life forces can be understood not just as traceable life-givers and divisible animators, but also as presences, powers that remain, binding the living dead to their haunts and habits.

Even when the living dead are located, however, there remains an unsettling question of how to respond to their presence. The spatially bound appearances assembled in this discussion all agree on one appropriate response, that is, to watch. From the crowds that gathered to see the Lindsey jurors to Thurstan stood agape behind the door at Throckenholt, the witnesses to these appearances are spectators. The locations of the living dead appear to become sites for silent reverence. In fact, the priest Palumbus explicitly warned the young Roman man to not say a word to anyone in the wandering company.[321] This silence conceals the concerning implications of life forces that extend beyond remains and appearances. Contact warranted caution. A Christmas encounter with Cuthbert, whose perfect body opened our discussion of remains, illustrates the uncertainties that such contact could bring. Cuthbert's appearance to the anchorite Bartholomew of Farne was recounted by Geoffrey of Coldingham in the early thirteenth century. Geoffrey reports many occasions when Bartholomew saw, just as Thurstan had done at Throckenholt, that the previous incumbent of his oratory on Farne was ever-present. It is said that one Christmas Day Bartholomew entered the oratory to find all the

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[319] *Vita et miracula Godrici Heremite de Trokeholt*, ed. and trans. Tom Licence, in 'The Life and Miracles of Godric of Throckenholt', *AB* 124 (2006), 24, 41, 'uidit infra capellam ingentem lucem et totum cimiterium ex hoc splendore irradiasse uel illuminatum fuisse'.
[320] Ibid., 'cognouit quod frater Godricus, si iam uiam uniuerse carnis fuisset ingressus, tum locum suum in quo tot pro Christo sustinuit supplicia dum adhuc uiueret defunctus non desereret'.
[321] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 205, 382-383.

candles lit and a priest, whom Bartholomew believed to be Cuthbert, stood before the altar. As in the Evesham processions, time seems to collapse in this episode as both former and current hermit celebrate the office of the Mass together.

Geoffrey tells us that Bartholomew had related the details of this Christmas Mass to one brother William, who in turn shared the story with this author. However, when first hearing Bartholomew's account, William supposedly raised an unsettling question that Bartholomew could not bring himself to answer. Bartholomew is 'asked whether he had also given him the kiss of peace during the observances of the sacred celebration'.[322] Bartholomew's silence is telling; Geoffrey writes that Bartholomew 'did not wish to confess it' (*quod licet confiteri noluerit*), but no doubt 'showed it' (*exhibuerit*) in his service to others. William's question betrays his interest, and perhaps his concern, about the contact that Bartholomew shared with this priest. Faced with this question, Bartholomew may have also been reminded of the fact that he had never asked this priest who he was for he had been so confident that it was Cuthbert. Bartholomew's silence could be read as his way of controlling access to knowledge about the living dead, granted to him on account of his religious life. And yet, William's unanswered question haunts this narrative with the uneasy thought of what might be at stake when lips touched.[323] This chapter has uncovered myriad ways in which bodies, like locations, were thought to be porous, receiving and releasing seen and unseen forces. While the priest's appearance had seemed spatially bound, the lingering life forces that bound him there were still moving, still emanating from his appearance. In touching lips, therefore, William may have feared that Bartholomew had risked receiving an unknown agent into his own body.

This reading of the kiss as an entry point for life forces corresponds with the idea, also illustrated in Geoffrey's *Vita*, that the mouth was their exit point. Geoffrey provides an extensive narrative account of the days leading up to Bartholomew's death, when the anchorite suffered from a burst internal abscess and a haemorrhage. Monks from Lindisfarne and from Coldingham attended to Bartholomew during this time. While they sat with him, they are said to have heard 'his heart burst with a sound'.[324] The verb *crepo*, 'burst' or 'crack', is also used by Geoffrey of Burton to describe the cracking noise made by

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[322] Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomæi Farnensis*, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia: Historiae Ecclesiae Dunhelmensis*, ed. Thomas Arnold, *RS* 75, repr. (New York, NY: CUP, 2012), 26, 316-317, 'inquisitus est ab eo utrum inter sacræ celebrationis obsequia osculum quoque pacis ei dederit'.

[323] For refusal to kiss the likeness of a deceased person, see *Miracula S. Margarite Scotorum regine*, in *The Miracles of St Æbba of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 13, 100-103.

[324] Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 31, 321-322, 'cor ejus cum sonitu crepuit'.

the burning hearts of the Drakelow fugitives.[325] As in the Drakelow story, this cracking sound heralds the release of a *spiritus*, but in Bartholomew's case it is no evil spirit. The monks who heard this cracking sound, 'when very much blood flowed from his mouth, thought that with the same flow his spirit also went out'.[326] Together, blood and *spiritus* are thought to have exited Bartholomew's body via his mouth. This movement of a *spiritus* through an outflow of blood reiterates the life-carrying properties of blood, reiterated in so many of the examples examined in this chapter. And yet, the idea that Bartholomew's *spiritus* had departed seems to contradict his subsequent behaviour. After his haemorrhage, Bartholomew is said to have sat up, stood up, and spoken to the monks 'as if he had a whole heart'.[327] The consequences of Bartholomew's blood loss and the *spiritus* that left with it are thus obscured by an emphasis on his wholeness, perhaps modelled on that of Cuthbert. In this way, the possibility that life forces remain in Bartholomew's body and thus his oratory is ultimately left open.

This chapter has uncovered a range of ways in which the living dead were said to remain. The concept of life force has helped to conceptualise this endurance of life as it permeated anatomical and spatial locations. Blood has emerged as a crucial image for the detection and dissemination of these life forces through corpses, body parts, and places. The concentration of life force in certain body parts, namely, heads, hearts, and hands, has also revealed their perceived susceptibility to animating and life-sustaining agents as well as their suitability to symbolizing certain living dead persons. Throughout this chapter, the themes of wholeness and fragmentation have operated both in tension and in tandem. The potency of life forces perhaps resides in such paradoxes for these life forces seem to be both extendable and retractable, detachable and attachable, transferable and locatable. The lingering life forces studied in this chapter testify to the continued presences of the living dead in their once-living bodies and their known locations. These continuities, however, were related to deep felt anxieties about the changes that occurred after death. Signs that even holy corpses could not resist decay forever and that lingering presences were not meant to be spoken to suggest that the living dead who had remained had still

[325] Geoffrey, *Vita S. Moduenne*, 47, 196-197.
[326] Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 31, 321-322, 'Cumque per os ejus sanguis plurimus proflueret, putabant quod cum eodem fluxu spiritus quoque ejus exiret'.
[327] Ibid., 'quasi cor integrum haberet'.

transformed. To understand the changes in the living dead, it is time to turn our attention away from living dead bodies and towards the varieties of other forms and shapes.

Chapter 3: Animals

Among the forms and shapes of the living dead, animals served as some of their most common manifestations. The zoomorphic imagery deployed in relation to the living dead deserves more detailed study to understand medieval interpretations of and relationships with animals. Mentions of animals in our case studies thus far have already shown that these zoomorphic images operated on multiple levels. As we saw in chapter one, the shapes of animals could be just some of the likenesses assumed by demons, like the bodies, bears, and dogs reported at Drakelow. In this case, the shapeshifting power eventually revealed an evil spirit in the form of a crow, flying from their burning hearts. In contrast, the living dead husband of Buckinghamshire was said to not assume the shape of animals but cause wild movements among them, as if they reacted to this unseen nuisance in the byre. Finally, the use of animal skins to sew the bodies of Leofstan and the Berkeley witch seems to suggest a warding potential. To understand the significance of these animal shapes, animal behaviours, and animal powers, this chapter concentrates on the deployment of animals in stories about the living dead. Animal motifs are widespread in medieval literature; bestiaries often provide commentary on the metaphorical meanings ascribed to animal shapes and behaviours. However, the animals who appear in connection with the living dead generally lack the moral metaphors found in bestiaries, which seem more closely related with treatises on virtues and vices and other sermon material.[328] By tracking appearances of animals in tales of the living dead, this chapter discusses how and why certain animals seem to have been more readily connected with this storytelling tradition than others. Birds, dogs, horses, and lambs emerge as the most frequently occurring zoomorphic motifs in narratives about the living dead, often in accordance with patterns that suggest shared expectations about these animal forms and behaviours. This chapter assembles some of the most illustrative examples of animals in tales of the living dead to track these patterns and variations in their deployment.

Birds and Butterflies

Birds were widely regarded as meaningful images for the human life course. To cite one, well-known, example, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* presented a vivid metaphor for human life as analogous to a sparrow flying swiftly through a hall, temporarily sheltering

[328] Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 192.

from the cold and uncertain storm that awaits it outside.[329] Bede's choice of bird in this tale, that is, the sparrow, has been explained by means of scriptural allusion and literary inversion.[330] Analogies like this are deeply rooted in a narrative tradition that regards birds, whether they be doves, sparrows, ravens, crows, or swans, as useful images. Images of beating wings in skyward-soaring swift flight seem to have united these different kinds of birds as experts in ineffable journeys. This discussion explores the varieties of birds and winged creatures whose flights represented presences and movements in stories about the living dead.

Winged Companies

Winged creatures were said to have been present at the death of Bishop Wilfrid (d. 709). This powerful, and controversial, eighth-century bishop died at Oundle and was initially buried at Ripon, until his remains were translated to Canterbury by Archbishop Oda (d. 958).[331] In celebration of Canterbury's acquisition of Wilfrid's relics, the Frankish scholar Frithegod, or Fredegaud, was commissioned to compose a metrical life of Wilfrid, the *Breuiloquium uitae Wilfridi*. Towards the end of his poem, Frithegod versifies Wilfrid's death, writing 'In the midst of those mourning, praying, and attending / The winged creature departed, free from the struggle of the flesh'.[332] Here, Wilfrid's death is visualised by a *volucer*, a winged creature or bird, flying from the body. The poetic context of this detail may partly explain this metaphor of the bird-soul. However, the source for Frithegod's imagery suggests that this bird imagery was rooted in personal anecdote.

Frithegod had based his metrical life on Stephen of Ripon's prose *Vita Wilfridi episcopi*, which was finished by c. 720, just over ten years after Wilfrid's death. Stephen's account provides the earliest description of Wilfrid's death. He writes that attendants were chanting psalms around Wilfrid's deathbed when, having reached Psalm 103, he died and 'the brethren heard, to their amazement, a sound in the air like a flight of birds approaching'.[333] Unlike Frithegod's liberated *volucer*, the birds in Stephen's account seem

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[329] *HE*, II, 13, 184-185.
[330] Julia Barrow, 'How Coifi Pierced Christ's Side: A Re-Examination of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62:4 (2011), 693-706.
[331] Paul Hayward, 'St Wilfrid of Ripon and the Northern Church in Anglo-Norman Historiography', *Northern History* 49:1 (2012), 11-36.
[332] Frithegod of Canterbury, *Breuiloquium uitae Wilfridi*, in *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. Raine, I, 157, 1358-1359, 'Inter mœrentes, orantes, opperientes, / Evasit volucer, carnis ceromate liber'.
[333] Stephen of Ripon. *Vita Wilfridi episcopi*, in *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave, repr. (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 64, 140, 'et omnes stupefacti sunt, audientes ea hora

to arrive, rather than depart, when Wilfrid dies. They were heard again when Wilfrid's body was taken to Ripon to be washed and buried. Stephen reports that 'once again from over the monastery came the sound of birds alighting and taking off with a gentle, almost musical flapping of wings'.[334] The movements and departures of the birds are once again heard rather than seen. This kind of auditory manifestation will be discussed in further detail in chapter six. In the Wilfrid legend, at least, the sound of flying birds seems to indicate unseen movements. And yet, these movements were expressed differently in Stephen's and Frithegod's respective accounts, until they were completely omitted in the twelfth century when Edmer narrated Wilfrid's death in his *Vita S. Wilfridi* and *Breuiloquium*.[335]

When it came to interpreting these sounds, Stephen tells us that 'the wiser members of the community were convinced that Michael had come with his choirs of angels to lead our bishop's soul to Paradise'.[336] Stephen at least agreed with, if not inserted, this interpretation. Perhaps the wisdom of this opinion was based on its correspondence with another story about Wilfrid, in which Michael was said to have visited Wilfrid four years before his death to forewarn him.[337] Those who knew this story seem to have connected the sound of flapping wings at Wilfrid's death with Michael's prophesised return. However, Frithegod chose to reimagine these wings as those of the freed *volucer*. Michael is still present in Frithegod's account; he returns to receive Wilfrid's *spiritus*.[338] And yet, this winged creature clearly refers to the *spiritus* that has been freed from a struggle with the flesh.

The delay and distance between the two sounds is another curious element of Stephen's narrative. We are led to believe that Michael and his angels arrived to receive Wilfrid when he died at Oundle, but the sound of their departure is not heard until his body is brought to Ripon for burial. This repetition of the sound would suggest that Wilfrid and the birds did not leave his body until he had reached Stephen's monastery. Wilfrid was certainly a re-founding figure of great importance to this community.[339] Thus,

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sonitum quasi avium advenientium'; Trans. David Hugh Farmer and J.F. Webb, in *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), 180.

[334] Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 65, 99, 'et supra domum, quasi residentium avium cum sonitu iterum audierunt, et statim iterum avolantium in cælum cum suavi modulamine pennarum'.

[335] Edmer of Canterbury, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, in *Vita S. Wilfridi Auctore Edmero / the Life of Saint Wilfrid by Edmer*, eds. and trans. Bernard Muir and Andrew Turner (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), *Vita*, LVIII-LIX, 109-110, 138-139.

[336] Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 65, 99, 'Sapientes autem, qui illic aderant, dixerunt, certe se scire angelorum choros cum Michaele venisse, et animam sancti pontificis in Paradisum deducere'.

[337] Ibid., 56, 84.

[338] Frithegod, *Breuiloquium*, 157, 1355-1357.

[339] *HE*, III, 25, 298-299.

for Stephen and his brethren, the auditory manifestations at Wilfrid's death and burial indicated unseen movements brought about by their conveyance of the body to their monastery. As such, the sound of birds reinforces this community's connection to this powerful bishop and suggests his approval and continued support. In contrast, Frithegod and Edmer, writing for Canterbury communities in the tenth and twelfth centuries, respectively, dispensed with sounds that so emphatically tied Wilfrid to Ripon. Thus, the bird sounds at Wilfrid's death, which meant so much to the eighth-century community at Ripon, were preserved only in Frithegod's metaphor of the *volucer*. For the brothers at Ripon, however, Wilfrid had been enveloped by the sound of beating wings when he was led from the site of their community, joining an angelic flock in flight to heaven.

Conversely, a very different winged company was said to appear at the deathbed of a priest in London called Martin in the twelfth century. Peter of Cornwall explains in his *Liber reuelationum* that Martin had been negligent in his duties, tragically resulting in a suicide in his parish. This tragedy haunted Martin until his dying moments, when he lamented to all those present that 'most of all that woman, who hanged herself because of my negligence, now drags me to damnation'.[340] However, those present, that is, Martin's household, including his son Geoffrey and his clerk Richard, did not see this woman. Instead, it is said that 'many ravens entered through the windows and extinguished all the candles'.[341] Everyone fled the room in terror, except Richard, who had been holding Martin's head. In response, Richard took hold of a crucifix and a sprinkler of holy water and cried out, 'Bring light quickly, otherwise I shall die too'.[342] By the time a light had been brought, Martin was dead and the ravens were gone. This image of a flock of ravens arriving at a deathbed scene resonates with the Ripon legends about bird sounds at their patron's death. The ravens seem to represent the arrival of a company to convey Martin, which most notably includes the late parishioner. The ravens that signify this woman and her damned company starkly contrast the flock that signified Michael and his heavenly company. And yet, the two stories reach similar interpretations for birds at the deathbed. Although these ravens are not violent, the household's fear reveals the perceived danger of their presence, which is intensified by the removal of light from the room. In fact, Richard's desperate request, for a light to be returned, resonates with the apotropaic use of fire in the Drakelow story. As such, the case of Martin reveals how expectations about the forms assumed by living dead

[340] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 22, 288-289, 'et maxime illa femina, que per negligentiam meam se suspendit, me modo ad dampnationem trahit'.
[341] Ibid., 288-291, 'ecce corui multi per luminaria intrauerunt et omnia lumina extinxerunt'.
[342] Ibid., 290-291, 'Cito afferte lumen, alioquin en ego morior'.

companies as well as apotropaic strategies against nefarious agents both inform readings of ravens at the deathbed.

Flights of the Soul

The chapter that immediately follows continues some of the themes from the Martin story; an unfortunate priest, an innocent parishioner, and a raven are once again central to the narrative. As such, Peter's commentary on wicked priests and their moral responsibility links these tales. In this instance, however, both priest and parishioner are unnamed. At first, one of the priest's parishioners is said to have seen 'a very huge devil in the air between heaven and earth'.[343] Then, Peter narrates that this same man 'saw as if a black raven was flying from afar, headed towards that foresaid foe, and at full speed it entered its mouth'.[344] The consumption of this raven visualises a rather perverse reception for the late priest, whom this huge, air-borne, devil appears to swallow in damnation.[345] The entry of the raven into the devil's mouth also seems to subvert ideas about the departure of the soul or spirit through the mouth. Giant, soul-eating, devil aside, a crucial element in this story is colour of this bird. This 'shape of blackness' (*specie nigredinis*), like the 'black spirit' (*niger spiritus*) that consumes it, reflects the tainted, sinful, state of this priest. The didactic commentary afforded by this choice of colour appears to adapt a narrative pattern to fit this morally charged representations of the living dead. Shared expectations were adapted by storytellers to present the living dead in diverse ways for the purposes of their messages.

The case of Bishop Paulinus illustrates how the nearby Whitby community also deployed the image of the soul in the shape of a bird in the eighth century. Paulinus (d. 644) had come to Kent from Rome, during the Gregorian mission, and became bishop of York following the marriage of Æthelburh of Kent to King Edwin of Northumbria. The role of Paulinus in the conversion of King Edwin and the Northumbrian people is developed in the earliest *Vita* about Pope Gregory I. The anonymous author of this text was a member of the monastery at Whitby and wrote this *Vita* around the beginning of the eighth century. After tales of Paulinus' time in Northumbria, the narrator states that 'it is related by some who saw it that, when he died, his soul journeyed to heaven in the

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[343] Ibid., I, 23, 290-291, 'in aere inter celum et terram uidit magnum ualde diabolum'.
[344] Ibid., 'uidit quasi nigrum coruum delonge uolando tendere ad predictum inimicum et in os eius concito intrare'.
[345] For a giant devil in the way of departing souls, see Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of St Antony of Egypt*, trans. David Brakke, in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head (London: Routledge, 2000), 66, 22.

form of an exceedingly beautiful great white bird, like a swan'.[346] The comparison of the form of a white bird to a swan may seem surprising given the frequency at which white birds were usually identified as doves. Perhaps the relatively early date of this eighth-century text, compared to the examples studied in chapter four, suggests that the dove was yet to emerge as the predominant motif for such departures in medieval England. And yet, this disjunction is intensified by the swan's appearance in a Life of Gregory, whose *Dialogi* provided some of the most influential examples of the dove-soul.[347] Explanations for this peculiarity have ranged from the swan's association with the *fylgja* in the Norse sagas to its association with the soul in Exeter Riddle 7.[348] However, I believe that the earlier use of a bird in this text provides a more compelling context for understanding this swan.

In this Life of Gregory, tales of the bishop's missionary exploits reveal another narrative function of birds. It is said that Bishop Paulinus, along with King Edwin and the royal company, was passing through a crowd on their way to church one Sunday when 'a crow set up a hoarse croaking from an unpropitious quarter of the sky'.[349] The entire royal company turned to listen to the crow, the Whitby author writes, as if this crow's song was the 'new song' (*canticum novum*) of the church. Bishop Paulinus is said to have perceived the falsehood of this song and ordered a young man in his retinue to quickly shoot the bird with an arrow. Paulinus then warns the newly converted royal company against interpreting this omen for the crow could not even avoid its own death, let alone foretell the future.[350] I believe that this 'new song', an allusion to Psalm 39:4, that concerns Paulinus so greatly is the key to understanding both crow and swan. The song of this crow is clearly perceived as false teaching by the missionary bishop, who swiftly acts to silence it. Paulinus is presented as the authority on true, Christian, teaching. Thus, it seems significant that the swan, *cygnus*, shares a linguistic connection with *canere* (to sing), hiding a song in the very name of the creature.[351] By casting the

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[346] *Liber beati et laudabilis viri Gregorii*, 17, 100-101, 'fertur a videntibus quod huius viri anima in cuiusdam magne, qualis est cignus, alba specie avis, satisque pulchra, quando moritur migrasset ad celum'.

[347] Gregory, *Dialogi*, II, 34; IV, 11.

[348] For the different iconographic and literary contexts for this swan, see M.E.R. Lacey, 'Birds and Bird-lore in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England', PhD Thesis, University College London (2013), 259-270.

[349] *Liber beati et laudabilis viri Gregorii*, 15, 96-97, 'quedam stridula cornix ad plagam voce peiorem cantavit'.

[350] For another fortune-telling bird, see the Berkeley witch's pet raven, see William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 204, 376-377.

[351] On the etymology of *cygnus*, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. Wallace Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), XII, 7, 18, 21-25; *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, eds. and trans. Stephen Barney, et al. (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), XII, 7, 18, 264-265.

bishop's soul in the form of a swan, therefore, the Whitby author presents Paulinus as the source of the true new song that has come to Northumbria. Nor is it surprising that this swan-soul does not literally sing, as the crow did. Given that medieval writers most likely encountered the Mute Swan, storytellers grew accustomed to deploying creative representations of swan-song, which often played on the sound of their beating wings.[352] I would argue that this swan-soul was designed to juxtapose the earlier crow and remind the audience of the true source of the new song, sung out by Paulinus, whose missionary endeavours, in the eyes of this Whitby monk, were indeed his swan-song.

Winged Assailants

In 1272, somewhere on the Scottish borders, a young man in the service of Sir Patrick Edgar encountered a very strange bird. In bed one night, the young man woke when 'a bird of the size of a dove, but differing in appearance by its variety of colour, entered by the chimney of the house and attacked the said youth with its wings'.[353] It is said that the sound of this avian assault was so great that the blows could be heard from the kitchens. While the significance of this event is initially unknown, the bird is said to have been later connected with a death. We are told that a month afterwards, this young man went to the monastery at Kelso, where he learned that his uncle, Richard of Barneby, 'a simple and pure man' and former cleric of Kelso, had died at Gisburn at the very moment that the bird came to him.[354] The appearance of this bird is thus retrospectively connected to Richard's death. However, this bird is aggressive. The chronicler who composed this account draws attention to further peculiarities, in that the bird exhibits a variation in colour, which differs from the innocence and purity connoted by a dove, and enters through the chimney, focusing our attention onto hearth and home.

Although its explicitly non-white colour and unsettling intrusion into this domestic space seem to associate the bird with impurity and danger, the bird is retrospectively connected to the death of an apparently pure man. This tension in the text is left unresolved; the chronicler simply concludes 'let the reader judge what such an apparition was intended to teach'.[355] We may be tempted to speculate about the nature of the relationship between uncle and nephew here, such that the behaviour of this violent bird became associated by the young man with his uncle. Nor would it be implausible for

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[352] Natalie Goodison, *Introducing the Medieval Swan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022), 32-39.
[353] *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 93-94, 'avicula per fumarium domus ingressa, quantitatis columbinæ, sed varietate colorum in qualitate diffimilis, dictum juvenculum alis impetens'.
[354] Ibid., 'vir simplex et mundus'.
[355] Ibid., 'Quid talis apparitio docere voluerit, qui legit intelligat'.

the bird to have been retrospectively interpreted as Richard in the living dead form of a bird. Ultimately, the ambiguity of the bird in this story, and how it relates to Richard, exemplifies the recurrent ambiguity in tales of animals and the living dead.

As well as omens, crows and ravens are also deployed as forms or appearances of the living dead themselves. In the fourteenth century, for instance, among the many forms of the shapeshifter, it was with the form of a bird that the Byland monk introduced the living dead person who appeared to Snowball the tailor to request his help. Snowball is said to have heard a sound, like ducks washing themselves (*quasi anates se lauantes*), before seeing a bird, like a raven (*quasi coruum*), fall to the ground.[356] The repeated use of *quasi* illustrates the uncertainty of this birdlike apparition representing something, or someone, else. When Snowball mounts his horse, the raven flew at him, striking him from his horse and leading to a duel between them. Snowball's attempts to fight this raven reinforce the idea that this birdlike appearance conceals a hidden nature for it seems to him that he is striking his sword against a peat-stack. This shapeshifter eventually transforms into the likeness of a man. However, the arrival of the shapeshifter is visualised by the form of a bird. While the bird at first drops down as if dead, a portentous action indeed, its subsequent behaviour seems more like the aggressive bird that assaulted Richard of Barneby's nephew. These avian assailants, different in colour from the white dove or swan, represent a juxtaposition with these sinless birds and reveal the malleability of the winged creature motif.

The Butterfly Bishop

Throughout these stories, close attention has often been paid to the wings of birds, whether in their attacks, their sounds, or their flights. As such, we might imagine that winged creatures who shared some of the qualities or abilities of birds also appeared in connection to the living dead. The butterfly is one such creature that has been attested in place of birds in narratives like those discussed here.[357] However, there is a marked absence of butterflies in accounts of living death in medieval England. Moreover, a thirteenth-century legend that does deploy the butterfly presents a notably different function for this winged creature when compared with the birds studied here. Like the strange bird that opened this chapter, this story was incorporated into *The Chronicle of Lanercost*. Under the year 1216, the chronicle reports that Peter des Roches (d. 1238),

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[356] *TMGS*, II, 415.
[357] On the butterfly-soul, see Barasch, 'The Departing Soul', 14-15; Claude Carozzi, *Le voyage de l'âme dans l'au-delà: d'après la littérature latine (Ve-XIIIe siècle)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1994), 177.

bishop of Winchester, went hunting in the woods one day where he stumbled across a great mansion. Servants from the hall rushed towards him and led him to a banquet, where he was seated at the right hand of none other than King Arthur himself. Starstruck, Peter is said to have asked the king how he could possibly hope to convince anyone of their meeting. In response, the king told the bishop to close and then open his right hand; 'when he opened his hand, out flew a butterfly'.[358] It is said that for the rest of his life Peter was able 'to see this kind of insect fly' in this manner.[359] The chronicler adds that 'this sign later became so well known that men often asked for a butterfly as a blessing, and many used to call him the Butterfly Bishop'.[360] This butterfly becomes central to the story, but its meaning and relationship to the living dead king seem vague. Unlike the birds examined in this thesis, this butterfly is said to have appeared repeatedly, at will, whenever the bishop wanted. Thus, the creature acts more like a token, a reproducible proof of their meeting, in response to the bishop's concern that no one would believe his testimony. The question of whether the butterfly was in any way seen as King Arthur himself seems to be left open by the chronicler, who concludes 'let him reflect who is able to guess what the soul of Arthur wished to teach those alive today by this'.[361] The living dead king's *anima* is thus present in the narrative, albeit haphazardly inserted into its final sentence. Perhaps some degree of familiarity with butterflies as a potential form for souls prompted this closing remark. Nevertheless, the implications of this identification of butterfly with soul for this narrative, in which Peter is said to conjure butterflies at will, are understandably elided.

The connection between the butterfly in this story with the living dead may operate on two levels. Thus far, we have examined the function of the butterfly as a signifier for the bishop's meeting with King Arthur. And yet, the butterfly also seems to have functioned as a signifier for the bishop himself. The story goes that this peculiar gift earned Peter a reputation as the Butterfly Bishop, *Episcopum de Papilione*. This displacement of the butterfly, such that it pointed to Peter rather than Arthur, may have been reinforced at the bishop's tomb. Peter's tomb, a thirteenth-century effigy of a bishop in black Purbeck marble, has been identified at Winchester Cathedral. Peter

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[358] *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 23, 'et aperta manu papilio evolavit'; Trans. Austin Whitaker, cited in Peter Gallup, 'The Butterfly Bishop and King Arthur', *Winchester Cathedral Record* 62. *Friends of Winchester Cathedral* (1993), 15.
[359] Ibid., 'hoc genus muscæ volare volueris'.
[360] Ibid., 'Istud indicium ita factum est postea notorium, ut pro benedictione sæpe viri papilionem peterent, et multi eum Episcopum de Papilione vocitarent'.
[361] Ibid., 'Quid in hoc anima Arthuri mortalis adhuc docere voluerit, perpendat qui melius conjicere poterit'.

Gallup has pointed out that black limestone is warmer to the touch than white marble, especially in the sun, and thus the tomb itself may have attracted tortoiseshell butterflies seeking warmth in the cathedral.[362] The mention in the story of butterflies given as blessings to those who requested them from the bishop may even have extended to the tomb, where these winged creatures gathered.

Dogs and Wolves

The presences and movements of the living dead seem to have been revealed by animals, even when the persons were not explicitly said to appear in animal form. Among the functions of crows and ravens, discussed above, their roles as omens have revealed circulating ideas about how animals might provide access to hidden, often forbidden, knowledge. For those who knew how to interpret them, like the Berkeley witch, these birds were evidently thought to uncover secrets about death. In the search for signs of the living dead, however, birds were not the only creatures deployed to facilitate such revelations. The reactions of animals were carefully watched and reported in stories about the living dead. For instance, when Gaynor and Gawain saw the former's late mother, to whom we will return in chapter five, the animals reacted to the arrival of the living dead body; birds shrieked and dogs hid in terror.[363] The behaviour of canine species, that is, dogs and wolves, in tales of the living dead warrant further examination through the following case studies. Like crows and ravens, these dogs and wolves frequently serve as omens, shapeshifting forms, and demonic agents. While their mention in individual narratives can sometimes be fleeting, taken together these case studies reveal a consensus about the distinctly canine interactions with the living dead.

Barking Dogs

The motif of barking dogs, who follow and accompany the living dead, was deployed by William of Newburgh in two of the stories discussed earlier in chapter one. In the Berwick story, for example, the living dead man who wandered about at night was said to have been 'pursued by a pack of dogs with loud barkings'.[364] Like the dogs in the Byland stories, these barking dogs may have served to reveal the presence of the living dead, perhaps to those who dared not leave their houses after dusk, as well as reflect the social disruption

[362] Gallup, 'The Butterfly Bishop', 19.
[363] *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 182, 124-130.
[364] *HRA*, V, 23, 476, 'canum cum ingenti latratu prosequente turba'.

caused by this outcast.[365] Dogs continue to feature in William's stories in the chapter that follows. Immediately after the Berwick story, William narrates the tale of the *Hundeprest*, whose love of hunting had evidently earnt him a reputation related with hunting dogs. Despite this, the living dead *Hundeprest* is not said to have been followed by dogs. This motif is instead used in the second story in this chapter, that is, the case of the living dead husband at Anant. After the husband's burial, William writes that he left his grave at night 'and pursued by a pack of dogs with horrible barkings'.[366] The absence of this motif from the *Hundeprest* story seems surprising given the existing connection between man and dog. That said, it may have been this existing connection that cancelled out the motif of pursuing dogs. In any case, the tale of the *Hundeprest* reminds us of the hunting role of dogs. This role may reveal a further implication for the canine pursuits of the living dead, in that these dogs may have been readily cast in the roles of hunters and protectors, assisting local efforts to find and combat nocturnal assailants.

The focus on canine responses to the living dead appears again in a tale in the Byland collection. At Kilburn, it is said that a certain Robert, the son of Robert de Boltby, had been buried in the churchyard but grew accustomed to leaving his grave at night, to loiter around doors and windows in the village. This Robert is rumoured to have been complicit in a murder, among other evil deeds. The Byland monk reports that, whenever Robert wandered the neighbourhood, 'the dogs of the village used to follow him and bark loudly'.[367] Once again, the reaction of the dogs seems to authenticate testimonies of Robert's presence in the village. However, the loud barks of the village dogs may also signify the disruption created by this unwanted visitor. Given mention of his links with a murder, Robert was evidently considered partly responsible for an incredibly disruptive event in this local community. This social unrest and disorder may thus be reflected in the restlessness and disruptive noise of these dogs.

The Byland monk deploys dogs elsewhere in the stories in his collection. When William of Bradeforth was stalked one night by a voice screaming 'how how how', he had not been travelling alone. Accompanied by his pet dog, William approached a crossroads, where he is said to have encountered a pale horse, to which we will return later. In response, 'his dog barked a little, but then hid itself in great fear between William's legs'.[368] It is the reaction of William's dog, rather than William himself, that receives

[365] Simpson, 'Repentant soul or walking corpse?', 399.
[366] *HRA*, V, 24, 480, 'prosequente eum cum latratu horribili canum turba'.
[367] *TMGS*, III, 418, 'deterrere ac canes ville sequebantur eum et latrabant magnaliter'.
[368] Ibid., VIII, 419, 'et canis eius latrauit paululum, sed valde timens abscondit se inter tibias eiusdem Willelmi'; For dogs hiding from the living dead, see also *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, 182, 124.

comment from this narrator. There is no mention of William's emotional response to the shrieking voice, the eery horse, or the revolving canvas in this narrative. This silence reinforces the importance of William's dog and its ability to perceive not just the image before it, but the terror it instils. One might even say that the dog's reaction works to authenticate the story, as if proving that something or someone was there that night. In contrast, the dog plays a very different role in the story of Snowball the tailor. As opposed to the witness to the encounter, a dog serves as a shape assumed by the shapeshifter. It is said that, after his altercation with the raven, the tailor next saw that shapeshifter 'in the likeness of a dog with a chain on its neck'.[369] Upon seeing this form, the terrified tailor decided to question the *spiritus* about the cause of its punishment and any remedy for it. Snowball is shown to recognise that the dog represented someone seeking his help.

Canine Companions

As we saw in chapter one, William of Newburgh often saw demonic agents at work in living dead bodies. It may thus seem vague whether the dogs in his stories were thought to have been pursuing living dead bodies or the demons therein. Such a connection between dog and demon is complicated by the deployment of dogs as likenesses for both the living dead and evil spirits, as in the case for crows and ravens.[370] The case of the Dunfermline demoniac reveals how this pursuing dog motif was more widely applied to demon-infested bodies. According to an anonymous thirteenth-century miracle collection, about the miracles of Queen Margaret of Scotland, a dark-skinned woman travelled England for two years, troubled by a demon, until she came to Margaret's church at Dunfermline. During this time, the writer reports that 'it seemed to her that two wild and shaggy dogs were following her'.[371] This exiled, wandering, woman somewhat resembles the living dead studied in chapter one. Moreover, in their pursuit of the demoniac, the behaviour of these dogs seems similar to that described in the stories of William of Newburgh.

Their appearance to only the demoniac, however, speaks to a different function for these canines. Rather than revealing the woman's presence to others, the dogs seem to reveal the presence of the demon to the afflicted woman herself. There is no commentary in the text to explain whether the dogs were thought to be likenesses of the possessing demon or guardians of the distressed woman. Indeed, unlike other evil spirits in animal

[369] Ibid., II, 415, 'in figura canis anulati'.
[370] Reginald, *Libellus de admirandis Beati Cuthberti virtutibus*, XVII, 33; Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 30, 320-321.
[371] *Miracula S. Margarite Scotorum regine*, 29, 124-125, 'ut sibi uidebatur, duo canes horridi et hispidi sequebantur'.

forms these dogs do not appear to harm this woman. Their power, however, is bounded. It is said that once the woman crossed the sea at Queensferry, near Dunfermline, and arrived at the nearby hospital, 'the two dogs halted, unable to go any further'.[372] The woman then rushed through the court to the church of Margaret where, having been carried to the queen's well, her health and colour are said to have been restored. By halting the dogs, the area at Dunfermline seems to have exhibited a hidden, warding, power. The healing miracle seems to be worked by Margaret at the well, but the demon seems to be left with the dogs on the outskirts of the monastic precincts.

Among canine companions in medieval literature, one of the most famous can be found in the story of King Edmund's severed head. According to Abbo's tenth-century *Passio*, before the king's head was discovered by his people, it was guarded by a wolf. Having followed the head's shouts, the people are said to have discovered a 'monstrous wolf' (*immanis lupus*).[373] Abbo writes that this wolf was 'embracing the holy head between its paws', guarding the head.[374] The peaceful, protective, presence of the wolf is presented as a miraculous victory over the wolf's vicious nature.[375] As Rebecca Pinner argues, the king's descent from the 'Wulfingas', the kin of the wolf, reveals the genealogical significance of the wolf, as if it were a personification of Edmund's ancestor or ancestral guardian.[376] This context reinforces Edmund's construction as a guardian himself, a protector of the East Anglian people. At the same time, I believe that this wolf can also be read in the context of similar canine behaviour in stories about the living dead. For instance, the wolf is the first to find Edmund's talking head and its response is considered meaningful, like a reflection of the king's personality. It is perhaps for this reason that the wolf does not bark or cower, unlike the dogs that pursued living dead murderers and demoniacs. Furthermore, the behaviour of the wolf in the Edmund story bears some similarities with the dogs that followed the Dunfermline demoniac. In both stories, the canines are wild but harmless and follow their charge, to a certain point. In a similar way to how the dogs halt when the woman reached Dunfermline, the wolf in the Edmund story is said to have followed the people who carried the king's head to its burial place until it returned to its home. Their presence is temporary and spatially bounded. Even though the living dead personalities in these accounts are constructed differently, there

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[372] Ibid., 'substiterunt duo predicti canes, ulterius progredi non ualentes'.
[373] Abbo, *Passio*, 12, 81.
[374] Ibid., 'illud sacrum caput inter brachia conplexus'.
[375] Elizabeth Marshall, *Wolves in Beowulf and Other Old English Texts* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2022), 121-156.
[376] Pinner, *The Cult of St Edmund*, 222.

seems to be a common consensus among the stories that dogs and wolves are sensitive to and reflective of these presences.

Horses and Riders

This range of representations for dogs and wolves has revealed how canine companions were both integral parts of human society, as pets and hunters, and wild exiles on its peripheries, ranging from demon forms to ancestral guardians. Unlike birds, these canines cannot fly away. As we have seen, their exit from the narrative is explained by a halting in their movement or a returning to their natural habitat. While winged creatures connect heavens and the earth with their flight, mammals remain bound to the earth. Furthermore, the dog is just one animal whose existence was deeply integrated into human societies. The horse represents another such animal, whose social and economic roles centred on human-animal interactions. In this next section, I would like to explore how these familiar creatures also facilitated interactions with the living dead and, in doing so, subverted this very human-animal dichotomy. There are interesting correspondences between the deployment of horses and dogs in tales of the living dead. Above all, there is a striking correspondence in our source material; the case studies assembled here for dogs and horses reveal that the authors who deployed one creature also deployed the latter. When authors, such as the Dunfermline and Byland story collectors, included both dogs and horses in their works, their choices may have been reinforced by the tendency to see these animals alongside each other in wider medieval settings, most notably, in the hunt.

Riding Companies

A connection between dog and horse is central to Walter Map's story of King Herla. The wanderings of this royal company are brought about through the instructions of the pygmy king, who gave Herla 'a small bloodhound to carry, strictly enjoining him that on no account must any of his train dismount until that dog leapt from the arms of his bearer'.[377] It is said that those in Herla's retinue who disregarded these orders fell into dust and so Herla warned the rest to stay on their mounts. Walter Map writes, in his revised account of King Herla, that 'the dog has not yet alighted'.[378] When constructing the seemingly endless wanderings of this king and his company, therefore, Walter Map presented Herla on horseback, dog in hand, in the likeness of a courtly hunt.

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[377] Walter, *De nugis*, I, 11, 28-29, 'canem modicum sanguinarium portatilem presentat, omnibus modis interdicens ne quis de toto comitatu suo descendat usquam, donec ille canis a portatore suo prosiliat'.
[378] Ibid., 30-31, 'Canis autem nondum descendit'.

This imagery was certainly fitting for Walter Map's courtly audience, but it was by no means a static picture. Having included this story twice in *De nugis* at varying stages of revision, Map reveals slightly different roles for the animals in his earlier version.[379] Here, it is said that the *Herlethingi* of Hereford included persons known to have died, who 'travelled as we do, with carts and sumpter horses, packsaddles and panniers, hawks and hounds, and a concourse of men and women'.[380] The living dead are still shown to depend on animals that were arguably most integrated in human society: the horse, hawk, and hound. While this combination of creatures reinforces the connotations of the hunt, the company's carts, packsaddles, and panniers hint at the pastoral functions of these animals. Rather than mounts from which the company cannot alight, horses serve as pack animals for transporting goods. The burdens that the animals carry in this version intensify the torment of the wanderings. For Map, this torment would be transferred from the retinue to the court so that people nowadays 'break down our own bodies and those of our beasts'.[381] In this draft of the story, the travels of Herla are likened to an itinerant, nomadic, company. In both versions, the presence of animals is central to recognising the living dead and seeing daily life reflected in their appearances.

This integrated appearance of animals among the living dead raises the question of where these animals were thought to originate. In the case of King Herla, horses had enabled the company to visit the pygmy king whereas the dog had been a gift from him. In contrast, when Richard Rowntree of Cleveland stumbled upon a great nocturnal riding company on his travels, the Byland monk described that 'some rode sitting on horses and sheep and oxen, and some on other animals; and all the animals were those that had been given to the church when they died'.[382] The gifting and exchange of animals seems significant in both cases, such that the fate of humans and animals become intertwined by these transactions. Another revealing example of animals gifted to the living dead can be found among the thirteenth-century miracles of Queen Margaret. It is said that there was a monk of Dunfermline who wished to abandon monastic life. His plans were revealed to his nurse when she saw a graceful lady, with a beautiful girl, who held by the reigns 'a huge white horse with a lovely saddle'.[383] Not far away, the nurse also saw 'a black horse of the

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[379] Joshua Byron Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 83-105.
[380] Walter, *De nugis*, IV, 13, 370-371, 'circa meridiem, eo modo quo nos erramus cum bigis et summariis, cum clitellis et panariolis, auibus et canibus, concurrentibus uiris et mulieribus'.
[381] Ibid., 372-373, 'corpora nostra et iumentorum frangimus'.
[382] *TMGS*, XI, 421, 'et aliqui sedebant et equitabant super equos oues et boues et quidam super alia animalia, et vniuersa pecora que fuerunt sua mortuaria quando moriebantur'.
[383] *Miracula S. Margarite Scotorum regine*, 37, 134-135, 'equum album pergrandem decenter stratum'.

same size'.[384] When the nurse marvelled at these horses, the lady explained to her that the black horse awaited that Dunfermline monk whose mount had been 'made ready for him by the one he has decided to serve'.[385] However, the lady says, if this monk changes his mind, then she will give him the white horse and her protection. This story stresses how, in choosing a lord, one chooses the horse that will be gifted. Such a decision can make the difference between a beautiful horse and comfortable saddle, or a terrifying and tormenting mount.[386] Moreover, these horses appear to symbolise protection, a place in a company, destined for a journey that is anticipated by and prepared for in this life. There is therefore a revealing consensus that animals have been prepared to join the living dead on their journeys.

The white horse in the Dunfermline story hints at more enjoyable rides for the living dead than those described in wild hunt narratives. Rather than a restless wandering or an eternal torment, a place in a white riding company appears to have promised protection, honour, and joy to the living dead. In the eleventh century, Lanfranc, the archbishop of Canterbury, witnessed one such company of white riders. Edmer narrates that Lanfranc had fallen terribly ill during his stay at Aldington and had to be confined to his bed, when he saw a vision of men dressed in shining white, 'advancing before him in a long procession, two by two and on white horses'.[387] Lanfranc notices their smiling faces and similar appearances for everything in this procession, the horses and garments of the riders, was the exact same size and shape. The only distinction in this company was the age of the riders; they were grouped according to their age, progressing from children to youths, then from men to elders. In this way, the procession seems to resemble those performed for religious ceremonies, in which functionaries were positioned two by two in ascending order of seniority.[388] When Lanfranc inquired on whose behalf such a procession was being performed, he is told that it is for one of his predecessors, Dunstan. Indeed, as Lanfranc watched the procession, he eventually saw a snowy-white haired Dunstan riding among the elders. At the sight of the late archbishop, Lanfranc rushed forward to grasp Dunstan's foot with both hands. A strange struggle follows as Dunstan

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[384] Ibid., 'alterum equum nigrum… eiusdem magnitudinis'.
[385] Ibid., 'quem sibi preparauit cui ille seruire disposuit'.
[386] For nocturnal companies riding upon saddles studded with burning nails, see Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ælcclesiastica*, vol. 4, VIII, 17, 240-241.
[387] Edmer of Canterbury, *Vita et Miracula S. Dunstani*, in *Eadmer of Canterbury: Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, eds. Andrew Turner and Bernard Muir, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 21, 192-193, 'coram se bini et bini in albis equis longa serie iter agebant'.
[388] For an introduction to medieval religious processions, see the entry on 'Liturgy and Church Music, History of', by Nick Sandon, in *Routledge Revivals: Medieval England: An Encyclopedia*, eds. Paul E. Szarmach, M. Teresa Tavormina, and Joel T. Rosenthal (London: Routledge, 1998), 453.

tried to wrench his foot out of Lanfranc's grasp, while Lanfranc desperately tried to kiss the rider's foot. It is during this struggle that Lanfranc awakes, his health restored.

This image of Dunstan as a white-haired, white-clothed, elder upon a white horse places him among a heavenly company. Like the processions examined in chapter two, this performance presents the living dead as perpetual participants in the liturgy. And yet, Dunstan's struggle with his eventual successor adds tension to this otherwise peaceful vision. An explanation for Dunstan's behaviour seems to follow in the next chapter, when Edmer narrates how one of Lanfranc's clerics had also fallen sick and lay in bed with a fever, separated from Lanfranc by only a single wall. This cleric is said to have regained his health at the very same time as Lanfranc, but he saw no great procession. Instead, Edmer writes, while Lanfranc was struggling to kiss Dunstan's foot, the cleric saw himself kissing the feet of Dunstan.[389] Edmer marvels at Dunstan's grace in bestowing two visions at the same time. The close physical proximity of Lanfranc and his cleric, separated by only a wall, may indicate a shared sense of presence tied to the space where these two sick men lay. However, the implication of their simultaneous visions seems to be that Dunstan was thought to appear in two likenesses at once, but only one person could kiss his feet at a time. The metaphorical significance for Dunstan's behaviour is perhaps easier to explain; Edmer may have sought to juxtapose the intensity of Lanfranc's humility with Dunstan's refusal to allow Lanfranc to humble himself before him. In any case, this image of white, health-bringing, riders, reveals the great honours that could await the righteous.

Ghost Riders

The actions of horse riding and healing are an intriguing combination. As the Dunstan story reveals, it could be quite awkward, inconvenient even, to heal someone while riding a horse. Furthermore, visually speaking, a living dead rider cuts a larger figure, equipped with awesome, hopefully bridled, horse power that accentuates their stature and status. The portentous quality of this figure would certainly have been familiar to medieval audiences.[390] A dual function as powerful horse rider and gentle healer is perhaps best exemplified by one of the miracles performed by King Edmund. Herman recounts the tale of Ranulf, a Norman knight who came to England with King William I and earned a fearsome reputation for his conduct in battle. When Ranulf fell ill, he is said to have dreamt that:

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[389] Edmer, *Vita et Miracula S. Dunstani*, 22, 194-195.
[390] On the four horsemen of the apocalypse, see Revelation 6:1-8.

> He was fleeing on horseback and the holy martyr Edmund galloped after him, armed. A spear hung down, lodged in his back, until his pursuer unhorsed him on to a hedge, and loomed over him like a warrior about to kill him.[391]

From the very outset of the narrative, the military role of horses is evident. This aggressive tale thus seems closely tied to Ranulf's experiences of war and maybe even reads as the late king's endeavour to give the knight a taste of his own medicine. The threat of this living dead rider clearly instilled great fear in the percipient. However, when Edmund knocks Ranulf from his horse and towers over him, he reaches out his right hand and insists upon making the sign of the cross on Ranulf's head. Ranulf awakens healed with a putrid matter oozing out from his ears. The shift in tone, from fear of Edmund to thanks for his help, creates a disjointed account. This ambiguous, unfolding, role of Edmund resonates with previous discussions of legends associated with him in earlier chapters. This uneasiness about Edmund, who could so swiftly transform from executioner into physician, seems deeply rooted in his legends. In fact, just as this tale's chase on horseback resonates with Ranulf's reputation, it is interesting to remember that it also resonates with that of Edmund. The violent military context in which Edmund had died seems to colour his encounter with a Norman knight in the years after conquest and haunts this contradictory representation of the royal rider, whose vengeance, protection, and healing were sought with devotion and apprehension.

We find a contrasting representation of the horse-riding protector in the twelfth century in the figure of the anchorite Wulfric. A cantor called Richard came to Wulfric after his father, Segar, died and asked him to reveal the state of his father's soul. In response, Wulfric is said to have told Richard that Segar, having suffered a great deal, was now at peace because 'I saw the man in a vision stuck in the deepest mire, trying to get out but quite unable, until I rode up to him on horseback, set him on my own beast and carried him joyfully away'.[392] Unlike the terrifying chase in the aforementioned Edmund story, Wulfric's ride to and with Richard's late father is a gentle and reassuring image, reminiscent of the parable of the Good Samaritan.[393] Wulfric's reply consoled

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[391] Herman, *Miracula*, 34, 96-97, 'somniat quod equitans fugam ineat, et sanctus martyr [EADMVNDVS] eques insequutor fiat eius armatus. Lancea dorso deorsum affixa, donec ab equo resupinans eum supra sepem, uelut miles ei desuper intentauerit mortem'.
[392] John of Ford, *Vita beati Wulfrici anachoretae Haselbergiae*, in *Wulfric of Haselbury by John, abbot of Ford*, ed. Maurice Bell, *Somerset Record Society* 47 (London: Butler & Tanner, 1933), 77, 105, 'Sane vidi hominem illum per visionem in limo profundissimo infixum eluctari volentem nec aliquatenus valentem, usque dum ego in equo eo veniens, jumento meo impositum cum laetitia adduxi'; Trans. Pauline Matarasso, *The Life of Wulfric of Haselbury, Anchorite*, *Cistercian Fathers Series* 79 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011).
[393] Luke 10:34.

Richard for a while, and when the latter became anxious again about his father's fate, Wulfric answered 'Didn't I tell you that I set him on my horse?'[394] Wulfric as horse rider fulfils a heroic role, saving a soul from suffering. His horse, however, is an elusive element in this story. It is unclear whether Wulfric believed that he had taken a horse from Haselbury to reach Segar, in a similar way to how Herla visited the pygmy king, or had a horse prepared for him by his lord, or Lord, as in the case of the monk of Dunfermline. Nevertheless, the horse enables Wulfric to reach and convey someone whom he knew to have died. Wulfric's own state seems ambiguous during this journey; his traversal of unknown spaces on horseback might be construed as a sign on his own living death, a state into which he entered to reach Segar. Wulfric's communion with a spirit world on horseback, as Licence has argued, echoes shamanic practices, such as trances or altered states of consciousness.[395] The reclusive rider, embracing living death for the sake of their clients, is revealed to have been a comfort to those struggling with loss and separation.

Not all those who set the living dead upon their steeds were so benevolent, however. When the Berkeley witch, whom we previously met in chapter one, was abducted from her stone coffin, despite the iron chains that bound it, a very different rider awaited her. William of Malmesbury tells us that one of the demons, *demones*, who was taller than the others, broke down the church door, snapped the last of the iron chains, and kicked the lid off the coffin. This foe dragged the woman by the hand out of the church, where there 'appeared a stallion, black, whinnying proudly, with iron barbs set point upwards all down its back'.[396] Having set the woman on these iron spikes, the company disappeared and 'her piteous cries were heard, for a distance of some four miles'.[397] Both Segar and the Berkeley witch seem helpless; neither move until their respective riders put them on their horses. Unlike Wulfric, however, the journey for this mother is exceedingly painful. Her journey also seems to take place in a familiar place. While Segar is vaguely located in a mire, the demons in William's story attack the church at Berkeley, where the woman's children had buried her. The added detail that her cries could be heard from four miles away reinforces the familiarity of the spaces that this living dead mother traverses on horseback with the demonic company.

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[394] John, *Vita beati Wulfrici*, 77, 105, 'Numquid, ait, non dixi tibi quod imposui eum equo meo?'
[395] Licence, 'Anchorites', 725.
[396] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 204, 378-379, 'equus niger et superbum hinniens uidebatur, uncis ferreis per totum tergum protuberantibus'.
[397] Ibid., 'Audiebantur tamen clamores per quattuor fere miliaria miserabiles'.

Tormented Horses

The relationship between horse and demon seems similar to that in the case of ravens and dogs. These animals could be omens, forms of demons, or associated with the work of demons. Both the Berkeley and Dunfermline stories suggest that black horses were prepared for the living dead by demons, whom these persons were thought to serve. At the same time, there was also a belief that demons did not just prepare horses for the living dead, they also transformed the latter's appearance into that of the horse.[398] A vision narrative, presumed to have been written by Ralph of Coggeshall, provides an illustrative example of this idea. The narrative relates a vision experienced by Thurkill, a labourer from Stisted, Essex, in 1206. Ralph recounts Thurkill's journey, which surveys a valley of extreme heat and intense cold, a theatre of sin, and a mountain of joy. Thurkill is joined on his journey by Julian and Domninus, whom Thurkill meets in a basilica. While he and his companions were in the church, it is said that 'a demon riding a black horse at a fast pace' (*venit quidam demon equum nigrum precipiti cursu obequitans*) approached from the north.[399] Domninus demands that the demon explain himself, at which point the demon relates how he had come into possession of the soul of one of the king of England's noblemen, who had died without confessing his many sins. According to Ralph, the demon added, 'Do not be surprised that I have transformed him into the shape of a horse, so that I can ride him, for we are allowed to change the souls of the damned into any shape or form we wish'.[400] This soul is visually represented in the service of a demon as his horse, his mount, controlled and tormented by his rider. This transformation into a horse is thus understood as a form of torture for this soul, who is made powerless, rather than liberated, by their loss of human shape.

There seems to have been a consensus that transformation into a horse was a wretched fate for the living dead. Even when demonic agency is not mentioned, transformation into a horse seems to trap the living dead on earth, alone, whereas transformation into a winged creature had the potential to signify liberation and reception into flocks destined for the sky. The stories collected by the Byland monk illustrate the troubled condition of the living dead who appear as horses. For instance, a

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[398] On the demonic ability to change appearances of God's creation, see Gerald of Wales, *Topographia hibernica*, in *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, eds. J. S. Brewer, James Dimock and George Warner, vol. 5, *RS* 21, repr. (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), II, 19, 106.

[399] *Visio Thurkilli relatore, ut videtur, Radulpho de Coggeshall*, ed. Paul Gerhard Schmidt (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978), 17.

[400] Ibid., 18, 'Nec mireris, inquit, quod eam in equinam formam transformaverim, ut illam usque huc inequitarem, quia dampnatorum animas licet nobis in quaslibet formas et species transformare pro libitu'.

horse was the first form in which one living dead shapeshifter appeared to William of Bradeforth at a crossroads. The Byland monk describes this 'pale horse' (*pallidum equum*) that frightened William's dog that transformed into a revolving piece of cloth.[401] The pale colour of this horse contrasts the black and white horses discussed thus far. Its colour echoes the personification of Death as the fourth horseman in Revelation.[402] In this way, a familiar image for Death may have been deployed here to signify an individual death.[403]

In a similar way, the story about a labourer at Rievaulx also connected death with a horse. Following an accident on the road, the labourer had to abandon his injured horse and take the beans it had been carrying onto his own back. Presumably preoccupied with thoughts of his own abandoned horse, the labourer looked further along the road and 'saw as it were a horse standing on its hind feet and holding up its fore feet'.[404] This shapeshifter turns into a revolving haycock, before it transforms into the shape of a man. The horse is but one appearance of a living dead person, for whom the labourer arranges absolution and masses. Subverted expectations seem key to this narrative; the labourer has been compelled to carry his own goods like a pack horse while the shapeshifting horse stands on its hind legs like a human. When the shapeshifter looks like a man, he takes the beans off the labourer and carries them for him, as if taking over the role of pack horse as penance. This representation of the living dead thus plays upon the roles of human and animal to create an unsettling encounter.

Other Animals

The final group of animals that I would like to examine in this chapter concern encounters with other animals, like oxen, goats, and sheep. There are patterns in the behaviour of these animals in some of the following stories that reveal their strange connection with the living dead, above all with their tombs. In some ways, these creatures reiterate the demonic shapeshifting motif that has recurred throughout the case studies examined in this chapter. On the other hand, there are also behaviours that more closely align these animals with the doves that will be discussed in chapter four.

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[401] *TMGS*, VIII, 419.
[402] Revelation 6:8.
[403] On Death as signifier for personal death, see Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination*, 225-251.
[404] *TMGS*, I, 414, 'vidit quasi equum stantem super pedes posteriores, pedibus anterioribus sursum erectis'.

Goats

In returning to the Byland monk's story of Snowball, we find a representation of a living dead shapeshifter in the form of a goat. Having already appeared as a raven and a dog, the goat is the first form in which the shapeshifter appears at Byland Bank during their second meeting. It is said that Snowball had drawn a circle, in which he had placed four reliquaries in the form of a cross, and stood holding the four Gospels inside it. As he waited in the circle, he saw the shapeshifter 'in the form of a she-goat and went thrice round the circle saying, "Ah! ah! ah!"'[405] At this point, the tailor conjured the she-goat, so that the shapeshifter transformed into his final, human, likeness. The behaviour of the she-goat is connected to the circle drawn by Snowball, such that both seem to participate in some sort of ritual. The numerical correspondences in the text, from the she-goat's three laps and cries to the tailor's four gospels and reliquaries, reinforce this sense of hidden meanings. Like the raven, dog, and horse, the goat can also be understood as a likeness associated with demons. For instance, in the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Coldingham described how demonic illusions, *dæmonum phantasiæ*, in the form of 'hooded black she-goat riders', inhabited the island of Farne, kept at bay by holy men, like Cuthbert and Bartholomew.[406] And yet, the she-goat seen by Snowball presents no black colour, no rider, and no apparent threat. By this point in the story, Snowball had arranged masses for and buried an absolution with this person. For this reason, we might speculate that this riderless she-goat was intended to contrast the earlier shape of the chained dog to signify the gradual liberation of the living dead shapeshifter. The revelation from the living dead man, in his final appearance, that he will enter eternal joy next Monday affirms that his various animal forms were reflections of salvific transformations.

The Ox and Lamb

The behaviour of the she-goat in the Snowball story bears an interesting resemblance to that of other animals. Two comparisons, for instance, can be drawn from Goscelin's eleventh-century *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*. In the first instance, Goscelin describes how Edith received a vision seven days before her death, in which 'an ox went around the cauldron in which her bath used to be heated and sang three times'.[407] The ox, while more commonly associated with Luke the Evangelist, is said to have sung John 3:8 and circled this leaden vessel three times, in a similar way to the she-goat that cried thrice

[405] Ibid., II, 417, 'in figura capre et ter circa iuit circulum prefatum dicendo a. a. a.'.
[406] Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 22, 314, 'cucullati ascensores caprarum nigri'.
[407] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 23, 92, 'plumbum, in quo lauacrum eius calefiebat igni superpositum, bouinum animal ter circuire terque ita circumcantitare'.

while circling Snowball three times. The ox's function in this story seems to reinforce the idea of the ox-as-preacher, or even as prophet given that oxen were said to be able to predict the weather.[408] In the case of Edith, this ox prophesies about her impending death by circling the very vessel that will later be refashioned into her casket.

The second case for comparison, however, concerns not Edith but her mother, Abbess Wulfthryth. Goscelin relates that a woman called Ælflæd had been especially affected by the death of Wulfthryth, such that she would often remain near her tomb in prayer or reciting Psalms. Once, when Easter day was approaching, Ælflæd had stayed in the church after the office when she suddenly saw the tomb shake and its covering billow up, before 'a lamb whiter than snow suddenly came out of the top of the tomb'.[409] Amazed, Ælflæd began to shout and bang her staff on the ground, summoning her sisters with the cry: 'Look, a lamb! Look, a lamb!' (*Hem ecce, inquit, agnus; ecce agnus*). This lamb 'ran three times round her tomb, so that it seemed to be protecting the sleeper who lay there with its threefold circuit (*trino ambitu*) of guardianship; and so it was received back into the bosom of the tomb from which it had come forth'.[410] It is this *trino ambitu* that seems to serve as the connecting idea between the she-goat, ox, and lamb in these tales. Their movement seems ceremonial, quasi-liturgical, but their significance appears to vary depending on the context in which the animal is encountered. The she-goat's ritual, the ox's prophecy, and the lamb's protection each focus upon circular threefold movements, which are deployed to very different ends.

While the lamb's behaviour follows a recognisable pattern, I think that there is an underlying tension in the story surrounding the lamb's interpretation. The liturgical setting of this story, at Eastertide, was crucial to Goscelin's interpretation of the lamb for he presents this creature as the paschal lamb, symbolic of the paschal victim, Christ. Of course, this allusion to Christ is rooted in the gospels and the shaking of the tomb and billowing of the covering appear to be further echoes of the earthquake and tearing of the temple veil that accompanied Christ's death.[411] However, Goscelin's interpretation of this lamb as Christ sits uneasily with parts of the narrative that he has constructed. Most notably, Ælflæd, a senior member of this monastic community, does not recognise this

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[408] Richard Barber, trans. *Bestiary, being an English version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Bodley 764 with all the original miniatures reproduced in facsimile* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 89-90.
[409] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 8, 276, 'subito a uertice tumbe niue candidior agnus egreditur'.
[410] Ibid., 'trino curriculo ad iacentis tumbam circumfertur, ut trino ambitu et munitione requiesscentem tueri uideretur; sicque in eundem quo prodierat tumbe sinum recipitur'.
[411] John 1:29; John 1:36; For the signs that accompanied Christ's death, see Matthew 27:51.

creature as Christ. Her cries do not refer to this animal as the *agnus Dei*, as one would expect. Furthermore, it is unusual for Christ to be presented as residing in or moving through other people's tombs. Nor is there any mention of the conventional elements that usually accompany an encounter with Christ, such as the altar, the Eucharist, or the Crucifix.[412] Rather, the tomb of Wulfthryth is clearly the focal point of the story, as if the lamb resides within her tomb or travels through it. Arguably, this community's understanding of the lamb that leapt from their late abbess' tomb has been distorted by Goscelin's, perhaps reactionary, efforts to mould this story according to scriptural allusions. I believe that a more ambiguous reading of this lamb as a protector, in the tradition of the wolf that guarded Edmund's severed head, is more likely to have reflected its significance to the Wilton women.

The Animals at Throckenholt

The animal behaviours noted around Godric's tomb at Throckenholt exemplify some of the key patterns identified in this chapter. Godric's settlement had been taken over by his relatives and some years after his death they decided to bring roosters to the site. However, the roosters stopped crowing as soon as they were brought there and it is said that no matter how many times the roosters were substituted with new ones, they would always cease to crow.[413] This curious detail about the roosters precedes an unusual sight at Godric's tomb. It is said that 'one day a young man sitting at his door gazing at Brother Godric's grave noticed a little animal whiter than snow repeatedly entering and exiting the tomb'.[414] This 'little animal whiter than snow' (*bestiolam niue candidiorem*) seems strikingly similar to the *niue candidior agnus* seen by Ælflæd at Wilton. The young man responds in much the same way as Ælflæd, shouting to summon his companion.

When the wardens investigate Godric's tomb, they discover that there is 'a gaping hole between the grave and its slab'.[415] The sight of this white creature at the tomb alerts them to the tomb's disrepair. No sooner had they filled this hole when 'the roosters, beating their breasts with their wings, burst forth into their long-suppressed song at the

[412] For the *agnus Dei* descending from above, see Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, II, 618, 314-315; For appearances of Christ, see Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 41, 90-91, 182-185; 70, 147-149, 278-281; Tiberius A. iii, 15, 124-127; 20, 132-135.
[413] *Vita et miracula Godrici Heremite de Trokeholt*, 26, 40-41.
[414] Ibid., 'Quadam itaque die iuuenis quidam in ostio domus sedens et respiciens ad sepulcrum fratris Godrici uidit quandam bestiolam niue candidiorem in sarcofagum intrantem et de sarcofago exeuntem pluribus uicibus'.
[415] Ibid., 26, 42-43, 'foramen apertum inter cooperculum et sarcofagum'.

tops of their voices'.[416] The hole at Godric's tomb is thus revealed to have been the source of the roosters' silence and its repair was heralded by their resounding approval. The behaviours of the roosters and white creature are carefully observed in this story in a manner that echoes the interest in animal behaviours seen throughout this chapter. The narrator uses these animals to tell the wardens and his audience alike that Godric deserves their respect and devotion.

This story may reveal how an animal had made its den or nest in the holy man's grave, disturbing the nearby birds. And yet, the narrator uses this story to show how neglecting the tomb of this holy man disrupts the natural order of things. In the context of similar stories, such as those at Wilton, unexpected animal behaviours, and their proximity to tombs, seem to convey hidden meanings to their onlookers. Unlike the lamb at Wilton, however, this creature appears to be an unwelcome intruder. The emphasis on the white colourings of both the animals at the Wilton and Throckenholt tombs seems to make them unlikely evil creatures. Nevertheless, these creatures seem to share understandings of animal behaviours as signs of hidden knowledge or presences.

Over the course of this chapter, the deployment of animals in stories about the living dead has revealed a repertoire of shared expectations. The animals that were most integrated into medieval societies and economies, namely, birds, horses, dogs, and sheep feature the most prominently in these stories. Bonds forged through ancestry, interaction, and exchange seem to have sustained these interconnections with animals. Their familiar roles in local communities appear to be reflected by messages of inclusion and exclusion across these narratives; flocks of birds and riding companies indicate the communities that await the living dead. These images of flying and riding also appear to have helped to visualise the movements of the living dead. These zoomorphic manifestations were often morally charged, drawing on species and colours to instruct their audiences, deterring them from the fates of wretched ravens and tormented horses. At times, these negative portrayals of animals are demonised, especially in their appearances as omens and shapeshifters. And yet, there is clear evidence that the living dead were also thought, or forced, to assume animal shapes. Perhaps some of the most interesting findings from this chapter concern animal companions. Certain animals,

[416] Ibid., 'galli, pectora sua cum alis tundentes, cantum ab eis diu sublatum cum magno strepitu ediderunt'.

especially dogs and lambs, are said to reveal presences or movements that human percipients may otherwise have missed. The revelatory quality shared by many of these animals obscures their origins, in that it is sometimes unclear whether living animals were believed to be attuned to such spiritual mysteries or other beings in the shapes of animals were understood to have brought this knowledge with them. The multiple functions inscribed into animal behaviours are exemplified by the most widely attested animal shape associated with the living dead: the dove.

Chapter 4: Doves

'O wondrous new metamorphosis! Nothing like this appears in Ovid's works!'[417] With these words, Herman celebrated an instance of wondrous shapeshifting, performed by Edmund. The East Anglian king provided Herman with an opportunity to edify his audience with a pure white, benevolent, shapeshifter to rival and even displace those of antiquity.[418] According to Herman, Wulmar had been lying sick when he saw 'a snowy-white dove fly in at the open door of his house and alight upon the couch next to the head of the sick man's bed'.[419] Wulmar senses that this dove is looking at him, before it 'suddenly changes into the face of a beautiful man'.[420] Herman describes this figure as a 'divine, metamorphosed man' (*celestis uir metamorphosicus*), who rises from the couch to approach Wulmar. In this shape, Edmund touches Wulmar's eyelids and by this he is healed.

Edmund's metamorphosis introduces us to the most frequently attested zoomorphic manifestation of the living dead: the dove. Of course, the dove holds a central place in Christian imagery; the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at Christ's baptism readily authenticated this image's interpretation as a mysterious presence.[421] Furthermore, the creature's multivalence in Christian stories and teachings, as messenger, metaphor, and symbol, further supported its wider deployment in medieval stories.[422] The dove was clearly a useful, malleable, image.[423] However, the range of available interpretations for doves problematises any attempt to isolate a single meaning for this image.[424] In this chapter, I would like to examine the manifold meanings and functions of doves specifically in relation to the living dead.

The transformation of Edmund from dove to man in this story suggests that his two manifestations perform different functions in the narrative. First, the dove travels to

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[417] Herman, *Miracula*, 37, 106-107, 'O noua et inaudita metamorphosis, satis altera quam pandat quiuis liber Nasonis'.
[418] Licence, 'Introduction', in *Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of Saint-Bertin*, lxv-lxvi.
[419] Herman, *Miracula*, 37, 106-107, 'hostio sue domus aperto intus aduolare columbam niuei candoris, assidentem supra sedile domus, quo iacentis lectulus capite erat adnixus'.
[420] Ibid., 'subito mutatur in cuiusdam uenusti hominis uultum'.
[421] Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32.
[422] For dove as envoy, see Genesis, 8:8-11; For dove as metaphorical lover, see Song of Solomon 2:14; On doves and lamentation, see Isaiah 59:11; On doves and innocence, see Matthew 10:16.
[423] For dove as model for preachers, see Barber, *Bestiary*, 161-163.
[424] On doves in different literary contexts, see Beryl Rowland, *Birds with Human Souls: A Guide to Bird Symbolism* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 41-48; Leonard Lutwack, *Birds in Literature* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1994), 98-109.

and enters his dwelling. Like the case studies examined in chapter three, the imagery of the bird in flight lends itself to movement and suggests that this dove serves to express Edmund's journey. Second, in the form of a man, Edmund administers a cure to Wulmar. This shape casts Edmund more clearly in the role of physician, tending to the sick. The transformation thus enables Edmund to perform two wonderful feats: travel to Wulmar and heal him. In this instance, the dove almost seems an unsuitable shape in which to perform the healing. And yet, as we shall see, the functions of doves in medieval literature were wide ranging and at times contradictory. To understand the widespread deployment of doves in medieval literature, this chapter examines the functions that these animals were reported to perform. In what follows, there are times when we must rely on patterns and narrative contexts to identify the most likely readings of these multifaceted creatures. The deployment of doves in tales of the living dead can be understood in a series of narrative contexts, which appear to have been closely associated with this image. This chapter organises its examples with reference to these contexts, by discussing the prominence of doves in decapitation stories, before examining their deployment in accounts of death, burial, healing, and post mortem communication.

Beheadings

Certain personalities in English legend seem to have become particularly associated with doves. We have already encountered Edmund's metamorphosis from dove into man and it is revealing to see the dove deployed elsewhere in connection to this East Anglian king, specifically at his execution. In fact, Edmund is one of a host of characters whose decapitations became visualised with doves in art and literature. For the purposes of this discussion, I have selected four case studies, whose beheadings exemplify the role of the dove according to these narrative patterns. In the last of these case studies, that is, the case of Margaret of Antioch, we also encounter an alternative version of her legend to that examined in chapter two. Due to the nature of the evidence, these case studies facilitate closer study of the correspondences and divergences in narratives that resulted from the translation of the living dead from text to image, and vice versa.

Edmund of East Anglia

Storytelling transformations when translating text into image can be found in the case of Edmund. As we have already seen, the murder of this East Anglian king at the hands of Scandinavian invaders was described in brutal detail by Abbo of Fleury in the late tenth

century. While Abbo's *Passio S. Eadmundi regis et martyris* made no mention of doves, a subsequent iconographic tradition introduced this imagery to the story.[425] An illustrated life of Edmund, produced at Bury St Edmunds Abbey c. 1130, contains two examples by two different artists. For instance, a full-page miniature, one of a series preceding the copy of Abbo's narrative, illustrates in its upper register the king's martyrdom beneath a blue-tinted dove, resting in the hand of God, which breaks out of the frame to convey the dove from the scene of execution (see Figure 2). Later in the manuscript, another artist was commissioned to produce thirty-nine initials to complement the *Passio*, *Miracula*, and offices for Edmund. At the beginning of the sixth lesson of second nocturn in the Matins office, this second artist decorates an initial C with the king's martyrdom. A white dove is shown in the draped hands of an angel above the beheaded body of the king, whose hands stretch out towards his falling head as if to catch it (see Figure 3). The iconographic motif of angels conveying souls in cloth is widely attested in medieval art.[426] A distinctive feature in this example is the substitution of the small human figure, or homunculus, often carried by such cloths, with the dove. The two artists approach this motif with slightly different styles, presenting doves that are, respectively, blue and white, resting and flying, carried by God and by an angel. Nevertheless, both doves seem to represent the departing soul of the king, which cannot make the journey to heaven by means of its wings alone. Despite the absence of this imagery in the textual account, both artists in this manuscript deploy doves to visually represent the departure of the immortal part of this once-living king.

[425] Abbo, *Passio*, 10, 79.
[426] Sheingorn, '"And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest"', 157-158.

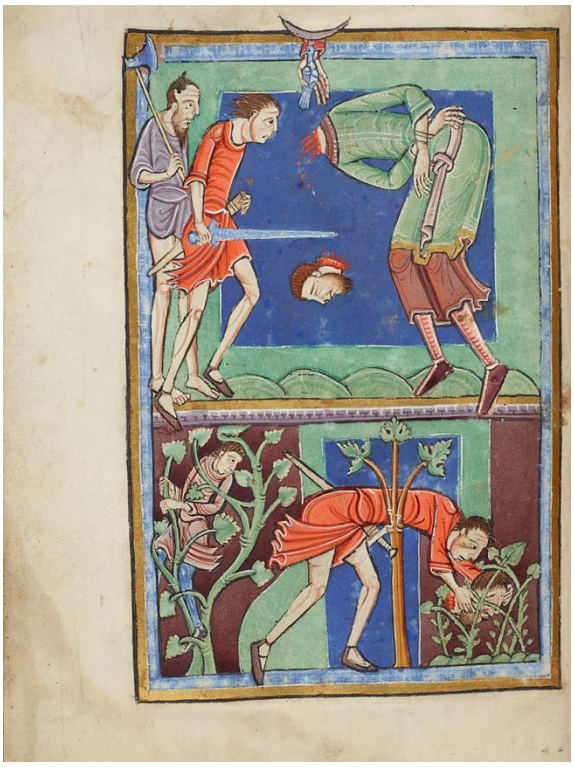

Figure 2. The Martyrdom of Edmund, Morgan, MS M736, fol. 14v, Bury St Edmunds, England, c.1130 © Pierpont Morgan Library.

Figure 3. The Martyrdom of Edmund, Morgan, MS M736, fol. 94v, Bury St Edmunds, England, c.1130 © Pierpont Morgan Library.

Alban the Protomartyr

The repetition of this motif in the Bury manuscript indicates a degree of agreement among at least two artists upon the meaning and significance of doves at scenes of decapitation. Scholars have previously observed, and indeed debated, the stylistic similarities between this Bury miscellany and the St Albans Psalter, a twelfth-century

work commissioned and designed by Abbot Geoffrey de Gorran.[427] The dove motif is one such similarity between the martyrdom miniatures of these two manuscripts. The most likely explanation for these similarities is that a member of the St Albans workshop, whether the Alexis Master or one of their assistants, visited Bury soon after the completion of the St Albans Psalter to design the Bury miniatures.[428] In turn, the Bury miniature designed by this visitor from St Albans could have inspired the similar iconography deployed in the C initial. It is thus to this influential deployment of the dove in the St Albans Psalter that we now turn.

Like Edmund, Alban was stylized as a martyr, whose beheading in the third century came to be later represented with a dove. Once again, there had been no mention of any dove in the textual account, or at least in that incorporated into Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.[429] Nevertheless, the dove served as the visual manifestation of the departing soul of Alban, drawn by an anonymous artist under the instruction of the Alexis Master. A dynamic scene shows the soul of Alban flying to heaven just as the roughly sketched eyes of his executioner fall to the ground (see Figure 4). The ascent of the dove to heaven, portrayed by angels carrying a white bird with outstretched wings, is also presented as simultaneous with the separation of the soul from the body, shown by an angel pulling what was presumably the soul from the mouth of the decapitated head. Jane Geddes has convincingly argued that this miniature, along with the facing illustration David the Psalmist, was relegated to the back of the book when Geoffrey diverted this Psalter from St Albans Abbey to the anchoress Christina of Markyate.[430] And yet, dove imagery is by no means peripheral to discussions of Christina; doves recur throughout her life, from her mother's pregnancy to her pivotal vision of the Holy Trinity, which she shared with Abbot Geoffrey in 1135.[431]

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[427] Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, and Francis Wormald, *The St Albans Psalter / Albani Psalter*, (London: The Warburg Institute, 1960); Katherine R. Bateman, 'Pembroke 120 and Morgan 736: A Re-examination of the St Albans-Bury St Edmunds Manuscript Dilemma', *Gesta* 17:1 (1978), 19-26; Elizabeth Parker McLachlan, *The Scriptorium of Bury St. Edmunds in the Twelfth Century* (London: Garland, 1986).
[428] Jane Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter: A Book for Christina of Markyate* (London: The British Library, 2005), 65.
[429] *HE*, I, 7, 28-29.
[430] Jane Geddes, 'The St Albans Psalter: the abbot and the anchoress', in *Christina of Markyate: A twelfth-century holy woman*, eds. Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 199.
[431] *De S. Theodora*, 1, 34-35; 69, 157-158.

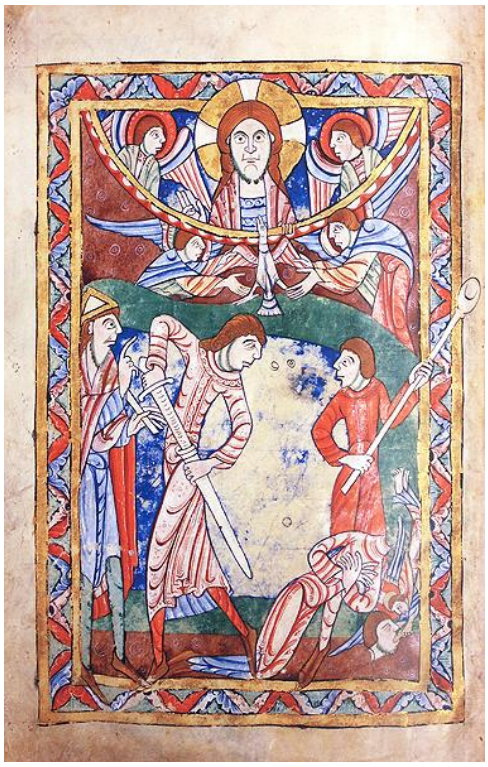

Figure 4. The Martyrdom of Alban, Dombibliothek, Hildesheim, MS St Godehard 1, fol. 208v, c.1125-c.1149 © Basilica of St Godehard, Hildesheim.

The dove thus appears to have been a particularly meaningful image for this St Albans-based abbot, anchoress, and community, one which they shared with the community at Bury. However, while similarities between the St Albans and Bury manuscripts reveal the artists and iconographic motifs in circulation, giving life to these tales of decapitation, their audiences were evidently primed to decode these motifs. The doves are not labelled. Instead, the reception of the dove and its accurate interpretation was taken for granted. A favourable climate for dove imagery at Bury has perhaps already been shown in the form of Herman's tale of their shapeshifting patron. In examining the next two case studies, therefore, I would like to further pursue the associations between doves and decapitations in medieval England that supported this twelfth-century iconography.

Kenelm of Winchcombe

While neither Edmund nor Alban had corresponding textual accounts for doves at their decapitations, the case of Prince Kenelm reveals one existing literary tradition for this link. Allegedly buried at Winchcombe Abbey, this royal child martyr was revered in the eleventh century by the community there, for whom Goscelin of Saint-Bertin wrote one of his earliest works, the *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi* (c. 1070). This *Vita* identifies a white bird as an image of Kenelm's soul early on in its narrative. In a prophetic vision, Kenelm

is said to have seen a great flowering tree, upon which he stood. As he gazed over his lands from atop the tree, Kenelm saw his men cut it down. When the tree fell, Kenelm found that he transformed into 'a little white bird (*auicula candida*) and soared into the heavens with easy flight'.[432] The boy's nurse, an inhabitant of Winchcombe called Wulfwynn, is said to have lamented that this vision had foreshadowed Kenelm's death. According to Goscelin, Wulfwynn also explained to Kenelm that 'the bird in the form of which you entered the heavens is to be interpreted as the glory of your ascending soul'.[433] The prophecy is soon fulfilled; at the hand of his tutor, Æscberht, the seven-year-old Kenelm is beheaded. When Kenelm's head is severed, Goscelin narrates that 'a milk-white dove (*lactea columba*) is rightly thought to have flown through the heavens on golden wings – just the kind of bird Kenelm saw himself as in the vision recounted above'.[434] In this way, Goscelin invites his audience to reinterpret the *auicula candida* from before as the *lactea columba*. The dove is not just introduced into the narrative, it is inserted back into the earlier vision narrative, which had been far more ambiguous about the species of this little white bird. For Goscelin, a white bird evidently implied a dove; its milk-white colour reinforced the infancy and innocence of the boy martyr. However, the conscious decision to reinterpret a white bird as a dove ought not be overlooked. This decision hints at a narrative mould, which shaped white birds into doves, one which will become a recurring theme throughout the subsequent case studies in this chapter.

The narrative patterns deployed in Kenelm's *Vita*, especially in connection to his death, reinforce links between a series of motifs. The alleged mastermind of Kenelm's murder, his older sister Cwoenthryth, is said to have been affected by the sight of his body in a similar way to Alban's executioner, in that both characters have their eyeballs fall out of their sockets.[435] Furthermore, Goscelin writes that Kenelm caught his own 'milky-white head' (*caput Kenelmi lacteum*) with outstretched hands, in a gesture that resembles that of Edmund in the C initial in the Bury miscellany.[436] By extending their hands in this manner, Kenelm and Edmund seem connected to the related tradition of head-carrying, as seen in chapter two. The prophetic vision of Kenelm also bears parallels with the vision of another beheaded East Anglian king, Æthelberht II (d. 794).

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[432] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, in *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi, and Vita S. Rumwoldi*, ed. Rosalind Love, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 3, 56-57, 'auicula Candida et libero uolatu penetraui ethera'; A similar account is preserved in Goscelin's *Vita brevior*, printed as an appendix to Love's edition, see 128-129.
[433] Ibid., 4, 56-57, 'in auicula qua penetrabas ethera intelligitur ascensure anime tue gloria'.
[434] Ibid., 7, 60-61, 'lactea columba aureis pennis transuolasse ethera merito creditur, qualis ipse sibi auicula in superiori uisione uidebatur'.
[435] Ibid., 16, 72-73.
[436] Ibid., 7, 60-61.

Long before Æthelberht was decapitated, supposedly on the orders of King Offa and Queen Cynethryth of Mercia, the anonymous Hereford account of his life reports that he saw a vision of his hall collapsing and a great wooden beam dripping with blood. As for Æthelberht, 'he himself was changed into a bird, whose golden wings covered the beam, and in swift flight it flew upwards'.[437] This metamorphosis into a bird exemplifies the connections binding these storytelling traditions together. These decapitated royals, namely Edmund, Æthelberht, and Kenelm, seem to reinforce one another in their adherence to familiar narrative patterns. In this literary context, the favourable reception of the dove in iconography emerges as a popular motif for innocent decapitated martyrs.

Margaret of Antioch

The dove, however, was but one of many available motifs to medieval writers and artists. Our fourth and final case study in this section aims to deepen our understanding of both the variety of ideas in circulation and the circumstances in which the dove emerged as the preferred, predominant, motif. As we saw in chapter two, there was never a standardised representation of Margaret of Antioch's ascent to heaven after her decapitation; different textual strands disagreed on whether it was the soul, body, or head of Margaret that entered heaven after her martyrdom. These different traditions seem to result from the legend's widespread transmission, across many Greek, Latin, and Old English strands. In chapter two, we focused on the revised Old English T version of Margaret's legend, which asserted that Margaret's head was conveyed to heaven. If we return to the T version, however, we find that a dove does play a vital role in the text, just in a different narrative context. Unlike the *Old English Martyrology* and the other Old English versions of Margaret's legend, the T version repeatedly introduces the dove into its narrative. According to T, a dove descends from heaven on three occasions to comfort Margaret.[438] At its first appearance, the T version relates that 'þær scan swiþe micel leoht on þæm þystran quarterne and Cristes rode wæs gesewen fram eorþan up oþ heofen, and an hwit culfre stod ofer þære rode' (there shone a very great light in the dark prison and the cross of Christ could be seen stretching from earth to heaven, and there was a white dove on the cross).[439] Here, clearly, the white dove signifies the crucified

[437] *Passio S. Athelberhti regis et martiris*, in 'Two Lives of St Ethelbert, King and Martyr', ed. M.R. James, *EHR* 32:126 (1917), 5, 239, 'Se ipsum in auem transfiguratum aureis alis expansis trabem totam obtegisse, leui uolatu superuolitasse'; Trans. Edward Brooks, *The Life of Saint Ethelbert, King and Martyr, 779AD-794AD, East Saxon King of East Anglia, Son of Ethelred, eleventh linear descendant after Raedwald* (Wheelwrights, Thorpe Morieux: Bury Clerical Society, 1995), 5, 31.
[438] Tiberius A. iii, 15, 124-125; 18, 128-131; 20, 132-133.
[439] Ibid., 15, 124-125.

Christ. Indeed, when the dove says, 'Secg me, Margareta' (Speak to me, Margaret), she immediately responds 'Wuldor þe sy, Crist' (Glory be to you, Christ). The T version sustains this identification of the dove with Christ as subsequent conversations between Margaret and the dove bring answers to her prayers and promises of her place in heaven. In this light, the absence of the dove at Margaret's decapitation might follow logically from a narrative that had already identified the dove as Christ.

However, not all versions of the Margaret legend were so consistent in their use of the dove. When Wace came to compose his Old French version of the legend in the twelfth century, he recounted not only Margaret's three visits from a dove, but also her martyrdom when 'Une columbe apertement / Issi del cors veant la gent, / Qui el ciel s'en ala la sus' (a dove clearly / emerged from her body in sight of everyone / and went up to heaven).[440] Wace countenances the dove's potential to signify more than one presence, from God who speaks through a dove to Margaret herself who departs through or as a dove. A medieval audience was evidently expected to infer the dove's significance from the narrative context in which it was deployed. It is this familiarity with narrative contexts that underpins the iconography chosen for Margaret's death in medieval England. Later medieval pictorial cycles present similar iconographic motifs to those found in the Edmund and Alban miniatures. The south wall of St Nicholas' Church, Charlwood, for example, depicts scenes from her life, dated to the early fourteenth century.[441] In the lowest register, there is a now mutilated depiction of Margaret's martyrdom (see Figure 5). The painting shows the prefect sat behind the executioner, who holds Margaret by her hair with one hand and wields a sword with the other. Above Margaret's head, the outline of a white bird is visible, flying upwards with outstretched wings. The correspondences between literary and iconographic representations of doves departing from decapitated martyrs reveal the mutually reinforcing narrative patterns that influenced the selection of an image from a recognisable common stock of motifs.

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[440] Wace, *La Vie de sainte Marguerite*, in *Wace, the Hagiographical Works: The Conception Nostre Dame and the Lives of St Margaret and St Nicholas*, eds. and trans. Jean Blacker, Glyn Burgess, and Amy Ogden (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 717-719.

[441] William Burges, 'Mural Paintings Discovered in Charlwood Church, Surrey, with Some Remarks on the More Ordinary Polychromy of the Thirteenth Century', *Archaeological Journal* 21:1 (1864), 212-213.

Figure 5. The Martyrdom of Margaret, Interior, South Wall, St Nicholas' Church, Charlwood, Surrey, England, c.1300-c.1324 © T Marshall.

Deaths and Burials

Doves were not only deployed in tales of beheadings in medieval literature. Doves often served as meaningful images that audiences were expected to decode. For example, scriptural allusions to dove imagery often framed representations of the virtues and behaviours of religious life.[442] In narratives of death and burial, the behaviour of doves emerges as a recurring interest to percipients. The following case studies reveal the narrative contexts in which doves were thought to signify the movements or presences of the living dead.

Funeral Rites

When Goscelin of Saint-Bertin first came to England, he found work and patronage among the noble women at Wilton. His visits to Wilton brought him into contact with the oral traditions of the community, especially the stories circulating about their principal saints, Abbess Wulfthryth and her daughter Edith (d. 984). Goscelin was commissioned to write a *Vita* of Edith, which he finished c. 1080. Animals, in general, maintain a prominent place in legends about Edith, for she appears to have been known and remembered for her special devotion to animals.[443] In fact, the animals which Edith cared for in life became meaningful signs of her death. Goscelin reports that the doves which Edith had fed 'were suddenly found dead when their mistress fell into her fever,

[442] Goscelin, *Vita S. Werburge*, IV, 36-39; John, *Vita beati Wulfrici*, 31, 48.
[443] Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 54.

foretelling the sleep of their mistress, so that they seemed to anticipate her funeral rites'.[444] The deaths of the doves respond to and anticipate the condition of their mistress, testifying to a harmony between the holy woman and the animals that she nurtured. The way in which the doves are thought to anticipate Edith's funeral rites (*exsequias*) is vague, but this detail suggests the perceived liturgical participation of the doves with the mourning Wilton community. Edith was just twenty-three when she died, but these doves are presented as indications of a naturally anticipated and divinely preordained death, perhaps a message of comfort for her community in their grief at a life cut short.

The idea that doves might participate in rites and liturgies for death is reinforced by the behaviour of a dove after the death of Thomas, prior of Farne. Geoffrey of Coldingham included information about this prior in his late twelfth-century *Vita* about Bartholomew since the prior's arrival at Farne seems to have created some tension with the anchorite. When Thomas died, Geoffrey reports that his body was taken from Farne to Durham, stopping at Gateshead on the way, where it was placed in the Church of St Mary. While the body was lying in the church, Geoffrey recounted that 'a certain deacon of good life saw a snowy dove flying around the bier all night long and performed heavenly service with sacred funeral rites by clapping its wings'.[445] Geoffrey evidently decided that this deacon's testimony was worth inclusion in his narrative, perhaps to show the holiness of yet another figure who came to be buried at Geoffrey's monastery at Durham. While it seemed to be the deaths of Edith's doves that anticipated her funeral rites, in this case it is the beating of the dove's wings over Thomas' body that mimics the performance of sacred funeral rites (*sacris exequiis*). The presence of the dove overnight reinforces this liturgically charged function, in that the dove appears to keep vigil over Thomas. The colour of this dove, which is likened to snow, contrasts with the milk-white colour of the dove in the Kenelm story, and instead stresses the purity and intensity of its colour. Having observed the dove's distinct colour and behaviour, Geoffrey leaves open the interpretation of its significance. It remains unclear whether this dove was an earthly creature, like the doves reared by Edith, or a heavenly visitor, come to render a service. In the absence of any ontological commentary, about whether this dove was an angel,

[444] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 23, 92, 'domina febricitante, domine sue dormitationem portendentes, subito mortue sunt inuente, ut ei uiderentur suas exsequias anteferre'.
[445] Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 15, 308, 'vidit quidam bonæ vitæ diaconus columbam niveam toto noctis tempore circa loculum volitare, et sacris exequiis alarum plausibus cæleste obsequium præstitisse'.

spirit, or soul, we could question the extent to which an interpretation of this sort was even needed to understand the story's message, let alone make the tale worth telling.

Tombs and Translations

For more explicit interpretations of doves, we must return to Goscelin.[446] Following Goscelin's departure from Wilton, he found work at Ely, Barking, and St Augustine's, Canterbury, among other monasteries. It was during his time at St Augustine's during the 1090s that Goscelin produced a series of texts about the abbots and archbishops, whose bodies had been translated into the church there in 1091.[447] One of these translated persons, Hadrian, the seventh-century abbot of the monastery, which was then St Peter's and St Paul's, is said to have appeared in the form of a dove on more than one occasion.[448] His most striking appearance is reported in a story about a frightened pupil, who fled to the abbot's tomb in search of protection from his enraged teacher. The boy is likened to a rabbit that fled to Martin of Tours for refuge, but his teacher violently bursts through the door and moves to take him for a beating. At that moment, however, the teacher saw 'the whitest and gentlest dove on top of the tomb near Hadrian'.[449] The dove is startled by the teacher's entry but then begins to bow its head and spread its wings, as if asking for mercy on the boy's behalf. Goscelin observes how the teacher would hardly have been able to bear Christ's thunder given how he could not bear 'his holy one in the mildness of a dove'.[450] This dove has a dramatic effect upon the teacher, who falls before Hadrian's tomb. Once the teacher had released the boy, it is said that he turned back again and 'saw that very dove flying to the highest vaults of the church, overcoming its mortal form (*specie mortalia uincentem*)'.[451] The dove in this story seems to visualise a form or appearance of Hadrian, Christ's holy one, whose protection at the tomb is made concrete by this animal. The nature of this form is partly illuminated by Goscelin's comment on its *specie mortalia*,

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[446] On Goscelin's enthusiasm for Psalm 54:7, 'O for the wings of a dove', see Tom Licence, 'Goscelin of St Bertin and the Life of St Eadwold of Cerne', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 16 (2006), 193-195.
[447] Sophie Sawicka-Sykes, 'Echoes of the Past: St Dunstan and the Heavenly Choirs of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, in Goscelin's *Historia Translationis S. Augustini*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 48 (2019), 271-299.
[448] For another example, not discussed here, see Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Translatio S. Adriani*, BL, Cotton MS Vespasian B. xx, fol. 247v.
[449] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Libellus de adventu beati Adriani abbatis in Angliam ejusque virtutibus*, BL, Cotton MS Vespasian B. xx, fol. 237v, 'columba candidissima ac mitissima in uertice tumbe adiacentis ADRIANI'.
[450] Ibid., 'sanctam eius in columbe mansuetudine'.
[451] Ibid., 'respicit magister ipsam columbam sua specie mortalia uincentem ad summa ecclesie tecta euolantem'.

'mortal' or 'transient appearance'. As such, the dove appears to be a temporary form in which Hadrian appears to come to the aid of those in need.

By the 1090s, Goscelin had already heard and reported similar testimonies of encounters with doves during his stay at Ramsey. In fact, Goscelin had been struck by the indescribable (*inenarrabilis*) frequency at which Ivo was said to appear when compiling his *Miracula S. Yuonis*.[452] The dove is said to have been one of Ivo's visible forms; Goscelin reports that:

> Nonnulli etiam affirmant, quod ipse, consors cœlestium, visus sit et locutus in columbæ specie. Neque hoc de tanta sancti puritate videre debet incredibile, in quo requievit gratia descendentis super Christum columbæ, quum et plerumque sanctorum animæ visæ legantur in columbæ specie egredi de corpore.
>
> Some also affirm that he, the heavenly brother, was seen and spoke in the form of a dove. Nor, given the purity of the saint, should it be regarded incredible to see him in the same form in which grace, descending, rested upon Christ, since the souls of saints are read to come out of the body in the form of a dove.[453]

As in the story about Hadrian, the dove is here described as a *species*, an 'appearance' or 'form', in which Ivo is seen. Goscelin explains that this external manifestation of Ivo is a reflection of his purity. Goscelin's commentary also reveals his concern with aligning the witness testimonies that he has heard with written accounts that he has read.[454] In fact, these encounters with Ivo may well have reminded Goscelin of his earlier *Vita S. Kenelmi*, in which he had described a milk-white dove flying from Kenelm's body.

In the Ivo legend, however, doves do not follow one fixed pattern of behaviour. For instance, upon the occasion of Ivo's translation from Slepe to Ramsey, the crowd accompanying his body asserted that 'a very white dove flew over the lump (*glebam*) of blessed Ivo' throughout the whole journey.[455] This dove is neither flying from Ivo's body to heaven nor serving as the *species* in which Ivo appears. Rather, its behaviour resembles that of the dove that the deacon saw flying above the body of Prior Thomas. Both Goscelin and Geoffrey thus claim to report witness accounts of doves flapping above bodies prepared for burial. Once again, the purpose of the dove in this context

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[452] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Miracula S. Yuonis*, in *Chronicon Abbatiæ Rameseiensis*, ed. W. Dunn Macray, *RS* 83 (London: Longman, 1886), lxvii.
[453] Ibid., lxvii.
[454] For souls leaving bodies in the forms of doves, see Gregory, *Dialogi*, II, 34, 104; IV, 11, 203.
[455] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Vita S. Yuonis*, *PL* 155:88B-C, 'columba candidissima supervolaverit glebam beatissimi Yvonis'.

seems obscure; its participation in the procession seems ceremonial, but its accompaniment of the body in its transition to a new resting place seems comforting, or even protective. Goscelin offers little clarification, observing only that everyone present testified that 'it had come from heaven by favour of the holy one'.[456] Thus, this dove, sent from heaven yet bound to a body and ultimately indicative of divine favour, exhibits qualities of angel, soul, and Holy Spirit.

On this point, Goscelin's commentary on Ivo's appearance as a dove in the *Miracula* is revealing. As if anticipating scepticism, Goscelin turns to authenticating evidence for dove forms; he cites the descent of the Holy Spirit at Christ's baptism and mentions reading about 'many holy souls seen departing from the body in the form of a dove', without specifying his sources.[457] However, the two contexts cited by Goscelin seem contradictory in their readings of the dove as Holy Spirit and soul. Moreover, the behaviour of the doves in the Ivo legend resembles neither of the doves in these allusions. Neither a dove resting upon Christ's head nor a dove issuing from the mouth or severed neck of a martyr in themselves explain the presence of a dove over Ivo's body during the procession or the form in which Ivo could be seen and heard. The mention of messages from Ivo, who, in the form of a dove, was said to speak to percipients, brings us to the next narrative context in which doves were deployed.

Cures and Communications

The final narrative context for doves under discussion here are reports of cures and communications from doves. The exchange of messages is a recurring theme across encounters with the living dead. In their search for post mortem communication, the pilgrims who brought their prayers and requests to tombs across medieval England provide a wealth of testimonies for such interactions. Of course, the answer to a pilgrim's prayer was in many cases a cure. The selected case studies that follow reveal healing and conversing doves who appear to represent the living dead.

Healing Doves

This chapter opened with the metamorphosis of Edmund from dove into man, a transformation that seemed to imply that the dove was unsuited to the healing function performed by the man. A story about Wulfric of Haselbury contributes another

[456] Ibid., 'eam cœlitus advenisse in gratiam Sancti'.
[457] Goscelin, *Miracula S. Yuonis*, lxvii, 'plerusque sanctorum animæ visæ legantur in columbæ specie egredi de corpore'.

interesting angle to this discussion. According to John of Forde, one day, when Roger de Nonant was staying near Wulfric's cell at Haselbury, a mute man in his retinue fell asleep in front of Wulfric's door. While he slept, 'some paupers standing around outside the rich man's gate seemed to see a dove fly out of the lodging of the man of God and alight on the sleeper, then poke its beak now into his mouth and now his ears as though gently kissing them'.[458] The man awakes to find that he is cured and able to speak. At first, witnesses think that the dove had been sent out by Wulfric from within his cell. However, the mute man gives a very different account of this healing miracle. He explains to his mistress that 'blessed Wulfric had stood by him while he slept and, laying his holy finger on his mouth, had opened it'.[459] These two accounts provide two manifestations for Wulfric, who simultaneously appeared as a dove to the crowd and as a man to the dreamer. This juxtaposition of dove and man resonates with the metamorphosis of Edmund. And yet, while Edmund's metamorphosis had suggested something instrumental about the human form that performed the healing, the dove and the man act simultaneously.

In the absence of Wulfric's voice in this story, John provides his own commentary, explaining that 'there is no dissimilarity between the mute seeing blessed Wulfric appearing in a dream, and those paupers seeing the dove descending on the mute'.[460] According to John, 'blessed Wulfric was in truth a dove'.[461] The dreamer alone is granted permission to recognise Wulfric, in a similar way to the woman at Finchale who was the only person to recognise that the doves sat in the tree were Godric, Thomas, and Cuthbert. John's narrative gives the impression that Wulfric is simultaneously present in the vision of the dove, the vision of the man, and physically within the cell. The presence of Wulfric in multiple images, in multiple places, at the same time is a mystery here, but perhaps it is also a part of the miracle.

One of the most striking appearances of a healing dove in answer to a pilgrim's prayer was reported in the twelfth century at Coldingham. According to the *Vita et miracula S. Ebbe virginis*, potentially written by Reginald of Durham or Geoffrey of Coldingham, doves were seen at the tomb of Æbbe, the seventh-century abbess, on two

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[458] John, *Vita beati Wulfrici*, 68, 95, 'Pauperes igitur qui ad januam divitis astabant, respicientes videbant columbam, quasi de domo viri Dei volantem, super dormientem hominem descendere; et nunc ori nunc auribus dormientis velut quodam blando osculo rostrum infigere'.
[459] Ibid., 68, 95-96, 'dormienti sibi astitisse beatum Wulfricum respondit et digito suo ori ejus imposito os ipsius aperuisse'.
[460] Ibid., 96, 'Proinde non dissimilis visio muti cui beatus Wulfricus per somnum visus est et pauperum illorum qui columbam super eum descendentem viderunt'.
[461] Ibid., 'Vere enim beatus Wulfricus columba erat'.

occasions. In the first instance, a young girl who had lost her sight, hearing, and speech had come to the oratory to spend the night in vigils. During the night, it is said that 'she saw a snow-white dove standing on the altar, which she begged to be given to her'.[462] In asking for the dove, the young girl regained the ability to speak, along with her other faculties, by a miracle of healing that was asserted by the young girl, her parents, and the women who had accompanied her. It is not just the presence of the dove that seems significance in this tale, but also the young girl's desire to have and to hold the creature; the implication may be that the dove signifies the health that the young girl sought.

On the second occasion, a dove was said to appear to a servant woman, who, for four years, had suffered from a swollen belly. The miracle collector reports that she, like the young girl, was performing vigils when 'she saw a white dove, which flapped its wings at her in a wonderful way and traversed her belly with repeated beating of its wings, frequently going away and returning again and performing the same action over again, before finally disappearing from sight'.[463] This extensive description of the movements of the dove gives it a peculiar agency, as if it performs a ritual or, given its curative context, procedure that restores the woman to health. The behaviour of this dove could correspond with that of the dove seen at Haselbury, when Wulfric healed the man outside his cell. In a similar way, the dove may have been an appearance through which Æbbe was thought to heal this woman. A further connection between the two Coldingham stories is of course the context of incubation, that is, the act of spending the night at the site in search of healing. Robert Bartlett has pointed out the correspondence between the exceptionally high frequency of apparitions of Æbbe with the frequency of incubation, both nearing 60 per cent of the 43 miracles in the collection. The nocturnal setting of these stories seems important and links back to the idea of nocturnal agents, discussed previously in chapter one with reference to Edmund's nocturnal perambulation. The two doves, however, appear to stand out from the other miracle stories at Coldingham. Their presence introduces a motif with multiple possible interpretations into a collection that otherwise had an established pattern for narrating Æbbe's appearances. While the dove in the first story is situated on the altar and desired by the female percipient, the dove in the second story attends to the sick woman and

[462] *Vita et miracula S. Ebbe virginis*, in *The Miracles of St Æbba of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), IV, 1, 32-33, 'super altare columbam niueam stare conspexit, quam sibi… dari peciit'.
[463] Ibid., IV, 22, 56-57, 'columbam niueam conspexit, que ei mirabiliter applausit et crebro alarum uerbere uentrem perlustrauit et, sepius recedens et denuo rediens, cum idem semper opus repeteret, ab oculis demum euanuit'.

performs the action of healing. Ultimately, these readings coexist in a collection that seems to have been especially concerned with nocturnal encounters with the late abbess.

The Finchale Flock

This dual reading of the dove, as both the object of prayer and its responding agent, can also be found elsewhere. Given that there is a case for Reginald of Durham to have been the author of the *Miracula S. Ebbe*, it is interesting to note that his *Miracula S. Godrici* provides further evidence of curative doves responding to prayer. Reginald narrates how a sick woman came from the hospital at Durham to Finchale, where she 'saw St Thomas flying very close around her in the shape of a dove'.[464] This account more explicitly identifies the dove as a *species* of Thomas of Canterbury. And yet, like the mute girl at Coldingham, this sick woman also desires to hold the dove for 'she tried to catch the dove in her hands when she saw it quite close to her'.[465] The woman's reaction, to reach out her hands to catch the dove, reinforces its tangibility and adds a degree of authenticity to the account. Nevertheless, the idea that the dove is the object of the sick woman's desire appears compatible with the interpretation of the dove as Thomas. Perhaps her desire was thus not just the restoration of her health but a sense of closeness, contact even, with an archbishop who was buried hundreds of miles away. The image of the dove may therefore have facilitated the bridging of great geographical distance, visualising Thomas in flight to Finchale to answer the prayers of his devotees.

Archbishop Thomas was not the only person who appears to have flown about Finchale. In fact, the deployment of doves elsewhere in the *Miracula S. Godrici* suggests that Finchale was a meeting place to which not only pilgrims, but also the living dead flocked. In another story, it is said that a woman afflicted by poison came to Finchale for healing where she saw the tree that Godric had planted next to the church door. Reginald narrates that she looked at this tree and exclaimed 'Look! I see St Cuthbert, the bishop, and St Thomas, the martyr of Christ, and the blessed man of God, Godric, sitting together in that tree'.[466] The people around her turned to look and 'clearly saw three very white doves sitting together in the tree'.[467] These doves then flew from the tree and perched on top of the church. The woman continues to explain what she sees to those

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[464] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 374b, 652-653, 'in specie columbe Sanctum Thomam circa se uolantem cominus uidit'.
[465] Ibid., 'Dum igitur columbam circa se propius uidit… sepius eam manibus comprehendere nisa fuit'.
[466] Ibid., 413, 682-683, 'Ecce Sanctum Cuthbertum pontificem, et Sanctum Thomam martyrem Christi, et beatum uirum Dei Godricum in arbore illa considentes aspicio'.
[467] Ibid., 'tres columbas candidissimas in ipsa arbore considentes manifeste uidebant'.

about her, relating how Cuthbert passes an aspergil to Thomas and now Thomas readies himself to sprinkle a blessing upon them all. Nevertheless, 'the people could see nothing but the form of shining white doves'.[468] Reginald observes that the appearance of shining white doves, *species candidatarum columbarum*, seen by all differed from the appearance of individual holy persons, *species singulorum sanctorum*, seen by the woman alone. Both the doves and the individuals are regarded as *species*, which suggests that they are just comprehendible appearances of otherwise incomprehensible living dead persons. Furthermore, the multiple levels of perception here echo the Haselbury story, in which we also found a disagreement on whether the witnesses had seen a dove or Wulfric himself. Yet the Finchale story also highlights exchanges and interactions between the living dead themselves, harmoniously presented as a flock of birds. These flocks were frequently sighted at Finchale according to this miracle collection.[469] In the chapter that follows, a similar interpretation of 'white doves roaming around the church and the courtyard many times throughout the night' as these holy persons illuminates the potency of this idea that the living dead congregated at Finchale in the form of doves.[470]

Speaking Doves

Thus far, we have examined how doves answered prayers silently, except for the sound of their beating wings. Ivo of Ramsey, however, had been said to speak while in the form of a dove. To find a transcript of such a conversation with a dove, we must turn to the life of another relatively obscure holy man. In the early twelfth century, Godric of Throckenholt was living in the Fens as a hermit with his servants and companions. When one of their number drew close to death, Godric requested him to reveal his condition once he had departed. The brother agreed; after he had died, Godric's oratory was filled with light, before the hermit saw above the altar 'the figure of a white dove, which said to him: "How exhausted I am to report to you what things I have seen concerning you"'.[471] The dove speaks as if it has personally undergone the journey and suffering that it describes. In this way, the dove seems indistinguishable from the brother himself, or at least an immortal part of him. The dove is notably accompanied by light imagery in this story. Just as light floods the oratory at the dove's arrival, it also signals

[468] Ibid., 'Populus uero non nisi species candidatarum columbarum uidere preualuit'.
[469] For a similar story, see the appearance of John the Baptist, Thomas of Canterbury, and Godric of Finchale as three shining birds at Finchale, in Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 373, 652-653.
[470] Ibid., 414, 684-685, 'columbas iterum albentes sepius ecclesiam et atria perlustrantes per noctem sepius'.
[471] *Vita et miracula Godrici Heremite de Trokeholt*, 18, 36-37, 'apparuit species quedam columbe candide, et hoc modo fratrem Godricum alloquitur: "Quamplurimum fatigatus sum ut ea que de te uidi tibi nuntiarem"'.

its departure; after hearing the brother's message, Godric watched 'a light set sail towards the east'.[472]

Once again, however, our source text presents multiple readings for the dove. In the very next chapter, just after Godric has spoken with the brother in the form of a dove, another dove visits Godric. This time, Godric is said to have been praying on behalf of his niece, Wulfgifu Greve, who was still living in his hometown of Wisbech. While praying one day, it is said that 'a dove appeared, whiter than snow, and announced that God, through his intercession, had pardoned the faults of the sinner entrusted to his prayers'.[473] Delighted with this news, Godric called for his niece and reassured her that she had been forgiven. In contrast to the preceding chapter, the direct speech of this dove is not given. Furthermore, the dove on this occasion is evidently not an appearance of the person on whose behalf Godric was praying. Instead, the dove acts as a third party, an envoy, conveying a message to Godric about the spiritual condition of his niece. Even though these different representations of doves appear to have ontological implications, that is, the soul of a deceased person in one story and an angelic messenger in the other, the text does not countenance any tension in logic in this diverging use of doves. Rather, both doves demonstrate Godric's ability to converse with beings beyond the access of his clients, like his niece. The multivalence of accepted interpretations for such doves could work to the advantage of a writer who was so keen to show Godric's access to these secret conversations.

This range of accepted interpretations for doves complicates our efforts to understand their relationship to the living dead. And yet, this chapter has uncovered narrative patterns and contexts that agree that the dove was a familiar appearance for the living dead. Equipped with this knowledge, it becomes possible to navigate the range of available interpretations and reach readings for some of the more obscure manifestations of doves in medieval literature. For the purposes of this study, I have selected a story, associated with the legends of Dunstan, to serve as an example for how we might apply these findings to unexplained appearances of doves.

B.'s tenth-century *Vita S. Dunstani* seems to digress when B. writes about one of Dunstan's relatives, called Æthelflæd.[474] She is said to have been one of King Æthelstan's nieces, who came to live near Dunstan's church at Glastonbury after her husband died to

[472] Ibid., 'lux illa uersus orientem tetendit'.
[473] Ibid., 19, 36-37, 'apparuit columba niue candidior dicens ei quod Deus intercessionibus eius predicte peccatrici commissa sua pro qua petierat condonauerat'.
[474] For the chapters on Æthelflæd, see B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, 10-11.

pursue a religious life. When Æthelflæd fell ill, Dunstan cared for her so arduously that one evening he missed Vespers. That night, Dunstan went to perform the missed office from outside the now locked church. B. narrates that, as he stood there, 'he saw, far away in the eastern quarter of the sky, a white dove burst forth, a bird of remarkable beauty but unusual appearance'.[475] The *noua specie*, 'unusual appearance', of this dove indicates to Dunstan that it signifies something meaningful. And so, when he watches the dove fly across the sky to Æthelflæd's dwellings, he hurries back. There, he finds her engaged in conversation behind a curtain. Æthelflæd's maids explain to Dunstan that they had no idea who she was talking to, but before he had arrived 'a ray of extreme brilliance filled this whole room with its glow'.[476] Even now, they said, 'though the light has died away, she has not stopped her conversation, as you can hear now for yourself'.[477] Dunstan waits awhile for her to finish but, growing impatient, decides to throw back the curtain and find out to whom Æthelflæd had been talking. However, Æthelflæd is alone. She explains to Dunstan that she had been talking to 'he who appeared to you as you stood and sang outside the church door'.[478] Æthelflæd then reveals that her conversation had uncovered details about her death and the place awaiting her in heaven.

Although B. did not explain who or what this dove represented, William of Malmesbury, one of Dunstan's later hagiographers, applied his own interpretation to the story.[479] According to William, Dunstan saw 'a dove of flame, its wings flickering with sparks; and he knew it to be the Holy Spirit, which once borrowed the form of that same bird to light on the Lord Christ by the Jordan'.[480] The flames and sparks in William's account are derived from B.'s description, but the emphasis on the Holy Spirit is new. Like Goscelin, as we saw in his account of Ivo's appearance as a dove, William turns to Scripture to gloss this strange story, which ultimately leads him to extend this logic to identify the Glastonbury dove as the Holy Spirit. Once again, the use of the Holy Spirit as an explanatory framework seems as authenticating as it is tenuous. Æthelflæd's visitor behaves very differently from the dove described at Christ's baptism and clearly performs a very different function. After all, the Holy Spirit did not come down to have a chat with

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[475] B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, 11, 36-39, 'uidit eminus ex orientis caeli climatibus prorumpentem niueam columbam, mira siquidem pulchritudine sed noua specie renitentem'.
[476] Ibid., 38-39, 'inmensi splendoris iubar totum hoc cubiculum rutilando repleuit'.
[477] Ibid., 'postea cessante lumine ipsa, ut ipse nunc audis, loqui erga loquentem non cessauit'.
[478] Ibid., 'Ipse enim mecum loquebatur qui tibi psallenti dum stabas ante hostium aecclesiae apparuit'.
[479] Edmer of Canterbury, like B., does not explain who or what this dove represented, see Edmer, *Vita et Miracula S. Dunstani*, 13, 72-73.
[480] William, *Vita S. Dunstani archiepiscopi*, I, 13, 196-197, 'columbam scintillanti alarum plausu flammeam, intellexitque esse Spiritum sanctum, qui quondam eiusdem auis mutuatus simulacrum apud Iordanem descendit in Dominum Christum'.

Christ while he stood in the Jordan. There is also no consensus on this dove's significance among modern scholars. Douglas Dales seems to agree with William's reading that this story recounts the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove upon Æthelflæd.[481] Conversely, in their recent edition of B.'s *Vita*, Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge cite examples of angels in the forms of doves as the literary context in which to understand the story.[482] I would like to evaluate the credibility of these variant readings of B.'s narrative and, in doing so, suggest another, that Æthelflæd had been visited by a once living friend in the form of a dove.

To assess the most compelling reading of B.'s story, we may begin with Æthelflæd's response to Dunstan when he asked with whom she was speaking. Her reply does not directly identify the speaker, but it does consistently use pronouns that are masculine in their grammatical gender, namely, *illum* and *ipse*. The pronouns are thus at odds with the grammatically feminine gender of the dove (*columba*) who came to her. As such, Æthelflæd's speech appears to acknowledge a grammatical distinction between the speaker and the dove. Of course, this masculine gender does not clarify whether Æthelflæd was talking to an angel (*angelus*), spirit (*spiritus*), the Holy Spirit (*sanctus Spiritus*), or the soul of a man. However, the speaker's role, in conversing with Æthelflæd, seems to correspond with conceptions of angels and souls as messengers. As in the case of the doves at Throckenholt, the potential for an angel and a soul to share an identical appearance undermines the validity of drawing a distinction between them.

The relationship between Æthelflæd and this unseen speaker, however, hints at the presence of a once living person. While Dunstan waited behind the curtain, B. narrates that he heard Æthelflæd talking 'as though she were exchanging words with some intimate'.[483] Whoever the dove represents is thus presented as an intimate friend (*familiari amico*) of Æthelflæd. This intimacy does not necessarily exclude an angel from our consideration of this dove, but it does crucially correspond with terms used by B. to refer to another visiting soul in their *Vita*. One of Dunstan's superiors, a deacon at Glastonbury called Wulfred, was said to return after death to visit Dunstan. Wulfred is introduced as an intimate friend (*familiaris amator*) of Dunstan and, like Æthelflæd's visitor, the late deacon brought news to Dunstan about everything that would befall him

[481] Dales, *Dunstan*, 149.
[482] Winterbottom and Lapidge cite examples of angels as doves sitting atop heads or flying to heaven that may derive from the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism of Christ, see B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, 11, 38, n. 101.
[483] B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, 11, 38-39, 'quasi cum quodam familiari amico, per uices uerborum sermocinantem'.

in the future. There are clear parallels between the terminology and function deployed in the stories about Wulfred in chapter 9 and the dove in chapter 11. Both are intimate friends of their percipients, bringing prophetic messages to prepare them for death. There thus seems to be an internal basis for interpreting the dove that visited Æthelflæd as a living dead person.

As well as internal grounds for this reading, there are also interesting patterns between the Glastonbury story and other accounts of living dead doves. The story about the brother of Throckenholt provides a useful analogue here. Both Godric's and Æthelflæd's visitors are said to come from an eastern, heavenly, origin. Furthermore, the doves that appear to Æthelflæd and Godric are both, respectively, accompanied by light, which disappears. While the disappearance of the light at Throckenholt seems to have been simultaneous with the departure of the dove, however, B. narrates that Æthelflæd remained in conversation even after the light had disappeared. In other words, the light only accompanied the dove on its journey and arrival, perhaps disappearing when it was no longer needed. The role of light, and its potential to guide and convey the living dead, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

Given these patterns between our narratives, it seems pertinent to ask who might have come to speak with Æthelflæd. I believe that Wulfred, Dunstan's visitor, provides the key to understanding this story. Two chapters earlier, Dunstan had asked Wulfred how he was to know that all his friend had said to him was true. To prove his credibility, Wulfred led Dunstan to the churchyard and pointed out to him where 'there will be buried in this place within three days a priest who is not yet sick'.[484] The next day, Dunstan marked out the place with a stone. Just as Wulfred had foretold, a priest walked by and indicated to his companions that he wished to be buried in that same spot. This man was said to have been 'the chaplain and priest of a noble and devout married lady, Æthelflæd'.[485] In fact, it is the mention of Æthelflæd at the end of this story that prompts B. to tell the two stories about her that follow, in chapters 10 and 11. I believe that this chaplain, whose death had been foretold by Wulfred two chapters earlier, was meant to be understood as Æthelflæd's visitor. The masculine pronouns and intimate friendship with Æthelflæd mentioned in the narrative support this hypothesis. Moreover, the revelation of his death in chapter 9 may have thought to make his presence in chapter 11 implicit. Just as Æthelflæd assumes that Dunstan knew who had appeared to him, B. may

[484] Ibid., 9, 32-33, 'hoc in loco ante triduum presbiter quidam sepelietur, sed nondum est infirmatus'.
[485] Ibid., 'cuiusdam Æthelflædae, nobilissimae ac religiosissimae matronae, minister et sacerdos'.

have assumed that his readers would recognise the reappearance of the figure whose death had been foretold two chapters previously. It seems plausible that this narrative context could have been lost on Dunstan's later hagiographers. In fact, when Edmer of Canterbury wrote his *Vita S. Dunstani*, he reordered the chapters, such that he told the tale of Æthelflæd, whom he calls Ælfgifu, and the Glastonbury dove three chapters before that of Wulfred.[486] This hypothesis reveals that B.'s digression about Æthelflæd was not so much an interruption, but a continuation of the narrative strands left by an earlier appearance of a living dead friend.

Doves were inscribed with a range of meanings in medieval literature. As a shape synonymous with faith, benevolence, and innocence, the dove served as the predominant manifestation in positive representations of the living dead. By tracking these doves, this chapter has shifted our attention from the authority of this familiar Christian image to its malleability in medieval storytelling traditions. While the dove's predominance among zoomorphic manifestations was explained by some writers, like Goscelin of Saint-Bertin and William of Malmesbury, with reference to Scriptural authorities, the dove also exhibited behaviours that extended beyond these allusions. The vigilant and conversational doves encountered in many of these stories seem to view this symbol as an agent, one that might conceal a benevolent presence.

[486] Wulfred is unnamed in Edmer's *Vita*, see Edmer, *Vita et Miracula S. Dunstani*, 16, 76-77.

Chapter 5: Elements

These zoomorphic motifs have illustrated how animals that performed key roles in medieval society were commonly associated with the living dead. The living dead were evidently woven into the fabric of medieval communities, but they were also intimately connected to medieval cosmologies. Certain forms and behaviours associated with the living dead reveal their continued claim on the world that they had once inhabited. This world, according to classical schemes that were reiterated by medieval writers, was formed of elements, namely, earth, water, air, and fire.[487] These four elements were thought to correspond with seasons, humours, and colours; such correspondences were thought to reflect the bonds holding the world in balance. Furthermore, the interface between these elements generated powerful images and frameworks for understanding other phenomena, like light and motion. By analysing the relationship between the living dead and the elements, this chapter tracks the most dominant representations and functions for elements in stories about the living dead. In doing so, this chapter examines what such imagery may reveal about the qualities and behaviours of the living dead.

Air

Of all the elements, it is the relationship between soul and air that has received the most attention from both medieval and modern scholars. Etymological links between 'soul/spirit' and 'wind/breath' in Greek and Latin typically framed these commentaries. Isidore of Seville was inconsistent about the connection between the Latin *anima* and the Greek *anemos* (wind) that enters the body.[488] Recent linguistic and literary studies have found medieval images of breath, wind, and air in connection with the soul.[489] Malcolm Godden has suggested that there was a 'primitive identification of soul with breath' in early medieval England, or at least around the time when Ælfric was writing his homilies.[490] If breath was so integral to conceptualisations of the human soul, we

[487] Isidore of Seville, *De natura rerum*, in *Traité de la nature*, ed. and trans. Jacques Fontaine (Bordeaux: Féret et fils, 1960), 11, 213-217; Bede, *De temporum ratione*, in *Bedae: Opera de temporibus*, ed. Charles Jones (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1943), 35, 246-247; Trans. Faith Wallis, in *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 35, 100-101.
[488] On Isidore and the incorporeal soul, see Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 205-212.
[489] Solomonik-Pankrašova, 'Near-synonyms for the concept of soul', 181-188; James Paz, 'Mind, mood, and meteorology in *Þrymful Þeow* (R.1-3)', in *Riddles at Work in the Early Medieval Tradition: Words, Ideas, Interactions*, eds. Megan Cavell and Jennifer Neville (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 196.
[490] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', 285.

might expect a nexus of breath, wind, and air to be a dominant motif in narratives of the living dead. The following discussion examines how different writers interpreted this contentious relationship between air, in all its forms, and the living dead in medieval narratives.

Breath

The association between soul and breath seems to have been reinforced by representations of the mouth as the exit point for the departing soul. In *The Guthlac Roll*, a visual account of Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci* from about the early thirteenth century, we find such a representation of the departure of Guthlac's soul. In the roundel inscribed *Guthlac[us] morit[ur]*, 'Guthlac dies', a small, childlike, figure labelled *anima*, 'soul', is drawn (see Figure 6). The ankle of this figure almost touches the lips of the recumbent Guthlac, as if it has just emerged from his mouth. Nimbed angels hold and receive the soul, which seems to ascend in or through heavenly rays that reach down to Guthlac's face. The idea of the mouth as an exit point is reinforced throughout the roll by similar portrayals of demons issuing forth from the lips, such as when Guthlac expelled a demon from Ecgga (see Figure 7).[491] Unlike the demon, Guthlac's soul is taken into the hands of an angel. And yet, its movement seems associated with the air released in Guthlac's final breaths. As we will see in chapter six, Guthlac's final breaths in Felix's written account are crucial to a sensory deathbed experience, which corresponds with the artistic choices made in *The Guthlac Roll*. For the purposes of this chapter, however, the motifs of rays and conveyance through the air suggest interactions between living dead figures and the world around them. The case of Guthlac's soul thus introduces two recurring themes, light and motion, that seem to express interactions between the living dead and the elements.

[491] For demons issuing from the lips of recumbent figures in *The Guthlac Roll*, see BL, MS Harley Roll Y6, roundels 10 and 18.

Figure 6. The Death of Guthlac, BL, MS Harley Roll Y6, roundel 14, c.1175-c.1215 © British Library Board.

Figure 7. The Exorcism of Ecgga, BL, MS Harley Roll Y6, roundel 10, c.1175-c.1215 © British Library Board.

This emphasis on final breaths, and that which is released with them, appears again in stories associated with Godric of Finchale. Reginald of Durham narrates a story, set after Godric's death, about the dying moments of a man who had been close to the hermit. He lay in the house at Finchale, where two women were attending to him. At the hour of his death, Reginald reports that Godric entered the house through a small hole in the latticed door. The two women are said to have recognised Godric and watched as he 'stretched out his hand over the mouth of the dying man'.[492] Godric then leaves in the same way that he had entered, 'through the small hole' (*per modicum foramen*) in the door. The means by which Godric enters and exits this story seem peculiar; the use of a

[492] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 593, 838-839, 'procedens manum super emigrantis ora protendit'.

small hole, as opposed to the door itself, raises the question of whether this Godric, like the drawing of Guthlac's soul, is some miniature or spectral form of his former self. A hole in the fabric of the door permits the living dead hermit to enter, but the narrator omits the shape in which Godric enters before he assumes a human shape. The act of covering the man's mouth is interpreted by Reginald as Godric's attempt 'to protect the soul of the dying man'.[493] As in *The Guthlac Roll*, the soul seems to be issuing forth from the mouth. In this case, Godric seems to assume the role played by the angels upon Guthlac's death, protecting the soul when it is at its most vulnerable.

Godric's concern for departing souls is a recurring theme in Reginald's *Vita*. Before Godric had even reached Finchale, he is said to have had a particularly intimate encounter with a departing soul when he was living at Wolsingham. There, Godric had assumed responsibility for the needs of a much older hermit called Ælric. When Ælric was nearing his death, Godric is said to have planned to watch for his passing to better understand death. Initially, Godric seems to fail in this task, for he awakens from sleep to find Ælric not breathing. And yet, having moved God to compassion with his tears, Godric is thought to have granted a second chance to see Ælric's soul depart. Reginald narrates that the spirit, *spiritus*, that had departed now returned to Ælric through his mouth, *inter fauces*, and a soul, *anima*, was once again discerned in his panting chest, *sub anhelo pectore*.[494] The function of these two principles, *spiritus* and *anima*, is unclear in this description. Both principles are present, and thus explain the signs of life observed in Ælric's rising and falling chest. And yet, the *spiritus* alone is said to have entered through the mouth, while the *anima* is simply there in the chest. In this way, Ælric's quasi-resurrection resembles that of Abbot Foldbriht, whose returning *spiritus* and beating chest were discussed in chapter one.

Unlike Foldbriht, however, Ælric does not regain his power of speech. Having watched Ælric draw in just three deep breaths, Godric is said to have observed how, at the fourth breath, the *spiritus* was released from his body. It is at this point in the narrative that we being to realise that *spiritus* and *anima* are being used interchangeably by Reginald for when asked by a monk from Durham to describe what he saw, Godric then claims to have seen his *anima*. The description that follows is presented as Godric's account of what this departing *spiritus*/*anima* looked like. It appeared to be 'in the shape of an all-consuming wind, which was also very hot, round in shape all over, like the sphere

[493] Ibid., 'quasi egredientis animam protecturus'.
[494] Ibid., 12, 96-97.

made by a rotating body'.[495] This wind imagery seems to correspond with Ælric's breaths yet places greater emphasis on air as not only the vehicle for movement but also the manifestation of the *spiritus*/*anima*. Alternatively, the description could be read for its sun or star imagery as its presents the *spiritus*/*anima* as a hot, rotating, sphere. The resemblance of this gaseous orb to a sun or a star is also reinforced by a subsequent description of its radiance, in that it is said to be emitting rays of light. These multiple images reveal the recourse to elemental and natural concepts to make sense of that which survives death.

Smoke

The examples of Guthlac and Ælric reveal the significance of air movements at the deathbed. A further, Cistercian, context provides a helpful parallel to the case of Ælric by showing another form in which a living principle was thought to leave a dying body. Around the same time that Reginald was writing his *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, Herbert of Clairvaux was compiling a collection of Cistercian vision and miracle narratives. Among these stories, there is one tale about the death of a monk at Bourges that bears some resemblance to the story of Ælric. Herbert describes how the monk's soul, *anima*, had been seen leaving his body 'like the smoke of incense rising from a censer'.[496] Once it had left the body, this smoky trail 'drew itself into a ball and stood over the corpse, suspended in the air about four or five cubits up'.[497] As in the case of Ælric, the spherical shape of the soul and its exit through the mouth are stressed. The formation of this spherical shape is given a more detailed description by Herbert; in this case, the ball seems less like an attribute of the soul itself and more like a convenient form it takes when it accumulates, or even coagulates. Air seems to be significant in two ways here. First, the suspension of the ball, specifically four of five cubits above the body, suggests that air supports the soul. Second, the cloud of smoke, *nebula fumi*, that manifests the soul appears to deploy two visible manifestations of air produced through its interaction with water and fire, respectively. The example from Bourges reinforces the role of air at the deathbed, when witnesses watch attentively for their friends' final moments. Herbert's story may also reveal Cistercian influence, along with that of the eremitic tradition represented by

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[495] Ibid., 'in similitudinem cuiusdam uenti urentis uidi et feruidi, quasi undique in rotundo scemate in spherica corporis similitudine regirantis'.
[496] Herbert of Clairvaux, *Liber miraculorum*, in *Herbert von Clairvaux und sein Liber miraculorum: die Kurzversion eines anonymen bayerischen Redaktors: Untersuchung, Edition und Kommentar*, ed. Gabriela Kompatscher Gufler (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 21, 146, 'quasi fumum incensi de turibulo procedentem'.
[497] Ibid., 'collegit se in unum globum et stetit supra corpus in aera suspensa altitudine IIII aut V cubitorum'.

Guthlac, on Godric's interest in departing souls.[498] Taken together, these accounts reveal the visible manifestations that were thought to signal someone's invisible, final, breaths.

Smoke also appears to have been a useful motif for representing invisible movements in Old English literature. On the death of Beowulf, it is said that the Geatish people built a pyre, laid him upon it, and watched the flames burn his body. After a funeral song, the lament of one Geatish woman, there comes the half-line: 'Heaven swallowed the smoke'.[499] This smoke seems to have been regarded as portentous; Davidson has noted that there was a custom, practiced in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark until the late nineteenth century, that involved observing the direction in which smoke from burning the bedstraw, *likhalm*, on which a corpse had been laid blew.[500] This Scandinavian context would certainly correspond with the setting of this Old English poem. Alternatively, Aaron Hostetter has linked this rising smoke to the song of the Geatish woman, carrying her grim predictions for the future to the sky.[501] The mention of *heofon* at this point is interesting, however, and may indicate that the smoke is intended as a signifier of Beowulf's own fate.[502] The smoke from the pyre may have been thought to explain, or even facilitate, the movement of an immortal part of the hero to the afterlife. These speculations aside, in including this detail, the *Beowulf*-poet invites the Geatish people, along with his Old English audience, to watch for the smoke.

There is further evidence that smoke issuing from a pyre was believed to be meaningful in medieval England. Cremation, as we have seen, released spirits, such as the evil spirit that flew from the pyre in the Drakelow story. This cremation, however, released more than just an evil spirit. For the locals in this story, the living dead fugitives had spread a disease so fatal that only two peasants remained of the population. The speech of the fugitives, which will be examined in chapter six, seems to have been instrumental in the spread of this disease, mediated by their mouths and breath. Those who cremated their hearts seemed to understand that to counter this disease the village needed to be rid of its infectious agents. The cremation thus proves to be crucial to

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[498] For Cistercian mystical experiences, and possible Cistercian influences on the Benedictine Reginald of Durham, see Tom Licence, 'The Gift of Seeing Demons in Early Cistercian Spirituality', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 39:1 (2004), 49-65.
[499] *Beowulf*, 43, 294-295, 3155b, 'Heofon rece swealg'.
[500] Davidson, 'The Restless Dead', 158-159.
[501] Aaron Hostetter, 'Disruptive Things in Beowulf', in *New Medieval Literatures* 17, eds. Wendy Scase, Laura Ashe, and David Lawton (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), 60.
[502] Stanley Greenfield, 'Beowulf and the judgement of the righteous', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Honour of Peter Clemoes*, eds. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 406-407.

cleansing the village of this disease. Once again, the sight of smoke from a pyre was meaningful, even if its significance went unexplained. Geoffrey narrates that 'the two peasants sick in their beds recovered their health as soon as they saw the smoke rising from the fire where the hearts were burned'.[503] The two sick peasants at Drakelow seem to have been watching for this smoke, like the Geatish people at Beowulf's funeral pyre. For the Drakelow peasants, however, this smoke has a curative effect, inducing their recovery from the disease purged by this fire. Smoke thus serves as a visible expression of air, evincing changes brought about by the cremation that might otherwise have been imperceptible.

Air Circulation

Such unseen changes in the air, related to the presence of the living dead, were of great interest to William of Newburgh. In the Berwick story, previously discussed in chapter one, William identifies two causes for concern among the locals. On the one hand, William wrote that the simpler, *simpliciores*, among the inhabitants feared 'to be promptly beaten by this lifeless prodigy'.[504] This fear seems in keeping with those living dead assailants, discussed in that chapter. On the other hand, the wiser, *prudentiores*, among them are said to have feared that 'the circulating air would become infected and corrupted by the pestilential corpse and bring about great disease and death'.[505] The living dead body is thus portrayed to have an impact on the air, infecting it and thereby spreading their contagion to the locals.

A similar explanation frames another of William's stories, that is, the tale of the jealous husband, who wandered around the neighbourhood at night in Anant. William remarks that the locals hid behind their locked doors in vain since 'the circulating air, infected by this foul body, filled every house with disease and death with its pestiferous breath'.[506] As in his Berwick account, William once again distinguishes between those who locked their doors in fear of a physical assault and those who could anticipate the air-borne dangers of the living dead. The cases of Drakelow, Berwick, and Anant thus

[503] Geoffrey, *Vita S. Moduenne*, 47, 196-197, 'duo quoque predicti rustici qui in lectulis languendo iacebant, ut uiderunt fumum egredientem de igne ubi corda combusta fuerant'.
[504] *HRA*, V, 23, 476, 'ab exanimi prodigio maturius sugillari'.
[505] Ibid., 'ex crebro pestiferi cadaveris circumactu infectus corruptusque aer, morbos et mortes gigneret plurimorum'.
[506] Ibid., V, 24, 481, 'tetri corporis circumactu infectus aer, haustu pestilenti universas morbis et mortibus domos replevit'.

reflect circulating theories about the effect of the living dead upon the air and its role in disease causation.

In each of these cases, fire is understood to be the solution to air-borne diseases spread by the living dead. The extent to which fire could effectively cleanse the air of this infection, however, seems to have been debatable. William closes the Anant story, the last of his series of living dead tales, with the most positive verdict in favour of the fire's efficacy. William reports that the once rampant disease ceased, 'as if the air, which had been corrupted by the pestilential movements of the dreadful corpse, were already purified by the fire which had consumed it'.[507] William's conclusion to the Berwick story is less confident; William reports that, when a disease raged across England, it spread most furiously in Berwick. As such, the sense that the air at Berwick was more susceptible to disease after its prior infection raises an unsettling question about the potential for air to retain some of the potency of the living dead. Such uncertainty may likewise have hovered over Drakelow for some time after the fugitives had been cremated. Once they had been healed, the two peasants are said to have left Drakelow for the nearby village of Gresley. Those peasants, who had seen the smoke rising from the pyre, may have had other ideas about what else that fire had released into the air.

Fire

The stories studied thus far have revealed the destructive and cleansing roles of fire. Arguably, this imagery was most frequently deployed in medieval literature when fire was presented in a purging role, especially when purifying a soul of sin.[508] Accounts of the afterlife vividly describe such purging fires, such as those witnessed by Dryhthelm during his afterlife experience. Bede narrates how Dryhthelm saw 'globes of fire' (*globi ignium*) shooting out from a pit, their flames 'full of human souls' (*flammarum plena esse spiritibus hominum*).[509] Fire was undeniably a potent image for suffering and purgation. However, the relationship between the living dead and fire is more complex than it might initially appear. Fire was of interest not only because of the way in which it acted upon the living dead, but also because of the ways in which the living dead acted or

[507] Ibid., 482, 'tanquam igne illo, qui dirum cadaver absumpserat, aer jam esset purgatus, qui ejus fuerat pestilenti motu corruptus'.
[508] On material fires acting upon immaterial souls, see Gregory, *Dialogi*, IV, 30, 100-103; On 'purgatorial fire' in medieval England, see Moreira, *Heaven's Purge*, 154-165; Marilyn Dunn, 'Gregory the Great, the Vision of Fursey, and the Origins of Purgatory', *Peritia* 14 (2000), 244-249; Helen Foxhall Forbes, 'The Theology of the Afterlife in the Early Middle Ages, c.400-c.1100', in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Pollard (Cambridge: CUP, 2020), 156.
[509] *HE*, V, 12, 490-491.

appeared through fire. The following discussion examines the myriad ways in which the living dead were associated with fire to express not only their torments, but also their purity, warmth, and light.

Tormenting Fires

An illustrative example of the relationship between the living dead and fire as torment is found among the stories from the community at Stratford Langthorne, recounted by Peter of Cornwall in his *Liber reuelationum*. There was a lay brother at this monastery who had once apostatised, but later returned, and who had never been given the habit of a lay brother. Thus, when this brother died, he was buried without a habit. Peter narrates how, having received God's permission at the tribunal, the lay brother appeared on the night after his death to his still living abbot, who was overseas at that time. Peter provides an account of this living dead brother's appearance; it is said that 'the hair of that brother's head was singed, and his tunic was burnt in many places on the shoulders, and holes were burnt in it by fiery sparks'.[510] The effects of tormenting fires are visibly shown by the singed and burned appearance of the living dead body. Furthermore, the effects are concentrated on the parts of the brother's body that ought to have covered by his hood. The lay brother explains his situation to the abbot and, with his blessing, appears to the prior at Stratford Langthorne on the very same night, passing on the abbot's message that he is to be granted his habit. At this point, the tale seems to invert those previously discussed tales that so often ended with fire; at Stratford Langthorne, a living dead brother tormented by fire is saved when the monks exhume his corpse, redress it with a hood, and bury it again. Fire in this case communicates to percipients that the living dead need help to alleviate their suffering.

Globes of Fire

Fire did not necessarily signify suffering or danger, however. A fiery orb seen at the death of Aidan, the first bishop of Lindisfarne (d. 651), illustrates the positive appearances of fire in relation to the living dead. Between 699 and 705, an anonymous author at Lindisfarne composed the *Vita S. Cuthberti*, having gathered stories about Cuthbert from the oral traditions of the Lindisfarne community. One such story relates how a young Cuthbert saw the soul of Aidan on its journey to heaven. Cuthbert was spending the night in vigils, while watching sheep near the river Leader, when the heavens were opened before him. As

[510] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 203, 234-235, 'capillos capitis fratris illius adustos, et tunicam illius in pluribus locis super scapulas esse exustam, et pertusam ex guttis ardentibus'.

Cuthbert contemplated the heavens, he observed that there were 'angels ascending and descending and in their hands was borne to heaven a holy soul, as if in a globe of fire'.[511] This anonymous writer in no way perceived Aidan's appearance as a globe of fire as a sign of torment or a danger to the percipient. Instead, fire in this instance gave visible expression to the wisdom of Aidan's teachings and Cuthbert's inspiration.

However, the manifestation of Aidan's soul was not static. When Bede turned his attention to Cuthbert, he decided that the existing *Vita S. Cuthberti* was sufficiently inadequate to warrant rewriting in both verse and prose.[512] The manifestations of Aidan's soul are revised in both the metrical and prose *Vitae*. The metrical *Vita*, composed c. 705, represents the first phase of Bede's revision. Bede versifies how Cuthbert saw 'fiery armies blazing in starry battalions and carrying a holy soul to heaven amidst the rejoicing of this resplendent procession'.[513] In the verses that follow, Cuthbert explains to his companions that the soul was accompanied by 'angelic flames' (*angelicae flammae*).[514] Cuthbert reveals to them that the soul must have been that of a bishop and that 'the fiery ether with its mighty choirs of companions receives him and carries him to the threshold of light'.[515] In Bede's verses, fire describes the armies (*ignea castra*) and the ether (*flammea aethra*), but not the disembodied soul. Bede has effectively displaced the fiery quality of the disembodied soul, extending it to other elements in the vision. By the time he came to compose his prose *Vita* in 721, Bede had completely removed the imagery of fire from his account. Bede narrates how Cuthbert 'suddenly saw a stream of light from the sky breaking in upon the darkness of the long night'.[516] In this light, the choir of the heavenly host came and took with them 'a soul of exceeding brightness'.[517] The fire of Aidan's soul is extinguished, and yet his soul shines out brighter than ever.

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[511] *Vita S. Cuthberti*, I, 5, 68-69, 'angelos ascendentes et descendentes uiderat, et intermanus eorum animam sanctam, quasi in globo igneo ad coelum efferri'.
[512] Elizabeth Krajewski, 'The Anonymous Life of Cuthbert: A "Celtic" Account of an Anglo-Saxon Saint?', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 37 (2017), 183; Matthew Delvaux, 'From Virtue to Virtue: Diverging Visions of Sanctity and Monasticism in Two Lives of Cuthbert', *Early Medieval Europe* 27:2 (2019), 237.
[513] Bede, *Vita metrica S. Cuthberti*, in *Bede's Latin Poetry*, ed. Michael Lapidge (Oxford: OUP, 2019), 4, 204-205, 122-124, 'ignea sidereis fulgescere castra maniplis / atque polis sanctam rutilae per gaudia pompae / ferre animam'.
[514] Ibid., 4, 204-205, 130.
[515] Ibid., 4, 206-207, 133-134, 'comitum quem flammea tantis / excipit aethra choris lucisque ad limina uexit'.
[516] Bede, *Vita prosaica S. Cuthberti*, in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 4, 164-165, 'uidit subito fusum de coelo lumen medias longae noctis interrupisse tenebras'.
[517] Ibid., 4, 166-167, 'anima claritatis eximiae'.

In a similarly positive light, this fiery motif appears in Reginald's *Vita S. Godrici*.[518] Godric of Finchale is said to have seen his close friend and advisor, Abbot Robert of Newminster, ascending to heaven during Pentecost in 1159. According to Reginald, Robert's departing soul seemed *totus igneus*, 'all afire', to Godric. Like Aidan's soul, Robert's soul appeared 'leaving in a fiery ball, like a kind of body of gleaming light'.[519] Godric is reported to have given an extensive description of this *sphaera ignea*, reiterating fiery and spherical characteristics that seem to resonate with the liturgical setting of Robert's death. Reginald tells us that Robert died on the Sabbath day during Pentecost, which is known as *Jubilaeus*. In a Pentecostal context, we might speculate that fire imagery associated Robert with the wisdom and divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit when it came upon the disciples.[520] This connection seems related to the roles that the abbot had played when he had visited Godric, as his *doctor*, teacher, and *medicus*, physician (in confession).[521]

However, Abbot Robert did not depart from this world alone. This detail is revealed in the next chapter, as if Robert's companion were a separate story or afterthought. According to Reginald, a pious woman called Edith was conveyed to heaven with Robert. This woman had died at Hastings when Robert died at Newminster and it is said that God ordained that they would depart from this world together. In contrast to the lengthy account of Robert's appearance, there is no explicit description of Edith's soul. Instead, in response to persistent questioning, Godric explained to a visitor that 'the spirits (*spiritus*) of the dead do not form distinct shapes of men and women as we know them'.[522] The absence of a distinction between the *spiritus* of a man and that of a woman would imply that Edith's soul had also looked like a ball of fire. This simultaneous ascent of two souls is reminiscent of promises made between friends. While the two friends Roger and Alexander, among others at Stratford Langthorne, had promised to reveal their fate to each other, Robert and Edith represent a related tradition of souls accompanying each other in the vulnerable moments of their departure.[523]

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[518] I presented an earlier version of this section as 'The Fiery Soul in the Lives of Cuthbert and Godric of Finchale', *Spirits and Spirituality in Medieval Britain and Ireland c.600-c.1400*, University of Nottingham (16 March 2022).
[519] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 75, 300-301, 'in spheram igneam egredientem, et corusci luminis speciei consimilem'.
[520] Acts 2:1-4.
[521] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 74, 296-299.
[522] Ibid., 76, 306-307, 'spiritus mortuorum non discretas maris aut femine formas gerere, quales nouimus'.
[523] See also the story of Cuthbert and Hereberht in *Vita S. Cuthberti*, IV, 9, 124-125.

Seraphic Fire

These readings of fire as an image for wisdom and companionship provide a useful framework for understanding more obscure references to fiery figures. Wulfric, like Cuthbert and Godric, was seen as an intermediary at the interface of life and death.[524] Visitors to Wulfric's cell and its adjoining church, St Michael's, at Haselbury Plucknett were sometimes granted the opportunity to witness the anchorite at work. Osbern the priest was one such visitor.[525] John narrates how Osbern was approaching the church one night, with his servant Taillefer, when he noticed that the interior of the building was 'sparkling with such an immense light that the appearance of flame (*facie flammae*) pouring out through the windows lit up the entire graveyard'.[526] Osbern, after realising that Taillefer did not share his vision, remained at the perimeter wall, singing psalms, before 'an angel enveloped in fiery flame (*in flamma ignis*) came out through the window'.[527] Osbern shared what he had seen with Wulfric on the following day, describing 'a fiery flame inside the church, and no ordinary one at that'.[528] At this point, it is revealed by Wulfric that, that night, 'my Lord came and comforted his servant'.[529]

Multiple details complicate the interpretation of this fiery figure. At first, the flame illuminates the graveyard, at least drawing attention to, if not signalling, those buried therein. As we saw in chapter two, a similar outpouring of light over the graveyard was reported by Thurstan Dod when he encountered Godric in his oratory at Throckenholt. John's commentary, in contrast to the reported speech of Osbern and Wulfric, identifies the fiery figure at Haselbury as an angel, *angelus*. Then, Wulfric's explanation recognises this figure as his Lord, *Dominus*, a designation which could identify the figure with the archangel Michael, to whom the church was dedicated, or Christ. However, there is a subtext to this story that underpins its significance. Wulfric desperately wanted Osbern, not Taillefer, to see this figure. In fact, Wulfric explains to Osbern that, in trying to grant him this experience, 'I was hard put to obtain it'.[530] While Osbern's participation could otherwise be explained by his merit or high regard, Wulfric's words reflect a firm belief on his part that this visitor needed to be seen by

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[524] On shamanic expertise in medieval England, see Licence, 'Anchorites', 724-725.
[525] Osbern witnesses two of Wulfric's experiences, but only the second is discussed here, see John, *Vita beati Wulfrici*, 35-36, 52-54.
[526] Ibid., 36, 53, 'immenso lumine coruscantem, adeo ut a facie flammae per fenestras erumpentis cimiterium omne resplenderet'.
[527] Ibid., 54, 'angelus in flamma ignis per fenestram egressus est'.
[528] Ibid., '"Flammam ignis", ait, "non modici intra ecclesiam"'.
[529] Ibid., 'Dominus meus affuit et consolatus est servum suum'.
[530] Ibid., 'vixque id impetrare praevalui'.

Osbern. It is Osbern who, I believe, provides the key to the most compelling reading of the fiery figure in this story.

Osbern had known Wulfric for many years, having spent his youth at this church, where his father, Brihtric, was priest. Brihtric had been a significant figure in Wulfric's life; John presents Brihtric as a close friend and, at times, well-meaning rival of the anchorite. For the purposes of this discussion, it is interesting to note that John calls Wulfric and Brihtric 'two seraphim' (*duo seraphin*) and 'angels of God' (*angelis Dei*).[531] The imagery of fiery angels had thus already been deployed in the *Vita*, in connection with Osbern's father. Furthermore, Wulfric and Brihtric are said to have constantly sought to outdo each other, such that Wulfric would insist Brihtric was the true anchorite, and Brihtric would refer to Wulfric as his superior, 'humbly calling him lord'.[532] In turn, Brihtric is called 'lord Brihtric' (*dominus Brictricus*) in the chapter that precedes Osbern's account of the flaming figure.[533] This competitive humility may inform our reading of the relationship between Wulfric and his fiery visitor, in that Wulfric's appellation of this figure as *Dominus* could represent his final word on their friendly rivalry. Brihtric's death goes unmentioned in the *Vita* and, due to John's thematic, as opposed to chronological, structure, he reappears in subsequent chapters. However, we may speculate that a former priest of St Michael's Church, later succeeded by his son, would have been buried in its graveyard, perhaps near the cell of his friend. These correspondences present compelling evidence for interpreting the fiery figure in this story as none other than Osbern's father, Brihtric. Like a seraph in fiery flame, the late priest seems to have visited his old friend, who, humbling himself before his lord, recognised him and sought to reveal Brihtric's presence to his son, Osbern. This interpretation reinforces the role of Wulfric as intermediary as he once again serves as a bridge between father and son, just as he did for Segar and Richard, as discussed in chapter three. This story reiterates Wulfric's concern for such familial affections, binding friends and relatives with a warmth, a light, and a love, represented by fire.

Light

Throughout this thesis, we have observed the blurring of light and fire imagery. Fire, as in the case studies of Aidan, Robert, and Brihtric, radiates light. Light could displace fire imagery, as it did in the retellings of the souls of Aidan and Germanus. More broadly,

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[531] Ibid., 16, 31; 17, 34.
[532] Ibid., 16, 31, 'dominum eum humiliter vocans'.
[533] Ibid., 35, 52.

light was saturated with meanings. Light could reflect the salvation of the living dead, as in the case of Alexander of Stratford Langthorne, as well as facilitate their movement, as seen in the case of the Glastonbury dove, discussed in chapter four. Light continues to mediate the fates of the living dead in the examples that follow. However, this section also narrows its focus, unsurprisingly given the efflorescence of light imagery in medieval literature, onto narratives that deploy light to describe the appearance and movements of the living dead.

Heaven's Light

Light was a favourite image for Bede. Bede distances Aidan from fire, perhaps out of concern that any fire could be mistaken for the fires of the afterlife, such as those that tormented souls in his afterlife visions.[534] In revising the representation of Aidan's soul, Bede seems to have made its form corresponds more closely with the stories that he composed over the next decade for his *Historia ecclesiastica*. Here, light fulfils a wide range of functions, from revealing hidden or forgotten corpses to spreading Christian teachings. It was presumably the multivalence of light that made it such an appealing and useful image. The effect of plague upon the community at Barking engendered a series of stories that capture the versatility of light as a motif in connection with living death.[535] Once plague had begun to claim some of the men at this double house, Abbess Æthelburh decided to make provisions for a graveyard, where the women could be buried when the disease reached them. Having found little enthusiasm among her sisters to select a location, Æthelburh and her community were shown their eventual resting place by a light. While the women were proceeding past the brothers' tombs, 'suddenly a light appeared from heaven like a great sheet and came upon them all, striking such terror into them that they broke off the chant they were singing in alarm'.[536] This light moved to an area, south of the monastery and west of the oratory, and stayed there for some time. At this point, according to Bede, 'no doubt remained in their minds that this light was not only intended to guide and receive the souls of Christ's handmaidens into heaven, but was also pointing out the spot where the bodies were to rest, awaiting the resurrection day'.[537] In this narrative, therefore, light performs a dual function as a guide

[534] *HE*, III, 19, 272-273; V, 12, 490-491.
[535] Ibid., IV, 7-10, 356-365.
[536] Ibid., IV, 7, 356-357, 'ecce subito lux emissa caelitus, ueluti linteum magnum uenit super omnes, tantoque eas stupore perculit, ut etiam canticum quod canebant tremefactae intermitterent'.
[537] Ibid., 358-359, 'ut nulli esset dubium quin ipsa lux, quae animas famularum Christi esset ductura uel susceptura in caelis, etiam corporibus earum locum in quo requietura et diem resurrectionis essent expectatura, monstraret'.

for heaven-bound souls and a revelation for earth-bound bodies. In fact, this guiding, receiving, role of light recurs whenever souls are seen on their ascent to heaven in the *Historia*.[538] In such moments, light seems to transcend time, refracting the eternity of heaven upon transitory existence.

As well as guiding souls, the light of heaven was also extended to the appearance of those who were received into it. The poet Ædiluulf recounted how light adorned the soul of Cwicwine, a monk and blacksmith of his monastery, who had appeared to another brother called Æthwine. When Cwicwine died, Æthwine is said to have seen a troop shining with light enter his cell to take his soul, which flew to heaven with them. Ædiluulf writes that Cwicwine's soul 'was resplendent, surpassing indeed the light of the sun'.[539] There seems to have been some agreement upon this representation, at least within the text of the poem, if not in the community that it describes. Later in the poem, Ædiluulf reports that an English confessor saw the soul, *anima*, of the priest and lector Hyglac, which was 'shining with sunlight'.[540] Both souls are likened to sunlight, using the image of the sun to understand the appearance of the living dead during their departure to heaven. This comparison to the sun corresponds with previous assertions of spherical shape, especially in the case of Ælric, whose soul appeared as a hot, gaseous orb. The implication of this imagery may be that the soul was thought to reflect God's light, and thus divine wisdom, which illuminated wise and righteous souls just as the light of the sun was reflected in the stars.[541] This recourse to the sun and stars recurs throughout Ædiluulf's poem through his repeated claims that his brothers are set to journey to the stars, *ad astra*, or above the stars, *super astra*.[542] For Ædiluulf, his monastic community were intimately connected to the world that they inhabited, to the celestial bodies that they observed in the night sky, and it was through this world that he understood their movements and departures.[543]

Light as Presence

Light seems to have been a great consolation in these examples. The reassurance conveyed by light was a welcome antidote to anxieties surrounding the post mortem fate of loved ones. As we have already seen, visitation pacts formed between friends also aimed to

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[538] Ibid., III, 8, 236-239; IV, 23, 411-415.
[539] Ædiluulf, *De abbatibus*, X, 313, 'splenduit haec nimium, superans iam lumina solis'.
[540] Ibid., XVI, 523, 'fulgentem lumine solis'.
[541] Karmen Lenz, 'The star-like soul in the *metra* of the Old English *Boethius*', *Anglo-Saxon England* 39 (2011), 147-150.
[542] Ædiluulf, *De abbatibus*, VIII, 269; IX, 272; X, 297; XX, 611.
[543] Ibid., XXI, 665.

dispel such anxieties, by calling upon friends to communicate their fates to one other. Such agreements seem to have been common, especially among the Cistercian monks at Stratford Langthorne, West Ham, during the twelfth century. Peter of Cornwall describes some of these pacts in his *Liber Reuelationum*.[544] One of the more detailed accounts concerns a monk and priest called Alexander and a lay brother called Roger, who formed a close friendship as novices at this monastery and agreed that whichever of them died first would make themselves known to the other on the first night, the thirtieth night, or the anniversary of their death.[545] This visitation pact seems to have caused a particular stir, dividing opinions within this community on the propriety of the pair's behaviour. When Alexander lay dying, there were some present who rebuked Roger for bringing up their old agreement. Prior Benedict exclaimed that, surely, Alexander should be released from this presumptuous pact. Abbot William, however, decided that they should let the promise stand and God's will be done. Other members of the community were also intrigued to see how this pact would play out. Later in the story, it is revealed that at some point the former prior, one master Jacob, asked Roger to enquire into his own fate from Alexander, should he speak with him again. Alexander's arrival was greatly anticipated, by none more than Roger, who spent many sleepless nights awaiting his coming. Roger is said to have described how the chamberlain of the house approached him out of concern that he would be terrified at the prospect of conversing with his dead friend. Nevertheless, Roger seems to have been resolute in the promise between them: 'I on the other hand became calmer in mind, and, neither disturbed about it nor even anxious, I wished that he would come'.[546] Thus prepared for his friend, Roger became privy to the unfolding representations of Alexander. There are multiple layers to Roger's encounters with Alexander that reveal the transformative potential of the living dead as they experience salvation as a process.

Around the thirtieth night after Alexander's death, Roger retired to the dormitory to sleep. He initially felt Alexander's presence, through a pressing sensation that will be discussed later in chapter six, but then conjured his old friend to speak. When he eventually sees Alexander, Roger perceives 'without any horror… that he was in the same form and habit, and in every way what he had been in life, so that I saw both his hands

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[544] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 186, 260-261; I, 201, 230-231; I, 202, 232-233; I, 204, 260-261.
[545] On these occasions and funerary rituals to commemorate the dead, see McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 44.
[546] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 205, 238-239, 'Ego uero anemequior [animequior] existens, nichil uel inde turbatus immo sollicitus optabam ut ueniret'.

and his arms bare almost up to the elbows'.[547] The conversation that follows between Roger and Alexander reveals the state of the latter, neither in glory nor in torment, and the fate of others still alive in their monastery, namely, the former prior, Abbot William, and Roger himself. After Alexander disappears, Roger realises that no one else in the dormitory noticed what had happened. Alexander appeared again about a year after his death. On this occasion, Roger was sat on a bed in the infirmary, attending to the sick at the end of the day. That night, it is said that 'an immense light, like a flash of lightning, entered through a glass window which was there; it seemed to be stirred with trembling motions, and it illuminated the whole building with a marvellous brightness'.[548] Roger wonders whether 'perhaps it was my Alexander' (*ne forte meus Alexander esset*), but 'in the light I saw, I was unable to discern the form of any human body'.[549] Once again, Roger asks who is present with him and Alexander reassures him that it is he, who is now in paradise. However, Alexander has transformed into light with no discernible body. This light represents Alexander's participation in everlasting glory, in the eternal light. The timescale of Alexander's salvation would seem to have followed the extra twenty masses that were presumably said for him over the course of that year in line with Cistercian liturgical commemorative practices.[550] Roger learns from Alexander about paradise and future glory, culminating in their private conversation, 'as friend with friend' (*tanquam amicus cum amico*), about Roger himself. Throughout this conversation, Roger feels cut off from the light and cannot focus on it clearly, but he acknowledges the complete transformation in Alexander's manifestation:

> Hoc autem in hac uisione pre ceteris duxi mirandum, quod nullatenus sicut in prima uisione nec aliquam humane forme perfectam mensuram, nec habitus qualitatem discernere preualebam. Vocem tamen ipsius qui de medio globo luminis coram me stantis mecum loquebatur, audiui et cognoui.
>
> Now this is what I considered marvellous in this vision more than anything else: I was unable to make out any perfect measure of a human form nor the character of

[547] Ibid., 240-241, 'absque omni horrore in eadem illum deprehendi esse effigie et habitu, et omnimoda qualitate qua fuerat uiuus, ita quod uidi utrasque manus eius et brachia nuda fere usque ad cubitos'.
[548] Ibid., 242-243, 'in similitudine fulguris choruscantis, claritas inmensa per quandam que ibi erat uitream fenestram subintrans tremulis motibus uidebatur agitari, et mirabili claritate totam domum illustrauit'.
[549] Ibid., 'Nullam tamen humani corporis formam in eo quod uidebam lumine discernere ualebam'.
[550] Michael Barbezat, 'Doubt, Faith, and the World to Come in Peter of Cornwall's *Book of Revelations'*, PhD Thesis (University of Toronto, 2013), 89-90.

> any clothing, as I had in the first vision, but I heard and recognized the voice of him who spoke to me from the midst of a globe of light which stood by me.[551]

This globe of light retreats through the same glass window through which it had entered. The transformations of Alexander, from a human to a spherical shape as well as from a tangible to an intangible entity, seem to indicate the salvific changes as he advances onward to eternal light. These metamorphoses are liturgically informed and illustrate the significance of the living dead's transformative potential and thereby the promise of salvation. Alexander's changing state is further reinforced by his response to an important question from Roger: will he ever see him again? Alexander explains that Roger may do, since he now enjoys blessedness, whereas 'it was very difficult for me to come to you the last time I was with you, because at that time I had no existence as my own master'.[552]

The orb of light motif could also perform a more obscure function in relation to the living dead. For instance, the role of light in the events leading up to the burial of Oda, archbishop of Canterbury (d. 958), is much harder to explain. According to Byrhtferth of Ramsey, the monks and clerics at Christ Church, Canterbury, came together to carry the archbishop's body to its tomb. While they were chanting, Byrhtferth narrates that some of the women who had been following their procession 'saw shining above the bier a gleam of light about a shield's breadth, above which they also saw a dove flying'.[553] The women then cried out 'Look, citizens, behold the light and the dove', at which point the monks and clerics grew very afraid and struggled to finish their chant.[554] No further comment on the light and the dove follows, but we know from Edmer's and William's accounts of the dove that settled upon Oda's tomb, discussed in chapter four, that this was not the last time a dove was reportedly seen in such close proximity to Oda's corpse. Similar to the stories of Ivo of Ramsey and Thomas of Farne, a dove flies around the bier, but the case of Oda differs in its deployment of two, unexplained, images. The doves in chapter four certainly support readings of this dove as a guardian, a participant in the funeral procession, a presence. In contrast to the light that accompanied the dove at Glastonbury, however, the light and the dove above Oda's body appear to be separate entities, in that the light is not a vehicle for the dove but an agent itself. The size of this light also receives an interesting image, like the width of a

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[551] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 205, 242-243.
[552] Ibid., 246-247, 'Difficillimum autem noueris fuisse aduentum meum ad uos quando alia uice tecum fui, quia mei iuris tunc temporis nondum exstiteram'.
[553] Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, V, 18, 194-195, 'uiderunt super feretrum luminis iubar fulsisse quasi scuti latitudo, super quod uolitare uiderunt et columbam'.
[554] Ibid., 'Videte, contemplamini, conciues, lumen et columbam'.

shield, *quasi scuti latitudo*. Perhaps the light, like the dove, signifies the presence of a guide or attendant. In any case, two multivalent images are deployed here to show that something or someone was revealed to the women in connection with Oda's body.

The function of light as a signifier of a living dead presence is more explicitly illustrated in another story from the Christ Church community. At some point in the late eleventh century, the abbot of Saint Augustine's, called Scotland, was once sitting with companions by the church at Christ Church, where Dunstan had been buried, on Dunstan's feast day at the hour for vespers. As customary, all the bells were rung in the church to signal the time for vigil. At this point, Abbot Scotland looked up to the heavens and 'saw a great light shine down from there upon that church and penetrate it from above'.[555] Like the women following Oda's procession, the abbot directs his companions' attention to what he can see, and they are able to see it too. Edmer reports that Scotland explained to his companions that 'truly our loving father Dunstan comes now to his own festival'.[556] The companions in turn agreed with the abbot that Dunstan had indeed come, 'for they sensed his sacred presence amongst them from the sweet and holy feeling there'.[557] The appearance of light thus seems to have been accompanied by an *affectus*, a sense or feeling, that proved to them that Dunstan was present. Such senses will be explored in greater detail in chapter six. This understanding of light as a living dead presence testifies to the significance of liturgical time, such as feast days, and spatial settings, such as resting places, when interpreting such a multivalent image.

Rainbows

Edmer's inclusion of this story about Abbot Scotland in his *Miracula S. Dunstani* may have been inspired by its similarity to a much earlier story, which he would have learned from Stephen of Ripon's *Vita Wilfridi episcopi*. This eighth-century *Vita* includes an account of the events that took place after Wilfrid's death. On the anniversary of Wilfrid's death, it is said that bishops and abbots came to St Peter's Church, Ripon, to keep vigil where Wilfrid had been buried. Stephen narrates that, when the abbots left the church with the community, 'suddenly they saw a wonderful sign in the sky, namely a white arc, surrounding the whole monastery, like a rainbow by day, but without its

[555] Edmer, *Vita et Miracula S. Dunstani*, 18, 180-181, 'uidit ingentem splendorem inde super aecclesiam ipsam descendere, eamque de superioribus penetrare'.
[556] Ibid., 'Vere pius pater Dunstanus iam ad suam festiuitatem uadit'.
[557] Ibid., 'Nam ex dulci sanctoque affectu… sanctam praesentiam eius sibi adesse persenserunt'.

various colours'.[558] This white rainbow-like arc stretches out from the church, creating 'a wall of divine help' (*murum auxilii divini*), which Stephen saw as a sign of Wilfrid's continued protection of Ripon. In contrast, when Edmer came to rewrite this story in the early twelfth century, distanced from the worries of the Ripon community following the loss of their leader, Edmer perceived his presence in place of his protection. For Edmer, the strange phenomenon reported on the anniversary of Wilfrid's death signified 'his spiritual presence, which they had learnt was among them from this most visible display of light'.[559] As in the story of Abbot Scotland, Edmer identifies light with a living dead presence that comforts the percipients.

The comparison of the white arc at Ripon to a colourless rainbow introduces us to the role of the rainbow in connection with the living dead.[560] As mentioned, Stephen interpreted the white arc as a defence against Ripon's enemies. However, such refractions of light in water also served as meaningful representations of guidance and movement, visualising the unseen paths of the living dead. For instance, Reginald of Durham relates the tale of a cleric who, having visited Durham, found himself lost in the surrounding neighbourhoods one night and called upon the late Godric of Finchale to light his way. Sure enough, 'something like a rainbow was sent out shining in a heavenly way' before him, stretching from Godric's resting place at Finchale to St Giles Church, Durham.[561] Reginald likens this rainbow that leads the cleric back on track to the Christmas star that guided the Magi. In Godric's case, however, 'he caused a rainbow to be made and, with its light leading, accompanying and following him, led the cleric who called on him'.[562] Thus, the light of the rainbow appears to represent Godric's power or presence, as if he has walked ahead of the cleric. From Reginald's perspective, of course, the image of the hermit making the journey to his monastery served to reinforce the ties between Godric and the Durham monks. It is an arching light, however, that crucially visualises the movements of the living dead hermit, connecting the earthly spaces that he can still traverse.

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[558] Stephen, *Vita Wilfridi*, 68, 148-149, 'statim in caelo signum admirabile viderunt, quod est candidum circulum, totum coenobium circumdantem, quasi per diem arcus coeli absque variis coloribus'.
[559] Edmer, *Vita S. Wilfridi*, 61, 140-141, 'spirituali eius presentia, quam aperta lucis ostensione sibi adesse didicerant'.
[560] See also the lights witnessed by priests and clerics at Hereford in 1130, reported by John of Worcester, in *The Chronicle of John of Worcester, Vol. 3: The Annals from 1067 to 1140 with the Gloucester Interpolations and the Continuation to 1141*, ed. P. McGurk, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 198-199.
[561] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 591, 834-835, 'quasi iris radians celitus est emissa'.
[562] Ibid., 'yrim produci fecit, et clericum se inuocantem cum lumine precedente, comitante, et subsequente… perduxit'.

Earth

This discussion of light reveals how spaces of the air were believed to be connected to spaces of the earth. And yet, earth was more than a backdrop for tales of the living dead. The plants, minerals, and food of the earth could reflect the instability and transformations of the living dead. Thus far, elemental representations have seemed characteristic of the living dead, adorning them with a lightness, heat, and brilliance that reflects, above all, the qualities of the soul. In contrast, stories that posit the earth in connection with the living dead concentrate more on the concept of animation. As suggested in the case of the dangling tunic at Winchester, in chapter one, the idea that the living dead might imbue inanimate objects with power underpinned reverence of contact relics in medieval England. Nevertheless, the potential for the earth to soak up and emanate the power of the living dead had unsettling implications. By examining how the living dead were linked to inanimate objects, food, and earthly spaces, the following discussion explores arguably the most subversive, and frequently subverted, element.

Trees

In the 1190s, Peter of Cornwall, prior of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, London, assembled an extensive collection of narratives in his *Liber Reuelationum*. A growing number of twelfth-century writers were narrating experiences at St Patrick's Purgatory, one of which, H. of Sawtry's influential account of Owein's journey, known as the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, was included in Peter's collection. After copying this story, Peter describes how he came to hear of a more recent story at St Patrick's Purgatory in 1200. According to Peter, during the reign of King Henry II, a knight entered the Purgatory located on Station Island and found himself in the hall of one King Gulinus. The arrival of King Gulinus is reminiscent of descriptions of King Herla in that he returns from a hunt with a clamour of people, horses, and wagons. King Gulinus welcomes the knight to his hall and, supposedly in the spirit of hospitality, invites him to have sex with his daughter. This daughter is described as 'a most beautiful girl, who with her good looks easily surpassed all the girls in the whole world, as it seemed to the knight'.[563] The knight accepts the king's invitation, but his desires are perversely frustrated:

> Et ecce cum crederet se miles uti connubio illius puelle, aperti sunt oculi eius et uidit truncum uetustissimum et aridissimum et deformem iacere inter amplexus

[563] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 5, 134-137, 'puellam pulcherrimam, que decore sui, ut uidebatur militi, omnes puellas tocius mundi facile superaret'.

> eius, et uirilem ipsius uirgam in quodam foramine facto in illo trunco coartatam, quam minister ad hoc deputatus a Gulino contriuit et eneruauit percutiendo uiriliter et sepissime malleo clauum stringens in illo foramine uirilem uirgam illius, ut miles desideraret centies si fieri posset incurrere mortem magis quam talem cruciatum uel ad modicam horam sustinere.
>
> 'And, lo, when the knight believed he was about to enjoy sex with this girl, his eyes were opened and he saw a most ancient, arid, and misshapen trunk lying between his arms, and his male member was squeezed into a certain hole made in that trunk, which a servant deputed to the task by Gulinus shredded and weakened by striking a nail with a hammer vigorously and very frequently, confining his virile member in that hole, so that the knight desired a hundred times to incur death, if it were possible, rather than sustain such agony even for a brief while'.[564]

The story takes a brutally sadistic turn; in what follows, King Gulinus inflicts further trials and torments in place of promised comforts upon this trusting knight. As the editors of this text have pointed out, this 'arboreal intercourse', along with the other torments that this knight endures in the story, serves no penitential or purgatorial purpose.[565] Indeed, the tale is one of unbearable agony, but also living death. The knight himself is presented as trapped in a state of living death; his penis is so violently assaulted that he 'was exhausted to death'.[566] Later, the knight accepts the king's invitation to a 'play-house' (*domus ludi*), where his feet are tied to a beam with a rope and he is swung around the room until his brains are bashed out against the walls. While apparently invincible for the duration of these fatal torments, the experience takes an understandable toll on the knight. When dawn comes, and Gulinus and his servants disappear, the knight finds himself once more at the entrance of the Purgatory suffering from 'such infirmity or debility of body that he thought he would completely expire'.[567] These near deaths, if not recurring deaths, of the knight are set against the backdrop of a *Purgatorium* on Station Island. In such a story, it seems futile to impose boundaries between 'purgatory', 'earth', and the 'otherworld' or between 'life' and 'death'.

In the absence of the protagonist's spiritual transformation, the only transformation that takes place in this story is the metamorphosis of the girl into a 'most ancient, arid, and misshapen trunk' (*truncum uetustissimum et aridissimum et*

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[564] Ibid., 136-137.
[565] Easting and Sharpe, eds. *Peter of Cornwall's Book of Revelations*, 116-129.
[566] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 5, 136-137, 'usque ad mortem fatigatus esset'.
[567] Ibid., 138-139, 'Tantaque infirmitate seu corporis debilitate tunc laborabat, ut se omnino deficere estimaret'.

deformem). The girl-tree also blurs qualities of life and death, as the beauty of her youth is juxtaposed with the infertility of the barren tree that she becomes. This ambiguous character is never described as a 'demon' or a 'fairy', even though her function resembles that of deceitful 'demons' and 'fairies' elsewhere in literature. Nevertheless, she remains a silent and passive instrument in her father's abuse of the knight, which culminates in the removal of her humanity, or at least her semblance thereof. In fact, her transformation is presented in a way that problematises the agency behind the change. Peter's allusion to the Scriptures, 'his eyes were opened' (*aperti sunt oculi eius*) raises the question of whether the girl truly transformed, or whether the knight's grasp of reality changed.

A tension between illusion and reality pervades this account of St Patrick's Purgatory. Peter's introductory comments on the Purgatory reinforce this tension, but might also suggest a contemporary framework for explaining what happened to this knight. When describing Station Island, Peter reports different accounts of the entry to Purgatory; some claim that the entry is gained by a door, but others say that it is through seats. Peter gives a more detailed description of the latter:

> Alii autem dicunt quod quedam sedes extra curtem cuiusdam senis, qui ibi manet, sunt parate, quasi in quodam herbario siue uiridario. Ad quas sedes qui intrat, non multa mora interueniente, accedunt ad eum demones et, ut illi uidetur, ducunt eum per diuersa loca et tormenta. Licet hec omnia, ut illi dicunt, non in rei ueritate corporaliter set ymaginarie spiritualiter ei contingant.
>
> Others, however, say that there are certain seats prepared outside the courtyard of an old man who dwells there, as in an arbour or green garden. Whoever goes in to these seats, without the intervention of much delay demons come to him and, as it seems to him, they lead him through diverse places and torments, albeit the truth of the matter is that all these things, as they say, do not happen to him bodily but spiritually in the imagination.[568]

In this description, we seem to be shown elements of the narrative that is to come. The old man and his courtyard appear to function as a mirror to King Gulinus and his hall. The king's servants, leading those who enter through torments, are then demonised in this explanation, although they are never referred to as demons in the story that follows. Peter is adamant that those who enter Purgatory in this way do so *ymaginarie spiritualiter*. Meanwhile, those who sit in these seats are surrounded by an arbour or green garden, revealing the arboreal setting in which this knight may have encountered this transformed

[568] Ibid, 132-133.

girl-tree. By providing this commentary on the Purgatory before narrating the knight's experience, Peter introduces a lens for reading and explaining these unusual encounters, without detracting from the vibrant and violent twists and turns of his story.

There are indications that women, or girls, were especially associated with trees and plants.[569] Goscelin also presents a male character trapped by a tree as a result of his sexual abuse of a young woman. This story about an anchorite called Alexander was incorporated by Goscelin into his *Liber confortatorius*, a book of spiritual instruction for a close friend and anchorite called Eve. Having been given a baby girl, a king's daughter, by a disguised devil, Alexander raised and abused the child, such that she became pregnant. Upon the devil's return, Alexander was reportedly tricked into thinking that it would be better to conceal his crime than ruin his holy reputation. Alexander murdered and buried the pregnant girl. The grief and remorse that he then feels for his crime do not spare him from punishment; Alexander is said to have seen something gold shining in an oak tree, which closes itself around his hand when he reaches inside to take it.[570] The anchorite is said to have been trapped with his hands bound by the tree for fifteen years.

There seems to be a link between this tree and the murdered girl in this story. When her father, King Gundofor, learned of all that had happened, he is said to have exhumed her undecayed corpse where Alexander had buried her. By throwing a rod placed in her hand, the girl's corpse is said to have forgiven Alexander, at which point the oak tree parted and set the anchorite free. The closing and opening of this tree are seemingly connected with the girl withholding and then giving forgiveness. Given the state of her undecayed body, it could be inferred from the tree's animation that the residues of life in the body permeated into the ground and vegetation around it. Like the girl-tree at Station Island, the agency of the young woman is transmuted, or transferred, to a silent tree.

Statues

As we saw in chapter two, the binding of a male suitor also played a central role in William of Malmesbury's story about the statue of Venus. The young Roman man in this narrative found himself betrothed to Venus when he placed his ring on the outstretched finger of

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[569] See also Geoffrey's vision of Christina as a flowering herb squeezed for oil, in *De S. Theodora*, 66, 152-153.

[570] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin, *Liber confortatorius*, in 'The *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin', ed. C.H. Talbot, *Analecta monastica 3*, *Studia Anselmiana*, 37, eds. M.M. Lebreton, J. Leclercq, and C.H. Talbot (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Saint Anselm, 1955), 104-105; Trans. Wright and Loncar, in *Writing the Wilton Women*, IV, 191.

her statue, only to find upon returning to it that 'the finger of the statue curved right down into the palm of its hand'.[571] The idea that the statue came to life, bending its finger to keep the ring, may provide an interesting lens for reading encounters with the living dead at or near statues. At Sherborne, for instance, there was there was a statue of Swithun in the cathedral. An anonymous miracle collection, compiled around the end of the eleventh century, reports that the sick sometimes sat by this statue to beg for alms. The statue, however, also became a site for encounters with its subject. One woman fell asleep at the statue and saw 'a priest with flowery white hair, resplendent in brilliant vestment, stand near her, and with his crozier pointed towards her as if about to strike her with it, asked her threateningly why she was lying there'.[572] When she wakes, she assumes that the approaching hebdomadary priest had threatened her and suddenly regains the ability to run. On another occasion, a sick man fell asleep at the statue and saw a beautifully attired bishop, distributing alms. The bishop did not neglect this percipient; the man saw 'a piece of cheese which he received from the bishop fall from his hand and roll on the pavement of the church, and himself run after it, and, as it is rolling along, disappear'.[573] Both encounters with the living dead Swithun are situated by the statue in his likeness, in the manner of encounters that typically occur by the tomb. The presence of Swithun appears to correspond with the presence of the statue, which in sleep becomes the figure that it portrays.

The image of a piece of cheese rolling along the pavement of the church introduces the theme of food into this discussion. For the sick man, this cheese had been a gift from the living dead bishop and so, even when he awakes, he rushes about the church to search for it. Having interrogated everyone in the church, the man realised that, while he did not have his cheese, he had received his health. The cheese may thus symbolise the health granted to the man, but it is nevertheless an unusual image. In fact, the gifting of food held a contentious place in reports of the living dead. One point of contention was the question of whether the living dead could, or should, share the food of the living, and vice versa. This question had been explored by Pope Gregory, in the tale of the stranger in the bathhouse, who refused to eat the loaves offered to him by the priest.[574]

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[571] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 205, 380-381, 'invenit statue digitum usque ad volam curvatum'.
[572] *Miracvla S. Swithvni*, in *The Cult of St Swithun*, ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge. *Winchester Studies* 4.ii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 45, 680-681, 'sacerdotem florentem canicie, splendidissima ueste fulgentem coram assistere, intento baculo, cur tam diu ibi iaceret minari et quasi eam uelle percutere'.
[573] Ibid., 53, 686-687, 'caseum quem ab illo accipiebat de manu elapsum per pauimentum ecclesie uolui, se sequi currendo et illum uoluendo diffugere'.
[574] Gregory, *Dialogi*, IV, 57, 267.

The ultimate loss of the cheese in this instance enables the percipient, and by extension the writer, to sidestep a crucial dilemma, in which the man, had he received food from the living dead bishop, would have been compelled to decide whether to eat it.

Feasts

The relationship between food and the living dead was given further thought by William of Newburgh. Food serves as a recurring motif in several stories in William's *Historia*. To understand the significance of food in these stories, it is helpful to begin with William's account of a Breton heresy, orchestrated by a man called Éon de l'Étoile. From the outset, food operates as a metaphor for Éon's heretical teachings, such that the crowds who listened to him were nurtured 'not with real and solid food, but rather with ghostly (*aëriis*) fare'.[575] The aerial quality of this food reflects the baseless substance of Éon's heresies, and its importance to Éon's followers is intensified after his death. His followers are said to have 'wandered through the world as a penitential exercise', in a way that seems reminiscent of the carollers of Colbek or the riders of Bonneval.[576] In Éon's absence, the aerial food that continues to sustain them on their wanderings is 'invisibly provided by the spirits of the lower air'.[577] And yet, they take this food in vain for it does not sate their hunger. There is also a more worrying effect of this food upon those who try it:

> quicunque autem forte ad eos accedens ex cibis eorum vel modicum gustasset, ex participatione mensae daemoniorum mente mutata spurcissimae multitudini continuo adhaerebat; et quicunque ab eis aliquid in qualibet specie accepisset, periculi expers non erat.
>
> Any person who chanced to approach them and tasted even a morsel of their food experienced a change of heart from sharing that table of devils, and at once attached himself to that most foul crew; and anyone accepting from them anything under whatever appearance was not immune from danger.[578]

Food continues to symbolize heretical teachings, which are presented as the temptations of devils and the means of entry to the company of heretics. William uses food consumption to explain the influence of religious teachings and the formation of community. Another story in his *Historia*, about the two green children discovered at

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[575] William, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, in *The History of English Affairs*, I, 19, 88-89, 'non veris et solidis sed aëriis potius cibis... alebatur'.
[576] Ibid., 'tanquam agentes poenitentiam per orbem vagabantur'.
[577] Ibid., 'subministrantibus invisibiliter spiritibus aëris hujus'.
[578] Ibid.

Woolpit, shares this imagery but in an inverted form. The children's consumption of food in the narrative corresponds with their spiritual nourishment through Christian teaching; food and teaching in tandem appear to sap the green colour from the girl's skin.[579] However, the development of this metaphor in the case of Éon's heresy, complete with a table of devils (*mensae daemoniorum*), a most foul crew (*spurcissimae multitudo*), and a threat that anyone who tastes of the food must join their company likens heresy to a kind of death through a common stock of motifs.

These motifs are given a life of their own in William's tale of a slightly drunk Yorkshireman when he came one night to a hill near Gypsey Race. The man is said to have heard singing, as if for a celebration, and discovered an open door in the side of the hill. He ventured inside to see a large house, 'crowded with men and women reclining at table as at a formal feast'.[580] At this point, the man is given a cup by one of the servants to drink, but 'deliberately refused to drink' (*consulte noluit bibere*) and, instead, poured out its contents. Taking the cup, the man flees from the feast, with the diners chasing after him. William writes that this strange cup became a gift for King Henry I and eventually ended up in the hands of King Henry II. Aspects of this narrative, especially the feasting and the refusal to share their drink, correspond with some of the metaphors that William used to explain the dangers of heeding Éon's heresy. Perhaps, unlike those drawn to the heresies served at the table of devils, the Yorkshireman in this story understood that to drink from this cup would be to join, to attach himself, to that company. The nature of this company, however, is ontologically ambiguous. The diners appear to be men (*viri*) and women (*feminae*), but their feasting company is neither known, nor considered safe.

The dangers of such feasting companies and their food are attested elsewhere in medieval literature. One man who was said to have experienced these dangers was Richard of Sunderland, whose story is narrated in an anonymous miracle collection about Cuthbert, written around 1200, at Farne. Richard was a labourer, working for a man from Ellingham, who went out to work one day but did not return home. His parents searched for him but, when they could not find him, they thought that their son had fallen off the cliff and died. Late one day, however, Richard 'came to his parents' house, beating on the door and bellowing instead of speaking'.[581] Hearing this banging on their door, the parents

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[579] Ibid., I, 27, 116-117.
[580] Ibid., I, 28, 120-121, 'plenamque discumbentibus tam viris quam feminis, tanquam ad sollemnes epulas'.
[581] *De mirabilibus Dei modernis temporibus in Farne insula declaratis*, in 'The Miracles of St Cuthbert at Farne', ed. Edmund Craster, *AB* 70 (1952), VI, 16, 'venit ad domum parentum, pulsans ad hostium, pro sermone dans mugitum'; Trans. Edmund Craster, 'The Miracles of Farne', *Archaeologia Aeliana, Fourth Series* 29 (1951), 93-107.

looked out of their window and 'thought at first that they saw a ghost (*spiritus*)'.[582] When the parents realised that it was their son, however, they brought him to Farne, where he regained his power of speech. For the purposes of this discussion, it is the series of events that befell Richard while he was missing, that led to his being mistaken for a *spiritus* by his parents, which merits further discussion.

When Richard set out for work, he is said to have encountered three young men on the road, whose clothes and horses were green. The riders try to persuade Richard to come with them but, when he refuses, 'one whom he thought to be a man reached out his hand' and forced Richard to sit on the back of his saddle.[583] The combination of human features and green attire seems to situate these riders in a similar tradition to that of the green knight that comes to King Arthur's court or the green children discovered at Woolpit. In further similarity to the children who climbed out of the wolf pit that led to their home, Richard is taken to a valley that opens before him and reveals the home of his green-clad abductors. While Richard thought he had been seized by a human (*homo*), the narrator explains that he had actually been led by 'a spirit of phantasy' (*phantasie spiritus*) to 'a company of devils' (*conventu diabolico*). This act of failed recognition, mistaking a *spiritus* for a *homo*, seems to anticipate the later confusion of Richard's parents, who inversely mistake their son for a *spiritus*. The demonic interpretation offered by this writer is meant to explain Richard's abduction but seems to be dropped when the writer comes to describe this company as a celebratory one, as at a feast.

Just as at the Yorkshire feast, the Sutherland diners include men and women, young and old, in a pastoral, holiday, scene. Richard also seems to have known tales of these feasts, perhaps akin to that of the Yorkshireman, as he refuses to drink from a green horn since 'he remembered the stories he had heard while he was still among men, and what popular opinion handed down about things of this kind'.[584] Unlike the Yorkshireman, who escaped the feast with the cup, Richard is not so shrewd. Richard is said to have afterwards reported that 'he fed on wheaten bread and very thin milk, eating and drinking what they had with them at the Lord's command'.[585] Thus, Richard shares the food of these diners. The Lord's command seems out of place here, given the writer's earlier claim that Richard had been led to a company of devils. Nevertheless, Richard's

[582] *De mirabilibus*, VI, 16, 'putabant se primo spiritum videre'.
[583] Ibid., 15, 'qui putabatur homo manum extendit'.
[584] Ibid., VI, 15, 'Recordatus est enim sermonum quos, cum adhuc cum hominibus esset, audierat, et quod de huiusmodi vulgaris opinio tradebat'.
[585] Ibid., 'Vescebatur... pane avenicio et lacte admodum tenui, commedens et bibens que apud illos erant, iuxta preceptum Domini'.

consumption of this food provides an angle for understanding his later likeness to a *spiritus*. The narrative reveals how the sharing of food creates a community, such that, once Richard has shared in their food, the diners not only invite him to stay with them, but also subject him to their laws and judgments. When Richard refuses to remain, the diners pass a sentence against him for his crime of disobedience, thus rendering him mute. To share the food of a company is to become attached to them, or even one of the *spiritus* themselves. Strange feasting companies such as these show that certain communities were believed to be best kept separate, lest one begins to merge with them and become almost unrecognisable to one's own family.

Water

The habitation of ambiguous beings in underworld communities corresponds with those found in underwater communities. Unlike other elements, earth and water are often considered fit for inhabitation and even containment. Both Sheriff Leofstan and Abbot Brihtwold of Malmesbury were thought to have needed a watery grave rather than a burial.[586] Both characters represent living dead figures who were unfit or unable to be committed into the earth. The function of water in these contexts seems to have been one of suppression. However, tales of beings emerging out of watery depths problematise this function and suggest that the living dead were not just imprisoned in water, but also used it to their advantage, to hide, to move, and even live under its surface.

Watery Ends

The tension between earth and water in the containment of the living dead is exemplified in the story of Cwoenthryth, the ninth-century abbess of Winchcombe. The *Vita* of Cwoenthryth's younger brother, Kenelm, potentially composed by Goscelin in the eleventh century, tells a story about how Cwoenthryth plotted the murder of her brother with his tutor as part of her plans to claim the Mercian throne. It is said that, upon seeing a procession of people carrying her brother's body in reverence, Cwoenthryth took up her psalter and began to chant Psalm 108 backwards to cause harm. While reciting these verses, her eyes are said to have fallen out from their sockets onto the open page of the psalter. Soon afterwards, Cwoenthryth died, but 'they say she could not stay buried in either the church or the forecourt nor in the cemetery'.[587] Goscelin does not explain whether he imagined this unburied Cwoenthryth as an ambulant figure or an expelled

[586] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, V, 258.
[587] Goscelin, *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, 16, 72-73, 'ferunt nec in ecclesia nec in atrio nec in campo sepultam posse teneri'.

corpse, spat out by the ground. Regardless, the solution, and Goscelin's final word on Cwoenthryth's story, is revealed by a shining child, most likely Kenelm, who instructed for Cwoenthryth to be 'thrown into a certain depth'.[588] An unspecified watery location thus serves as Cwoenthryth's final resting place, plunging her, and her ill will, into its depths.

A more specific location was identified as the resting place for King Herla and his company. As discussed in previous chapters, King Herla was said to still carry the dog in an eternal hunt with his followers. And yet, Walter Map reports that the company have more recently ceased to appear. It is said that, in the first year of the coronation of King Henry II, the company 'was seen by many Welshmen to plunge into the Wye, the river of Hereford'.[589] This immersion of the company underwater is said to end their wanderings, although Walter Map suspects that they have rather transmitted their wanderings to the court. For the purposes of Walter Map's political commentary, therefore, water suppresses the living dead so that their qualities can be transferred to those at court, which is presented as another kind of living death, albeit one for satirical effect. While this conclusion emphasises the river's role in ending these wanderings, Walter Map uses a starkly different image to describe this final sighting of King Herla's company later in his *De nugis curialium*. A second account of their last known appearance relates that the troop were threatened by a large force, which had come to obtain an answer from them. At this point, King Herla's company 'rose up into the air and vanished on a sudden'.[590] The substitution of water with air in this final sighting hints at an interchangeability in the functions of water and air, to which we will return through the theme of motion. In both cases, however, the disappearance of King Herla's company is connected with the limits of visibility, whether that is in the great heights of the sky or in the great depths of the water.

This out of sight, out of mind approach to disposing of the living dead had its limits. The underlying uncertainties in the practice of depositing the living dead underwater are exemplified in the fourteenth-century narrative about James Tankerlay, the late rector of Kirby, recorded by the Byland monk. James Tankerlay had been buried at Byland, in front of the chapter house, but was said to take nocturnal walks to Kirby where, on one occasion, he 'blew out the eye', *exsufflauit oculum*, of his concubine.[591] In response, the abbot and community at Byland unearthed James Tankerlay's coffin and compelled one Roger Wayneman to take it to Gormire Lake. In a similar way to some of the examples

[588] Ibid., 'in quodam profundo semoto proici'.
[589] Walter, *De nugis*, I, 11, 30-31, 'uisus fuit a multis Wallensibus immergi iuxta Waiam Herefordie flumen'.
[590] Ibid., IV, 13, 370-371, 'Illi autem eleuati sursum in aera subito disparuerunt'.
[591] *TMGS*, IV, 418.

discussed in chapter three, the behaviour of the oxen that pulled Roger Wayneman's cart is indicative of the anxiety surrounding this living dead body. The Byland monk writes that 'while he was throwing the coffin into the water the oxen were almost drowned for fear'.[592] Once the corpse had been dumped underwater, one would assume that these fears, along with the apparitions, ceased. However, the conclusion to this narrative reveals a fear, either personal or second-hand, that is still troubling its writer. The Byland monk writes:

> Absit quod ego taliter scribens sim in aliquo periculo, quia sicut audiui a senioribus ita scripsi. Misereatur ei omnipotens, si tamen fuerit de numero saluandorum.
>
> God forbid that I be in any danger for even as I have heard from my elders so have I written. May the Almighty have mercy upon him if indeed he were of the number of those destined to salvation.[593]

A 'risk' or 'danger' (*periculum*) preoccupies the Byland writer, even though he believes that he has faithfully reported the testimonies of older, reliable, members of his monastic community. The issue seems to be that there is no way for the writer to know whether James Tankerley deserved this treatment. The implications of this conundrum are revealing; if James Tankerley was indeed destined for salvation, then the Byland monk's fear suggests the role of water in denying him this right. Of course, theologically speaking, water would not hinder the power of God to grant salvation. However, from the Byland monk's perspective, the displacement of James Tankerley's body from the church graveyard to the liminal lake denies rights and honours due to the righteous living dead. Perhaps this maltreatment was feared to anger James Tankerley, such that he might rise out of this watery prison to correct his fate, as so many characters in the Byland Abbey stories do. In this instance, the Byland monk hints that water need not necessarily be the end of the story when those under its surface have a reason to venture out.

Underwater Worlds

These underwater deposits of corpses reveal little about the state of the living dead once they are beneath the water's surface. For instance, it is unclear whether water was believed to drown, weaken, or imprison the living dead, even though any of these three readings would explain why the living dead ceased to bother percipients when cast into the water.

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[592] Ibid., 'dum iactaret predictam cistam in aquam fer[e] pre timore boues demergerentur'.
[593] Ibid.

Furthermore, it is equally unclear whether the living dead were believed to inhabit the water itself, travel by it, or even journey through it, like a portal, to somewhere else. The uncertainties reflect the mysteries beneath the water's surface, beyond human sight. By analysing reported underwater inhabitants, we might hope to illuminate the mysterious, underwater, community that the submerged living dead were thought to join. In the early thirteenth century, Ralph of Coggeshall recorded an encounter with one such underwater inhabitant at Orford during the reign of King Henry II.

This underwater being, caught by fishermen off the Suffolk coast, is described as a *homine silvestri*, a 'wild man', who carried a human appearance. The explanatory frameworks deployed in the narrative propose three readings of this character as 'a mortal man or some fish in human likeness or an evil spirit lurking in the body of a drowned man'.[594] The ambiguity surrounding this human, animal, or evil spirit is unresolved, but, for the purposes of this thesis, it is the reference to a drowned man's body that seems to be of interest. This interpretation implies that evil spirits can move through water, to enter and reanimate a once-living, drowned, body, just as they did in interred bodies, as seen in chapter one. Given that the fishermen were able to catch and remove this man from the water to the extent that he was led to a church, though he showed neither reverence nor understanding of its holiness, this man seems to be as amphibious as he is ambiguous. Thus, the drowned were evidently believed to have been able to leave their watery grave, in this case when animated by an evil spirit. For this reason, the function of water to contain the living dead ought to be qualified by its potential to return them.

Tales of ambiguous water-dwelling beings often focus on their movements in and out of the water, that is, between water and earth. A lake in Brycheiniog, Wales, was said to be the home of women who would emerge from the water on moonlit nights to dance in a nearby field of oats. Walter Map narrates how the owner of this field, a man called Gwestin Gwestiniog, followed these women from his field back to the water on three occasions.[595] Having carefully observed them, Gwestin learned how he could capture one from their company, which he did on the fourth night. Gwestin married this woman, and they had many children together, but she forewarned her husband that she would one day leave him when he struck her with his bridle. Just as she said, Gwestin struck her one day with a bridle and he found her fleeing with their children. One son, Triunein Vagelauc,

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[594] Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, *RS* 66 (London: Longman, 1875), 118, 'mortalis homo exstiterit, sive aliquis piscis humanam prætendens speciem, sive aliquis malignus spiritus fuerit in aliquo corpore submersi hominis latitans'.
[595] For Gwestin Gwestiniog as Brychan Brycheiniog, the legendary Welsh hero, see Juliette Wood, 'The Fairy Bride Legend in Wales', *Folklore* 103:1 (1992), 57.

was caught by his father and becomes the focus of the remainder of Walter Map's narrative. Triunein's mother, however, was not forgotten. Having recounted Triunein's career and military exploits, culminating in his defeat at the hands of King Brychan, Walter Map struggles to provide a clear ending for Triunein; he writes that 'whereas they tell that Triunein was saved by his mother and still lives with her in the lake I mentioned, I think it must even be called a lie, for such a fiction could easily be invented about a man who was missing'.[596] Walter Map dismisses the reports that he seems to have heard about Triunein's mother, but hints at a saving role that she was thought to have played. Indeed, the saving role of Triunein's lake-dwelling mother deserves further discussion. An interesting analogue might be found in the Lady of the Lake, the foster-mother of Lancelot, whom Chrétien de Troyes introduced as a figure upon whom the knight could call for aid in times of need.[597]

The idea that Triunein and his mother moved from an earthly and to a watery dwelling resonates with Walter Map's earlier description of the lake-bound women, who could leave the waters of Brycheiniog at night to dance in the nearby fields. These water-dwelling nocturnal visitors were evidently thought to resurface and wander the surrounding environs. This representation problematises our understanding of the purpose of depositing living dead bodies in bodies of water. As such, water may not have served as just a means of containment for these living dead bodies, rather it may have been thought to provide a new community, a new locality, and a new centre from which water-dwelling wanderers roam.

Meres and Mothers

The themes of submerged corpses and lake-dwelling mothers are combined more explicitly in the figure of Gaynor's mother. This character appears in *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, a fourteenth-century Middle English poem, when Gawain and Queen Gaynor are at the Terne Wathelyne, or Tarn Wadling, Cumbria. The arrival of Gaynor's mother is heralded by 'a lowe one the loughe' (a fire in the lake), before she glides towards Gawain.[598] Gaynor's mother is described as a decaying body, 'blak to the bone' and

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[596] Walter, *De nugis*, II, 11, 154-155, 'aiunt Triunein a matre sua seruatum, et cum ipsa in lacu illo uiuere unde supra mencio est, imo et mendacium puto, quod de non inuento fingi potuit error huiusmodi'.
[597] Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette, ou, Le Roman de Lancelot*, ed. Charles Méla (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1992), 200, 2340-2350; Trans. Burton Raffel, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 75, 2345-2355.
[598] *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, 180, 83.

'biclagged in clay'.[599] This muddy, decomposed, body seeks help from her daughter, in the form of masses and prayers. While Triunein's lake-dwelling mother is said to have saved her son, Gaynor's mother hopes to be saved by her daughter. The appearance of the mother also works in part as a warning for Queen Gaynor that sins will disfigure beauty; the mother's transformation is said to have been stark as she laments to Gawain that 'I was of figure and face fairest of alle'.[600] The mother's sins seem to have condemned her to a terrible fate, located or accessed through the lake at Tarn Wadling. While the lake and its inhabitants are ambiguous in Map's tale, Gaynor's mother is described as 'in the lyknes of Lucyfere, laytheste in Helle' (In the likeness of Lucifer, most loathed in hell), adorned with toads and serpents.[601] This association between lakes and sites of suffering is echoed elsewhere in Middle English literature.[602] In *Saint Erkenwald*, for instance, Erkenwald hears the lament of an old judge that his virtuous deeds seem for naught 'quen we are dampnyd dulfully into be depe lake'.[603] The practice of throwing living dead bodies into lakes may thus correspond with a belief that suffering awaited the living dead therein and would suppress their wanderings.

Encounters with mother-figures in or at bodies of water brings us back to the figure of Grendel's mother. As discussed in previous chapters, Grendel and his mother inhabit the Fens, where their retreat is described as 'a pool of water-monsters' (*on nicera mere*).[604] When fatally wounded by Beowulf, it is only after Grendel has returned to the water that the poet writes 'there hell received him' (*þær him hel onfeng*).[605] The *mere* appears to act as an entry point to *hel*. This connection between postmortem suffering and a pool is once again heralded by a meeting of fire and water. The *Beowulf*-poet describes a fire over this pool, a 'fire on the flood' (*fyr on flode*) that seems to resemble the 'fire in the lake' (*lowe one the loughe*) at Tarn Wadling. Both portentous bodies of water are inhabited by mother-figures and, like the mothers of Triunein and Gaynor, it is the relationship between mother and child that drives Grendel's mother to leave her underwater dwelling. Unlike Triunein's mother, Grendel's mother was unable to save her son, but, as we saw in chapter two, she did reclaim his arm from Heorot. While body parts serve as the currency

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[599] Ibid., 181, 105-106.
[600] Ibid., 182, 137.
[601] Ibid., 180, 84.
[602] 'Stanzaic Morte Arthur', in *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), ll. 3180-3187.
[603] *Saint Erkenwald*, in *The Complete works of the Pearl poet*, 336-337, 302, 'when we're damned thus to drown in the deep, burning lake'; Revelation 20:14-15.
[604] *Beowulf*, 13, 142-143, 845.
[605] Ibid., 852.

of this feud, the saving role of mother-figures in medieval literature could suggest that Grendel's mother took the arm to return it, or even reattach it, to its body, like King Edmund's head. The potential for Grendel to return, perhaps once saved by his mother, may provide another layer of meaning to Beowulf's decision to decapitate the corpse.

The examples of these three women reveal compelling narrative patterns. All three women are nameless, known only through their relationship with their named children, Triunein, Gaynor, and Grendel. These hidden identities stress both their roles as mothers and their ambiguous ontologies. Furthermore, all three characters traverse water and earth, collapsing boundaries between supposedly oppositional environments. The emphasis on water as a dwelling for these women reveals perceived connections between water and motherhood, and perhaps the link between bodies of water and bodies that bring forth life. This traversal of water and earth exemplifies the mobility of the living dead, roaming seemingly oppositional spaces.

Motion

Throughout this chapter, the connections between the elements have revealed meaningful sites for visualising the movements of the living dead. Funeral pyres have shown how fire, wood, and corpse combined to release smoke, spirits, and sickness. Light has revealed how the living dead traversed the spaces of the air between heaven and earth. The living dead have also been repeatedly encountered in watery environs, at meetings of earth and water. In a similar manner, the correspondences between water and air seem to have helped narrators visualise the living dead in motion. This section explores how the living dead are represented in motion, floating, or even levitating, on often unseen currents.

Ascension

The currents upon which a *spiritus* is imagined to travel can be inferred from a revised account of B.'s *Vita S. Dunstani*. This reviser, whose copy of the text was written c. 1000 at St Augustine's, Canterbury, introduced an unusual tale in the days leading up to Dunstan's death. According to this account, Dunstan had sat in a chair in a raised part of the refectory and fallen asleep, when he was 'raised, together with the chair on which he sat, right up to the roof-beam, and then put gently back on the floor with the help of Him who looks down kindly from on high'.[606] Dunstan thus appears to have levitated, with his chair,

[606] Winterbottom and Lapidge have edited and translated this revised text, see 'Appendix I: Passages in MS D of B.'s *Vita S. Dunstani* in which rhymed prose replaces the verse or supplements the original prose', in *The Early Lives of St Dunstan*, 150, 'una cum sella in qua residebat trabem adusque eleuatus, atque iterum amminiculante superni Inspectoris pietate leuiter est depositus'.

above his companions. This levitation story understandably captivated Dunstan's later hagiographers, who added details of their own.[607] For instance, Edmer added that Dunstan was raised three times and explained that he could not be carried any higher than the roof 'because the beams were in the way'.[608] The presentation of the roof-beams as a physical obstacle for Dunstan implies that Dunstan would have risen continuously, that is, literally ascended to heaven, had the beams not hindered him. In this way, the levitation of Dunstan resembles an attempted ascension, a fitting tale for an archbishop who died on 19 May 988, just three days after the Vigil of Christ's Ascension.[609] Perhaps the tale of Dunstan's levitation was intended to represent his imitation of Christ. In any case, this levitation reveals unseen currents at work at the deathbed. It is unclear whether body, spirit, soul, and even chair operate in tandem or in tension with each other in this story. The distinctions between these facets are elided in favour of the marvellous spectacle of the levitating archbishop, anticipating the heaven-ward journey that awaits him. The air that lifts and lowers Dunstan with his seat may have been invisible, but his dying, levitating, body revealed the upward direction of its current.

Floating Figures

The levitation of the living dead recurs in accounts of their appearances and movements. For example, Henry of Essex is said to have seen the floating figure of King Edmund at Reading in c. 1163, according to Jocelin of Brakelond's *Chronicle*. Based on Jocelin's narrative, Henry seems to have ignored rights and privileges due to the Bury community and been accused of treason by Robert de Montfort. The tensions between these two kinsmen escalated to judicial combat on an island not far from Reading Abbey, but, just as Robert was gaining the upper hand in the duel, Henry 'looked round and was astonished to see, in a space between earth and water (*in confinio terre et fluminis*), the figure of the glorious king and martyr, Edmund, dressed in armour and apparently floating in mid-air (*quasi in aere uolitantem*)'.[610] The location of Edmund in this encounter, in the air between earth and water, exemplifies the position of this living dead body at the interface of the

[607] William of Malmesbury's version of this story is closer to B.'s narrative, with details added from his Old English source, see William, *Vita S. Dunstani archiepiscopi*, xxxvi; II, 32, 292-293; 293, n. 2.
[608] Edmer, *Vita et Miracula S. Dunstani*, 67, 156-157, 'sed trabibus ne ultra ueheretur obsistentibus'.
[609] Ibid., 64, 152-153.
[610] Jocelin of Brakelond, *Cronica*, in *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, concerning the acts of Samson, Abbot of the Monastery of St Edmund*, ed. and trans. H.E. Butler (New York, NY: OUP, 1949), 70, 'circumquaque respexit, et ecce in confinio terre et fluminis uidit gloriosum regem et martirem Ædmundum armatum et quasi in aere uolitantem'; Trans. Diana Greenway and Jane Sayers, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* (Oxford: OUP, 1989), 63.

elements. The levitating figure of King Edmund, moreover, reiterates the significance of the air as the current upon which the living dead float.

Such flights upon aerial currents was of great interest to Reginald of Durham. The *Vita S. Godrici* contains multiple examples of flying, floating, and fast-moving figures.[611] Among these stories, there is an illustrative example that describes the movement of the living dead. When Godric was out in a field around midday, he saw someone moving quickly towards him. Based on Godric's testimony, Reginald reports that:

> Gradiebatur quidem quasi sub pennigeri motu aeris, quia gradientis illius pedes nullatenus pertingebant usque ad inferiorem terre contactum pulueris. Sed superius eius uestigia uisebantur et nullo modo ab alterius alicuius leuamine siue modulamine gressus deambulantis deferebantur. Spiritus quidem exstitit, quia carnem et ossa non habuit. Et id circo alterius sustentamine non indiguit, quia uirtus Dei sola gressus spirituum dirigit. Species tamen illa uideri potuit, que instar uiuentis hominis tota reluxit.
>
> It walked as if with the movement of a bird of the air, because its footsteps as it walked in no way made contact with the dust of the earth below. Its steps, however, seemed to be higher than the earth and its footsteps in no way carried by the assistance of anyone else or by any rhythm in the pace of the walker. It was a spirit (*spiritus*) because it had no flesh or bones. For that reason, it had no need for the support of anyone else, because the power of the Lord alone directs the steps of spirits. That figure could, however, be seen and completely shone out like a living person (*uiuentis hominis*).[612]

This shining, fast-moving, *spiritus* in the likeness of a *uiuentis homo* flies or floats above the ground. However, the identity of this *homo* is only revealed to Godric once the distance between them has closed. Godric recognizes the *spiritus* to be that of one of his devotees, a pious woman who had often visited him. After her death, Godric had prayed for salvation on her behalf and thus this fleeting visit was a sign of God's favour in answer to his request. The power of God certainly explains the ability, or even permission, of the *spiritus* to move, but a combination of images visualise this movement, from flying like a bird to walking like a person.

When representing the living dead as floating figures, medieval writers could turn to water imagery to make sense of their movement through the air. Staying with the *Vita*

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[611] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 63; 149.
[612] Ibid., 62, 252-253.

S. Godrici, one word that Reginald frequently deploys to express the flying or light walking of *spiritus* is *remigio*.[613] This term typically refers to the motion created by rowing a boat as its oars propel the vessel across the water .[614] The sweeping, or gliding, movement of a spiritus is thus visualised by means of mechanisms that suspend these figures between the elements.[615] Furthermore, the imagery of rowing oars seems to correspond with that of flapping wings. Felix, over four hundred years earlier, had deployed the word *remigio* to describe the conveyance of Guthlac from the gates of hell back to his island. Felix narrates that Bartholomew came to Guthlac's aid when he had been abducted by demons, who were commanded by the apostle to return Guthlac to his home. Sure enough, the demons 'carried him back with the utmost gentleness and bore him up most quietly upon the oarage of their wings (*alarum remigio*), so that he could not possibly have been conveyed more steadily in a chariot or a ship'.[616] Here, the motion described by *remigio* concerns the movement of demons, but it is atypical for them, since they have only carried Guthlac with such care and gentleness at Bartholomew's command. The steady movement of their wings, propelling them through the air like oars, works to explain Guthlac's flight through the Fens, on currents that seem at once aerial and watery.[617]

The light and quick motion of the living dead, or *spiritus* more generally, also seems to have affected objects. At Finchale, it was not only figures who were seen flying, but also the hermit's water pitcher along with the very vessels used for Mass. Reginald recounts how an evil spirit (*spiritus nequam*) caused chaos in Godric's oratory one night by throwing objects at the hermit during vespers. There was a beam in Godric's oratory, upon which various objects had been placed. It is said that the evil spirit 'collected all these and threw each one of them at Godric, one after the other'.[618] The nocturnal disturbance apparently failed to distract Godric from his prayers, but it did prompt him to send for Prior Roger the next day to confess and rearrange everything that had stood on the beam. There is no visual description of the evil spirit in this story. Rather, the only evidence of the presence of this *spiritus* is the movement of objects, the sound of cackling

[613] Ibid., 41, 75, 149, for 'remigio'.
[614] Ibid., 483, n. 768.
[615] Simon Trafford, 'Swimming in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Meanings of Water in Early Medieval England*, eds. Carolyn Twomey and Daniel Anlezark (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 88-92.
[616] Felix, *Vita S. Guthlaci*, 33, 108-109, 'Nam illum revehentes cum nimia suavitate, velut quietissimo alarum remigio, ita ut nec in curru nec in navi modestius duci potuisset, subvolabant'.
[617] Things fall from the sky as if from a sea according to Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, I, 13, 78-83.
[618] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 38, 172-175, 'omnia hec minutim collegit, et in eum singillatim singula queque proiecit'.

and singing, and an unbearable stink.[619] The deployment of sensory motifs, such as sound and odour, to indicate unseen presences will be discussed further in chapter six. For the closing case studies of this chapter, however, it is striking to examine an encounter that uses inanimate, everyday, items to signify the behaviour of an unseen presence.

Levitating Objects

The strange movements of an inanimate object in the late twelfth century were also described in Peter of Cornwall's *Liber reuelationum*. Among miracle stories reported at Eadburg's tomb, there is one tale that seems relevant to our discussion of motion and the living dead. It is said that a nun was in the porch of Eadburg one day when 'she saw the altar of this same holy virgin suddenly raised about a cubit from the ground into the air, and gradually lowered again into the original place of its position'.[620] The levitation and return of the altar is strikingly similar to the aforementioned story about Dunstan. For Peter, however, this testimony signifies the protection of Eadburg to the relief of the sinful. The relationship between Eadburg, her altar, and the levitating force is nevertheless unclear. Unlike Godric's vessels, the altar is difficult to imagine in the hands of a human-like figure, lifting and replacing it. Instead, by its proximity to her tomb, the altar may have been regarded as imbued with the virgin's life or lightness. The agency behind the motion is unclear, but it seems plausible to speculate that Eadburg herself was considered responsible for her altar's levitation. In comparison, a French story from Arles, recounted by Gervase of Tilbury c. 1200, featured a levitating mortar, which smashed upon the head of a widow on the day of her remarriage.[621] While no one saw who was lifting the mortar, it was agreed that her assailant was her late husband, punishing her for her infidelity. These stories show how the living dead could interact with the world in innovative ways to communicate their presence as unseen figures to percipients.

Elemental manifestations enable us to understand the qualities associated with the living dead. The recurring emphasis on qualities of lightness, warmth, and mobility help us to paint a picture of the expected behaviours of the living dead as well as the environments

[619] Peter Maxwell-Stuart, *Poltergeists: A History of Violent Ghostly Phenomena* (Amberley: Stroud, 2011), 20-21.
[620] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, II, 616, 312-313, 'uidit subito eiusdem sacre uirginis altare subleuari prope cubitum unum a terris in aera, rursumque paulatim submitti in pristinum sue stationis locum'.
[621] Gervase, *Otia imperialia*, III, 99, 752-755.

in which life was thought to thrive. To make sense of the life sustained in the fabric of creation, some storytellers turned to feminine imagery, which empowered earth and water with the abilities to mutate and restore. It is through the discussion of elements that the limits of human perception are perhaps most directly addressed, limits that were partly overcome through the use of other senses.

Chapter 6: Senses

Throughout this thesis, we have examined how representations of the living dead appeared and transformed before the witness's eyes. Although some writers differentiated between a witness's physical and spiritual eyes, most of the examples studied here elided such distinctions and focused on describing the visible aspects of the living dead. And yet, as we saw in chapter five, sight was known to have limits, easily overwhelmed by the blinding light of eternal life, a light beyond human comprehension. When sight failed, other phenomena were believed to indicate the presence of the living dead. These phenomena were sensed through touches, odours, and sounds. Accounts of these phenomena tend to focus on unsettling, if often minimal, sensations. Even though many of these accounts have been shaped into narrative models, such as healing and scourging miracle stories, the narratives betray circulating ideas about how the senses were thought to detect the living dead. These stories illustrate patterns in the deployment of the senses to signify the living dead in medieval literature.

Tactile Experiences

The sensation of being touched by the living dead is reported in many of these stories. As we have already seen, tactile experiences could sometimes be the first indicators of a living dead presence, which were usually followed by visual manifestations. This section returns to previously discussed case studies that opened in this way to discuss their accounts of tactile experience in greater detail. These accounts are then brought into dialogue with other narratives that report tactile experience alone, without later visual manifestations. Throughout these accounts, a recurring point of discussion is the state or condition of the percipient who was said to feel the touch of the living dead. The following discussion builds on Gordon's research into medieval evidence for symptoms of sleep paralysis and dream states.[622] As Gordon has argued, the physiological changes in the human body during REM sleep, such as muscle relaxation and shallow breathing, provide a compelling context for understanding medieval accounts of tactile experiences while in bed or during nighttime vigils. The following stories share a focus on the sensations that accompany transitional stages between sleep and wakefulness, which were interpreted to represent the presence of the living dead.

[622] Gordon, 'Medical Condition', 426.

Nocturnal Pressures

In previous chapters, we have examined William of Malmesbury's story of a young Roman man who found himself betrothed to Venus after her statue trapped his ring on her finger. In chapter two, we analysed the climax of this story, when the young man witnessed a nocturnal procession at the crossroads and was released from this pact. However, while invisible up until her appearance in the procession, the presence of Venus is sensed much earlier in the story. As we discussed in chapter five, the animated statue itself seems to become identical with Venus herself when her hand closes around the ring. Having unwittingly created a bond with the statue, or rather that which animated it, the young man is then said to have felt a presence follow him into bed with his wife. William narrates that, when the young man lay down beside his wife at bedtime, 'he was aware of some thick, murky substance that rolled between himself and her, which could be felt but not seen'.[623] This seemingly tangible presence between the man and his wife prevents them from embracing. Even though its form cannot be seen, this presence is understood to have been 'dense' (*densus*) and 'cloudy' or 'opaque' (*nebulosus*). The presence is not explicitly said to have been an aerial body, but the cloudlike connotations of *nebulosus* may resonate with the last chapter's discussion of air and smoke as useful motifs for illustrating otherwise invisible movements. Having felt this presence in bed, the young man then hears a voice, which identifies the presence as Venus, to whom he is now betrothed. And yet, the young man does not act to rectify this immediately. William narrates that a considerable time passed during which this healthy young man repeatedly felt this 'barrier' (*obstaculum*) and heard this voice every time he tried to sleep with his wife. The recurrent sensation is here construed to signify a continued presence that could only be dispelled once the young man had dissolved the pact made with the statue.

In a similar way, William of Newburgh's account of the living dead husband of Buckinghamshire, previously discussed in chapter one, also began with a terrifying tactile experience. The story of the husband's return begins when, on the night after he was buried, he came into his wife's bedroom and 'not only terrified her on awaking, but nearly crushed her by the insupportable weight of his body'.[624] This reference to the wife 'awaking' (*excitatam*) suggests her waking, hypnopompic, state when she felt her husband's weight. As Gordon has argued, this crushing sensation experienced by the wife

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[623] William, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, II, 205, 380-381, 'sensit quiddam nebulosum et densum inter se et illam uolutari, quod posset sentiri nec posset uideri'.
[624] *HRA*, V, 22, 474, 'excitatam non solum terruit verum etiam pæne obruit importabili sui pondere superjacto'.

of Buckinghamshire is common to anthropomorphised nightmare experiences.[625] As in the tale of the young Roman man and Venus, this sense of presence is not an isolated experience. The Buckinghamshire husband was felt again on the following night, pressing upon her in the same way. Terrified at the prospect of his return on the third night, the wife kept watch with some companions. The introduction of other witnesses to an individual's waking experience creates some uncertainty in the narrative, in that it is unclear to what extent the wife's companions can sense or see the husband that she feels. William relates that 'still he came; but being repulsed by the shouts of the watchers, and seeing that he was prevented from doing mischief, he departed'.[626] The shouts of the watchers repel the husband, but there is no mention of that which triggered them.

In fact, the husband seems to remain as a tactile presence in these early stages of the story. Having been prevented from lying with his wife, the husband 'harassed in a similar manner his own brothers, who were dwelling in the same street'.[627] This redirection of the husband towards his brothers might suggest that these encounters were fuelled by emotional ties with the man, whose presence was most keenly felt by his kin, and yet the reference to their physical proximity to the wife's dwelling hints at a more physical, space-bound, understanding of the husband's movement. If this crushing sensation was thought to transfer to his brothers, this living dead husband seems to represent a kind of hypnopompic or hypnagogic contagion. As mentioned earlier, there is even an indication that these tactile experiences spread like a disease to the neighbourhood's animals. Just as the wife had done before them, the brothers found that a neighbourhood watch was the solution, such that wakefulness serves as a cure for the symptoms that come when waking. In this way, the neighbourhood spent sleepless nights avoiding sensations that presumably came when transitioning in and out of sleep.

The encounter between Roger and Alexander also began with a tactile, rather than a visual, manifestation. Peter recounts Roger's testimony that as he lay awake in bed facing the wall, 'lying on my right side, I suddenly felt as if a heavy weight was pressing on my shoulders to the point of causing pain'.[628] The weight that Roger is said to have felt agitates him and so, unsure 'whether it was a fantasy or something evil', he signed himself with the cross and whispered 'I believe in God' (*Credo in Deum*).[629] Roger suddenly found

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[625] Gordon, 'Medical Condition', 431-432.
[626] *HRA*, V, 22, 474, 'Affuit tamen ille: sed pulsatus exclamationibus vigilum, cum nocere non posset, abiit'.
[627] Ibid., 'fratres proprios in eodem vico habitantes similiter fatigavit'.
[628] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, I, 205, 238-239, 'dextro lateri incumbens, sensi subito tamquam onus graue molem quandam scapulas meas comprimentem et usque ad dolorem urgentem'.
[629] Ibid., 'ne quid phantasticum esset apud me recogitans aut malignum'.

himself able to roll over, although he is said to doubt 'whether it was by my own strength or by another's power'.[630] Nevertheless, Roger clearly understood this weight to signify a presence; he sat up in bed and conjured (*Coniuro te*) whatever had made its presence known to him, learning from the reply that it was Alexander. At this point in the story, once Alexander is given a visible body, there is a crucial difference: Roger can no longer feel him. In dispelling the weight that pressed upon him in bed, Roger seems to have surrendered any chance of touching Alexander, for 'when I tried to touch him I was unable to catch hold of him by any means, as though he was evading my hand and shifting utterly'.[631] Once he has realised that his friend was with him, Roger actively sought physical contact with Alexander and tried to hold him. In this way, the example of Roger and Alexander illustrates the importance of sight when discerning a presence. And yet, when Alexander disappears after this first conversation between them, it is the absence of any physical sensation that seems to bother Roger the most, as he watched Alexander 'slipping away between the hands of one who would have held him'.[632]

Unseen Assailants

As well as indicating their presence, touch was also believed to have been a tool used by the living dead to alert or admonish percipients. Among the stories added to his recension of the *Miracula S. Eadmundi*, Goscelin included some testimonies from a religious woman at Bury called Seitha. One of these accounts reveals the purposeful role of touch in communications with the living dead. One night, about a month after the death of Toli, the late sacrist, Seitha is said to have gained permission to stay in the church after Matins and recite thirty psalms on behalf of Toli's soul. Goscelin relates that at dawn, just as she reached Psalm 80, Seitha fell asleep. He reports Seitha's account that 'suddenly some unseen person – I know not whom – grasped my shoulders from behind with both hands and shook them dreadfully'.[633] Seitha is said to have heard a voice, asking her how she could sleep when Toli is in such great suffering. At this, Seitha awoke and finished reciting the psalms. Seitha's experience in the church corresponds in part with the sensations reported by the Buckinghamshire wife and Roger. However, unlike these percipients, Seitha is adamant that this sensation did not go away, at least for a while. She is said to have claimed that 'though the person disappeared, the pressure of his fingers remained

[630] Ibid., 'quod siue propria uirtute siue aliena id tunc potuerim, adhuc ambigo'.
[631] Ibid., 'Quem cum contrectare temptassem, tanquam manu[u]m supterfugientem [subterfugientem] et prorsus mobilem nullatenus poteram conprehendere'.
[632] Ibid., 'inter manus uolentis eum comprehendere elapsus disparuit'.
[633] Goscelin, *Miracula S. Eadmundi*, II, 5, 284-285, 'extimplo latenter a tergo quis ignoro manibus me binis per scapulas arripiens, horrifice concussit'.

awhile. I could feel him but in no way see him'.[634] It is also striking that Seitha reports the impression of fingers, given that previous examples have described only shapeless weights and pressures upon their chests or shoulders. This detail appears to associate a human shape with the unseen sensation, and yet the voice that addresses Seitha remains nameless. The anonymity of this presence intensifies its unsettling, lingering, touch upon Seitha's shoulders. Nevertheless, this unseen agent is called a *persona*, which perhaps suggests not only a 'person', but also a 'mask' under which another form may be concealed. As such, although the voice speaks of Toli in the third person, it is possible that this presence could have been interpreted as a manifestation of Toli himself, whose appearances to the monk Edwin are described immediately after this story. By obscuring the identity of the presence felt by Seitha, Goscelin chose to stress the worthiness of his subject rather than the identity of the one who reached out to her in her drowsiness.

Even more violent altercations with the living dead were reported near the tomb of Bregwine, the eighth-century archbishop of Canterbury. In the 1120s, interest in this old archbishop was renewed when a German monk called Lambert showed greater zeal about the archbishop's remains than the Canterbury monks. Shaken by the prospect of losing a patron, Edmer composed a *Vita* in c. 1123, detailing the posthumous miracles of Archbishop Bregwine and the translation of his body at Canterbury Cathedral. Edmer's work betrays a community's anxiety about failing to show the living dead their due reverence. For instance, Edmer tells the tale of a former clerk of Archbishop Stigand, who vainly ordered that a bed be made for him above the archbishop's tomb. It is said that 'when he was fast asleep, he was thrown out from the place with the bed he had made' (*cum illum sopor altus teneret: excussus cum eo quem extruxerat lecto a loco proiectus est*).[635] The familiar narrative of the earth rejecting corpses that did not deserve to rest there, as in the cases of Leofstan and Cwoenthryth, discussed in chapters one and six, seems inverted as the living dead reject those who do not respect them from their tomb.

Another form of tactile experience at Archbishop Bregwine's tomb received detailed attention. Two stories in Edmer's *Vita* describe striking sensations felt by monks around their neck or shoulders. The first of these stories concerns the monk Helias, who was working with his back facing Bregwine's tomb. Edmer writes that Helias was

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[634] Ibid., 'in modum recedente persona, digitorum eius impressio non statim abscesit. Sentiri a me potuit, uideri nequaquam'.
[635] Edmer of Canterbury, *Vita beati Bregowini Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et confessoris*, ed. Bernhard Scholz, in 'Eadmer's Life of Bregwine, Archbishop of Canterbury, 761-764', *Traditio* 22 (1966), 10, 143-144.

'unexpectedly struck between his shoulders' (*ex insperato inter scapulas percussus*).[636] Quite literally struck with terror, Helias turned to see who had hit him but 'saw no one' (*neminem uideret*). At first, Helias dismisses the sensation and returns to his work, but 'he was struck in the neck for a second time, so severely that what he was holding slipped from his hands and with it he quickly fell down on the ground' (*ecce secundo tam grauiter in collo percussus est, ut quid inter manus habebat deorsum cadens amitteret, et ipse celeri casu terrę procumberet*).[637] At this second strike, Helias realised the irreverence of his position and left the tomb to finish his work elsewhere, undisturbed. Edmer recounts a similar experience of a monk called Samuel, who was still alive when the *Vita* was being written. It is said that Samuel 'remembers being struck in the neck in such a manner that he thought he would soon breathe his last breath when he fell to the paved floor' (*sic se percussum in ceruice meminit, ut ruens in pauimentum, spiritum se mox exhalaturum putauerit*).[638] Perhaps having also heard of what had happened to Helias, Samuel did not hang around to be struck again; 'he immediately left that place, and did not want to come back there lest he was visited a second time' (*statim a loco discessit, nec ulterius illuc ne secundo uisitaretur accedere uoluit*).

Like Roger and Seitha, Helias and Samuel locate their tactile experiences around their neck and shoulders. This pattern raises the question of whether certain parts of the body were thought to have been more susceptible to the touch of the living dead. A weight or pressure on the chest is known to be a symptom of sleep paralysis.[639] However, the sensations described by Helias and Samuel are singular, sharp, strikes as opposed to lingering or pressing weights. Their blows echo that received by Ranulf, the Norman knight chased by Edmund on horseback, who was impaled in the back by the king's spear. And yet, unlike previous examples, Helias and Samuel are not said to be falling asleep or waking up when they feel these invisible assaults. The blows upon the neck and shoulders of Helias and Samuel were presumably recognised as correcting punishments by the Canterbury monks. It is thus imperative to bear in mind Edmer's aim when he recorded these testimonies: to correct his brothers' irreverence towards an overlooked archbishop. On this point, Aldhelm's prose work, *De virginitate*, provides a revealing allusion that may have also informed the significance of the location of this tactile sensation on the body. Aldhelm implores the monastic army to proudly bear their shields of modesty, rather than

[636] Ibid, 12, 145.
[637] Ibid.
[638] Ibid., 13, 145.
[639] James Allan Cheyne, 'Sleep paralysis and the structure of waking-nightmare hallucinations', *Dreaming* 13 (2003), 164-166.

slackly show the backs of their shoulder blades in the manner of timid soldiers.[640] The pride and irreverence of the Canterbury monks could thus have been corrected through not only familiar anecdotes, but also familiar images of monastic discipline.

Healing Touches

Thus far, the sensations associated with the living dead have been terrifying and, for the most part, unwelcome. However, there are also positive representations of tactile encounters with the living dead. One such example was recounted by Goscelin among the miracle stories that he learned from the Wilton community. The tale concerns a mute man called Sigeric who came to the oratory which Edith had built at Wilton to keep vigil alone, until he found the pain in his head so great that he had to lie down in the corner. Goscelin narratives that 'when he had dropped off into a drowsy somnolence, in that sleep-induced out-of-body state it seemed to him that someone drew a hand over his sleeping face, from his neck up to his mouth'.[641] Goscelin's choice of language to describe Sigeric's state, as *quasi semisopitus*, 'almost half asleep', and *soporis excessu*, 'excess of sleep', reveals a medieval writer trying to express the mental or bodily state in which these sensations are felt. For Sigeric, the touch proves to be more than an external pressure, but an internal movement, for he awakens to find his mouth filled with blood and his voice restored. Sigeric rushes out of the oratory, with his hand under his mouth to stop his blood dripping onto the chapel floor, to a nearby stream where he washes and tells his story to Brihtric the priest. The hand, presumably of Edith, is thus shown to have moved from Sigeric's neck to his mouth in order to bring forth his blood, and with it his illness.

The healing touch of the living dead was not always restricted to certain parts of the body. There are reports of tactile experiences felt across the entire body of the percipient. For example, Bede reports that a monk called Baduthegn, still alive at the time of writing the *Historia*, had suffered a stroke that left him paralysed and unable to walk. Baduthegn is said to have gone to the tomb of Cuthbert to pray for relief from his suffering, or the patience to endure it. However, as Baduthegn prayed, 'he seemed to fall into a deep sleep and, as he afterwards used to relate, he felt a great broad hand touch his head where the pain lay'.[642] This story has much in common with Goscelin's account of the

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[640] Aldhelm, *De virginitate*, in *Aldhelm, the Prose Works*, trans. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 11, 68.
[641] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 23, 300-301, 'Cum uero quasi semisopitus obdormisset, in illo soporis excessu uisum est ei quod quispiam a collo per faciem dormientis usque ad os manum pertraxerit'.
[642] *HE*, IV, 31, 446-447, 'uelut in soporem solutus, sentit, ut ipse postea referre erat solitus, quasi magnam latamque manum caput sibi in parte qua dolebat tetigisse'.

experience of Sigeric in Edith's oratory. Like Sigeric, Baduthegn feels the hand's touch move, so that it passes over his entire body down to his feet. The touch dispels the pain and heals him of his paralysis. This sensation, 'like a great broad hand' (*quasi magnam latamque manum*), hints at an immensity detected in the pressure felt by Baduthegn, which is mediated in the imagery of Cuthbert's giant hand. Nevertheless, when this scene of the story was illustrated at Durham in the twelfth century, appended to a copy of Bede's Life of Cuthbert, Cuthbert's hand was shown reaching out from within the tomb to touch Baduthegn's head (see Figure 8). The healing hands of the living dead emerge from this discussion as interpretations of a multifaceted literary tradition that shaped, and was in turn shaped by, lived experiences of nightmares and dream states.

Figure 8. The Healing of Baduthegn, BL, MS Yates Thompson 26 (*HE*, IV, 31), fol. 83r, c.1200 © British Library Board.

Olfactory Experiences

In chapter five, we discussed the relationship between the living dead, air, and contagion. The idea that something unseen emanated from the living dead was a cause for concern, especially for writers like William of Newburgh. Often this unseen, air-borne, emission was revealed through percipient reactions, most notably at times of disease outbreaks. However, there are examples that suggest the emissions from the living dead could be detected through the percipient's sense of smell. The fragrant or

noxious nature of the odours of the living dead were thought to reflect not only their heavenly or hellish fate, but also the healing or harming effect of that which had been released from their body and spread across the nearby area.[643] The examples of exhumation and translation in chapter two revealed expectations concerning the smell of incorrupt bodies and relics. These olfactory experiences thus reveal further patterns in detecting and interpreting the porous potential of the living dead.

Foul Stenches

As mentioned earlier, William of Malmesbury was sceptical of stories about reanimated and demonically possessed bodies. These doubts shaped William's account of the return of Abbot Brihtwold. Brihtwold was an ill-reputed abbot of Malmesbury who died drinking in the town. William writes that Brihtwold had been buried with his predecessors at St Andrew's, but 'the guardians of the place were troubled by hallucinatory apparitions until the body was dug up and plunged in a deep swamp a long way from the monastery'.[644] Although William deems the encounters with this living dead abbot to have been *umbris fantasticis*, the solution to this illusory problem is decidedly physical, casting the body into a swamp. As in the case of Sheriff Leofstan, the commentator's gloss seems somewhat disjointed when compared to the local response. Nevertheless, these appearances seem to have stopped with the expulsion of Brihtwold's body.

Fears about Brihtwold's continued threat seem to have been anticipated by the monks, who chose a swamp far away from their monastery. Moreover, William's conclusion to the tale hints at how this exiled abbot lingered in this local community. It is said that 'a foul smell that breathes a noisome miasma over the locals' emanated from the deep swamp into which Brihtwold's corpse had been thrown.[645] The lingering smell rising from the swamp seems to haunt the locals, a reminder of the abbot who had plagued their town in life. William does not elaborate on the relationship between 'smell' (*odor*), and 'miasma' (*mephitis*), but his comment implies that this odour was interpreted as a sign of air pollution, which spread throughout the local neighbourhood. Furthermore, the manner of this spread is likened to breath, as the smell 'breathes' (*exhalat*) the disease over the people.

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[643] Elaine Marie Glanz, 'The odours of sanctity and of evil in Old English prose and poetry', PhD Thesis, Lehigh University (1996).
[644] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, V, 258, 614-615, 'custodes locis umbris fantasticis inquietatos, donec cadauer suffossum longe a monasterio paludi profundae immerserint'.
[645] Ibid., 'unde aliquotiens teter odor emergens seuam uicinis exhalat mefitim'.

Fragrant Breaths

This association between odour and breath resonates with the deathbed story of Guthlac, discussed previously in chapter five. As we have seen, air was instrumental to understanding the movement of Guthlac's soul out of his body. It was odour, however, that represented such unseen movements in the narrative accounts. According to Felix's *Vita*, an odour seems to have originated in Guthlac's dying breaths, when Beccel is said to have reported that 'there seemed to proceed from his mouth the odour of sweet-smelling flowers, so that the scent of nectar filled the whole building in which he sat'.[646] Odour is reported next after Guthlac had died. Felix writes that 'the whole air was heard to thunder with angelic songs, while one would have thought the island to be filled with the sweet scents of many kinds of spices'.[647] At first glance, there appear to have been two odours, one that signified the departure of Guthlac's soul on his dying breath and another that signified the arrival of choirs of angels to receive him into heaven. However, as the narrative unfolds, we find that odour is gradually being disseminated from Guthlac's breath to his building to his entire island. This growing area, I would argue, suggests the emanation of an odour, that originated in Guthlac's dying breaths, and that could plausibly have transformed from the smell of flowers to the smell of spices.

This connection between odour and breath is particularly significant in Felix's *Vita*. Earlier in the text, Felix narrated a miracle story in which Guthlac healed a young man called Hwaetred, who had been tormented by an evil spirit. Felix described how Guthlac drove away the evil spirit by 'breathing into his face the breath of healing'.[648] There is a striking linguistic similarity in this expression for the verb *inflare*, used here to refer to Guthlac's 'breathing', was used to denote the 'filling' of both the building and the island with the smells of flowers and spices. This coterminous understanding of breath and odour suggests that the smells at Crowland signified Guthlac's lingering, healing, breath. This desirable diffusion of sweet, healing, smells contrasts with the odours reportedly associated with Abbot Brihtwold. The swamp into which Brihtwold's body was cast is said to have become a source of noxious air whereas Guthlac's island seems purified, attracting pilgrims to the marshes of the Fens. There appears to be a topographical parallel between these two case studies, which both make an association between odours and wetlands. These watery terrains seem fluid, more impressionable,

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[646] Felix, *Vita S. Guthlaci*, 50, 156-157, 'velut melliflui floris odoratus de ore ipsius processisse sentiebatur, ita ut totam domum, qua sederet, nectareus odor inflaret'.
[647] Ibid., 158-159, 'Cantantibus quoque angelis spatium totius aeris detonari audiebatur; insulam etiam illam diversorum aromatum odoriferis spiraminibus inflari cerneres'.
[648] Ibid., 41, 130-131, 'inflans in faciem eius spiritum salutis'.

receiving and absorbing a power and personality from those who entered them.[649] Watery environs remain in some sense inhabited domains as these wildernesses seem imbued with vestiges of the living dead.

Sweet Atmospheres

As in the case of Guthlac, the deployment of odour in the account of Godric of Finchale's death draws attention to how odours associated with the living dead disseminate and fill the spaces in which they once lived. Reginald of Durham describes how, after Godric had died, the trees at Finchale dripped as though they perspired a sweet dew and 'the airs of the skies in all the adjoining woods became sweet-smelling'.[650] Reginald explains that this happened because 'while his gentle spirit crossed through the ether to the heavens, the sweet smell which came from him chanced to drench the spaces of the air'.[651] The emanation of the sweet-smelling odour from Godric as he ascends to heaven seems heady and humid, soaking the surrounding air and woods. Like Crowland, Finchale becomes hallowed by its hermit's odour. The odours described in these stories betray an association with space, in terms of the physical proximity of the living dead and the reach of that which was thought to emanate from them, for better or for worse. In this way, these odours express not just lingering presences or essences of the living dead, but also claims to the environs which they once inhabited.

Auditory Experiences

The air at Crowland and Finchale was filled not only with odour, but also with song. As mentioned earlier, Felix described a thunderous sound of angelic songs that accompanied the aromatic smell that filled Crowland. Likewise, Reginald continued his account of Godric's death with a tale of a shepherdess from Newton who, at the hour of Godric's death, heard voices coming from Finchale, singing sweetly, and going up to heaven. As we have already seen, in the case of Wilfrid and the flapping wings heard at Ripon, sounds at the hour of death were especially important. Furthermore, these examples participate in a widespread narrative model in medieval literature that centred on heavenly choirs, which were believed to come at the hour of death to receive the righteous into heaven. As Sophie

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[649] Rebecca Pinner, 'Thinking Wetly: Causeways and Communities in East Anglian Hagiography', *Open Library of Humanities* 4(2): 3 (2018), 21; Heide Estes, *Anglo-Saxon Literary Landscapes: Ecotheory and the Environmental Imagination* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 106.

[650] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 170, 314, 564-565, 'celi erii in omni nemore circumiacenti melliflui sunt effecti'.

[651] Ibid., 'accidit quia dum spiritus eius suauis ad superos per aera pertransiit, forte mellifluus odor qui de eo prodiit erum spacia sui inundantia perfudit'.

Sawicka-Sykes has shown, these heavenly choirs were sometimes composed of an ambiguous mixture of angelic psychopomps and human singers.[652] The story of two brothers, Cedd and Chad, both abbots of Lastingham, provides a representative example of this ambiguity in the composition of the heavenly choir. Bede's *Historia* relates how Cedd was said to have descended amidst an angelic choir to receive Chad into heaven.[653] The ambiguities of the heavenly choir introduce some of the questions that are common to the range of auditory experiences associated with the living dead; questions about identifying voices, locating sounds, and interpreting unseen entities recur throughout the following examples. This section begins by discussing further examples of invisible choirs, before examining a wider array of auditory experiences associated with the living dead, such as voices and noises.

Bells

The causes of and reasons for auditory experiences received a range of interpretations. A series of auditory experiences heard at Finchale illustrate further available interpretations for mysterious sounds. Early in the *Vita S. Godrici*, Reginald of Durham writes about a little bell that Godric had suspended from a beam on the side of his oratory at Finchale. It is said that, whenever Godric happened to lose track of time, 'in a divine way but as if it had been guided by a human hand that little bell sounded out all by itself, struck with the help of absolutely no one'.[654] Like the roof at Farne, the little bell at Finchale is struck as though by a human hand (*quasi manu humana*). And yet, unlike at Farne, this unseen agent is believed to have been God rather than an evil spirit. Godric himself is said to have explained to his servants, who also reported hearing the bell ring on its own, that God had struck it himself to summon him for the divine office.

However, the ringing of this little bell was interpreted differently on another occasion. Later in the *Vita*, Reginald reports that a certain man had come to Godric's oratory to spend the night in prayer when, having first smelled a fragrant odour, 'a tiny little bell, which hangs there, and which I could see was not touched by any impulse, rang out in its customary fashion and for a very long time did not stop ringing in this way'.[655] In

[652] Sophie Sawicka-Sykes, 'Heavenly choirs in early medieval England: A study of topoi in their contexts', PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia (2015), 112-114.
[653] *HE*, IV, 3, 341-345.
[654] Reginald, *Vita et Miracula S. Godrici*, 47, 202-203, 'tintinnabulum illud nullius penitus adminiculo attractatum, sonitum reddidit et quasi manu regeretur humana, per se diuinitus sonare cepit'.
[655] Ibid., 97, 360-361, 'Tintinnabulum etiam illud modicum, quod ibi pendet, nullius impulsu quem uidisse potuissem contactum, ordinato satis ritu insonuit, et diutius a tali modulamine non cessauit'.

this instance, the bell is explicitly said to have been observed ringing on its own and this action seems to have lasted much longer. At the sound of the little bell, the man reportedly began to hear sweet-sounding voices and saw people processing from the church of John the Baptist to the oratory of the Virgin Mary. The sound of the little bell contributes to an overwhelming sensory experience that combines a fragrant odour, a ringing bell, a singing choir, and a visual procession between the buildings at Finchale. In this context, the little bell might seem to be a superfluous auditory experience, overshadowed, or even drowned out, by the songs of the procession. And yet, the little bell remains a meaningful detail for 'at the arrival and departure of the singers, the bell rang out and afterwards stopped sounding'.[656] In this instance, the little bell seems to herald the arrival and departure of a heavenly choir. While the composition of this choir is hidden from the visitor to Finchale, Godric reveals to him on the following day that this procession had been composed of John the Baptist with a heavenly company (*cum cetu celesti*). The arrival and departure of the living dead, whether ancient persons like John the Baptist or more recently departed neighbours, seems to have been signalled by bells.

This association between the sound of a ringing bell and unseen arrivals and departures is reinforced by another tale from Finchale. One of the first-person narratives in the *Vita* recounts that a monk had come to Finchale to celebrate Mass when 'a very clear sound like that of bells rang in the ears of the singer'.[657] As in Godwin's encounter with the unseen singers at Christ Church, Canterbury, this auditory experience at Finchale seems to move. The narrator describes how anxious they were to learn the source of this ringing sound, which initially seemed to come from faraway, 'little by little growing clearer as it resounded nearby' (*paulatim procedens clarius ut in proximo reboabat*), until it seemed to be just outside the walls and then 'as if of something passing by and going away again' (*ut pertranseundo digredientis*).[658] This perception of the sound's movement, as if the narrator were reporting their experience of the Doppler effect, moves our focus away from the actual little bell, installed on the oratory wall, and abstracts the sound to have a motion of its own. At the same time, the placement of this chapter in the *Vita*, immediately after the chapter about the little bell's ringing, may also be seen as an attempt to connect the sounds of the little bell at Finchale with those of less localised bells.

As in the preceding chapter of the *Vita*, the sound of ringing that interrupts the Mass heralds an unseen presence. However, this narrator, perhaps Reginald himself, is

[656] Ibid., 'In aduentu itaque canentium et regressu, illud signum intonuit, et postmodum a sua modulatione quieuit'.
[657] Ibid., 98, 360-361, 'sonitus preclarissimus quasi campanarium auribus cantantis insonuit'.
[658] Ibid., 362-363.

more familiar with the significance of such sounds. After the Mass, the narrator approaches Godric to enquire whether he had also heard these sounds. Upon hearing Godric's affirmation, this monk asked him, rather directly, 'whose spirit he had seen' (*cuius spiritum uidisset*). Godric's answers, albeit vague, reveal to the monk that the spirit of a man from faraway, who had never performed the office of a priest, and had already passed the limits of human sight, had passed through there on his way to join the heavenly company. It is striking how this story draws upon a familiar auditory experience, which has prepared the monk in question to expect some kind of *spiritus* to have been present. The range of interpretations carried by the sounds of ringing bells at Finchale reinforces the idea that these sounds all denote presences, even though that which is present might range from God to an evil spirit, and from the living dead of ancient times to their living dead contemporaries.

The stories at Finchale reveal the role of an actual bell in signifying an unseen presence. The function of such bells might correspond with their role in narratives of encounters with the living dead. A much earlier example of the bell heralding a departure to heaven can be found in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede relates that, when Abbess Hild of Whitby died, a nun called Begu at the monastery at Hackness 'suddenly heard in the air the well-known sound of the bell with which they used to be aroused to their prayers or called together when one of them had been summoned from the world'.[659] When this familiar ringing sound rouses Begu, she looks up to see the roof of the dormitory rolls back and Hild's soul (*anima*) being carried to heaven by angels in a great light. The custom of marking the occasion for prayers or for a death by ringing a bell shaped the expectations of the Hackness community and Begu's experience.

The auditory experiences that signified the unseen movements of the living dead were not always so predictable, however. The strange tale of a night at the church at Beverley exemplifies the more alarming experience of being awoken by bells. According to an anonymous miracle collection, assembled in the twelfth or thirteenth century, a canon is said to have 'heard the church bells chiming as if for the night service and, getting up, he made his way to the church with the bells still ringing and found the doors open'.[660] This canon headed into the church thinking that the office was about to begin, but like

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[659] *HE*, IV, 23, 412-413, 'audiuit subito in aere notum campanae sonum, quo ad orationes excitari uel conuocari solebant, cum quis eorum de saeculo fuisset euocatus'.

[660] *Alia miracula ejusdem patris*, in *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. Raine, I, 324, 'audirentur campanæ ecclesiæ ab illo, quasi pulsantes ad nocturnam synaxim; et surgens, tetendit ad ecclesiam adhuc signis pulsantibus, invenitque ostia aperta'; Trans. Wilson, as 'Alia Miracula II', in *The Life and After-Life of St John of Beverley*, 8, 200.

Godwin at Christ Church, Canterbury, he was surprised to find no one in the choir. The canon began to investigate other areas of the church, discovered that the churchwardens were still asleep, and eventually sat down in front of an altar in the lower part of the church. Having sat there for a while, trembling with fear, the bewildered canon suffered a terrible fright; 'all the doors of the church, which had been open before, shut themselves, still with no one there or pushing them'.[661] This terrifying story shares narrative elements, such as the continuous ringing of the bells, with the account of John the Baptist's procession at Finchale. This similarity is intensified by the revelation of the cause of these strange occurrences on the following day. Umfrid, the keeper of the crypt at Beverley, claimed to have seen a festival procession, composed of clerks, priests, bishops, led by a crowned queen, circling the church that very same night. Thus, while the canon was enduring a traumatic night, Umfrid was witnessing a noticeably peaceful procession of the living dead in the manner of a heavenly company. For all these similarities between these two living dead processions, there is still an unsettling difference in the canon's report of an intermingling of chiming bells with slamming doors, not singing choirs. The different tone created in the canon's account constructs two sides to this tale, based on two levels of understanding. It would seem that Umfrid was able to perceive more than this canon, just as Godric of Finchale was understood to see that which the Durham monks could only hear. And yet, the insertion of a heavenly procession ought not to detract from the distressing elements of the canon's experience. The canon spoke afterwards of 'what kind of terror he had been reduced to' (*quali horrore depressus fuerat*). Perhaps Umfrid, along with the miracle collector, also performs the role of interpreter in a more pastoral sense, providing a panicked canon and potentially unsettled readership with a more palatable explanation for these nocturnal terrors.

Songs

The sound of a choir notified a woman at Wilton of the death of Edith. As in the aforementioned examples, such as the story of Godric and the Newton shepherdess, this choir seems to represent Edith's reception into heaven. However, there is an intriguing difference in the Wilton story. According to Goscelin, whose *Vita* narrates this story, on the day of Edith's death, 'one sister, running in fear into the convent, heard what sounded like a great number of people singing psalms in the choir'.[662] In contrast to those songs

[661] Ibid., 'clauserunt se festinanter universa ostia ecclesiæ, pariter nullo præsente aut impellente, quæ prius pervia fuerant'.
[662] Goscelin, *Vita et Translatio S. Edithae*, 24, 94-95, 'quedam soror, trepida currens in monasterium, audit tanquam in choro multitudinem psallencium'.

that filled the air, these psalms resound in the choir, in the church where the women at Wilton chanted psalms. The haunting echo of these psalms in the church building creates a very different setting and tone for this story. Furthermore, the sister's reaction to flee in fear reveals an uneasy, rather than jubilant, response to these unseen singers. Having fled the choir, the sister runs into a beautifully attired stranger, who explains to her that holy angels (*angeli sancti*) have come to escort Edith to heaven. The heavenly choir emerges from this narrative as an ambiguous company, terrifying to encounter and difficult to understand, whose haunting songs in the church choir seem to collapse the heavenly and the earthly Wilton community.

The choir area appears again as the setting for unseen singers in the story of Godwin, the sacristan of Christ Church, Canterbury. This story is one of two appended by Edmer to his *Breuiloquium Vite S. Wilfridi* around the beginning of the twelfth century.[663] Edmer describes how Godwin had been sleeping in the oratory on the night of Wilfrid's feast day. He awoke when he 'heard in the choir something that sounded like the congregation of brothers beginning the nightly vigils in a festive way'.[664] Upon hearing the start of vigils, Godwin initially thought that he had overslept and so he hurried to the choir to take his place. When he comes to the entrance to the choir, however, he hesitates because he cannot recognise the voices of those whom he hears singing before the alter. Edmer narrates that Godwin dismissed his initial doubts as the result of his clouded vision, itself the result of his recent and sudden awakening from sleep. Thus, Godwin came to stand in his customary place, but then, 'when he stood there, and continued to be pleasantly delighted by the chanting of the singers, he could see everything clearly but realized that no one was there, and he was filled with wonder'.[665] Following this revelation, the sound of chanting moves. Godwin is said to have heard the singing now come from the rafters of the church, as if the singers were ascending as they sang. It is at this point that Edmer narrates that holy angels (*sancti angeli*) had come and gone, ascending from the hearer to return to heaven. As in the story of the Wilton woman, the interpretation of the unseen choir is delayed; the heavenly choir composed of holy angels is revealed, whether by a mysterious stranger in the narrative or by the narrator themself. The

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[663] For these two, similar, stories about the sacristans Godwine and Ælfwine, see Edmer of Canterbury, *Breuiloquium Vite S. Wilfridi*, in *Vita S. Wilfridi Auctore Edmero / the Life of Saint Wilfrid by Edmer*, eds. and trans. Bernard Muir and Andrew Turner (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 149-150, 178-181.
[664] Ibid., 149, 178-179, 'audiuit in choro quasi conuentum fratrum nocturnas uigilias festiuo modo incipientem'.
[665] Ibid., 180-181, 'ubi stans, et melodia cantantium suauiter iocundabatur, et clare omnia conspiciens, et neminem uidens, mirabatur'.

suspense created in these narratives may well have been deliberately constructed by Goscelin and Edmer, respectively, to heighten the intensity of the reported experiences of their percipients. Alternatively, Goscelin and Edmer may have sought to add their interpretation of these unseen singers as holy angels to weave witness testimonies from these two monastic communities into more widely familiar narrative models.

Voices

As we have seen, tales of unseen choirs seem to play upon the fears of hearing unknown voices in familiar places. The challenge of identifying seemingly disembodied voices was overcome in some accounts by locating such voices in the vicinity of their bodies. The story of Bishop Byrnstan of Winchester provides an illustrative example of this point. William of Malmesbury described this tenth-century bishop as a pure and devoted man, whose nights were given to walking about graveyards, singing psalms on behalf of souls. One night, while Byrnstan was chanting in this manner, William narrates that he had just finished saying the blessing for the dead, *requiescant in pace*, when 'he heard the voices, as of an army beyond number, replying from the graves "Amen"'.[666] Unlike the chants heard in the choirs or rafters of churches, these voices are said to come from or out of the graves, *e sepulcris*, as if these buried bodies are speaking once more. William does not comment on how these voices were produced or formed. The potential for a living dead body to speak resonates with our earlier discussion about talking heads and dialogues between body and soul. However, in William's account, these voices are connected to the concept of the soul. Byrnstan's practice is intended to benefit human souls and, for William, the response from the grave shows that 'the dead conversed with a living man to make sure he did not grow tired of a service he thus learned to be pleasing to so many souls'.[667] The identification of these voices as souls lingering at, or returning to, their bodies reinforces the didactic message behind this tale, that the living ought to aid the souls of the dead with their prayers. Thus, the bishop's auditory experience is substituted, or even abstracted, through recourse to the soul. And yet, this explanatory framework overshadows more unsettling, unanswered, questions concerning how living dead voices were thought to be produced, from whence they came, and whither they stayed.

These questions haunt tales of living dead voices, even when such voices are given a name. A related story about another tenth-century bishop relates that the voice of

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[666] William, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, II, 75, 258-259, 'uocesx quasi exercitus infiniti e sepulcris audiuit respondentium "Amen"'.
[667] Ibid., 'mortuos cum uiuo seuisse sermonem, ne eum offitii pigeret quod tot animabus gratum audiret'.

Bishop Wulsin was heard issuing from his grave. Goscelin reports that a golden shrine was stolen from the church at Sherborne during the episcopy of his bishop and patron, Herman. The sacristan and the monks of Sherborne had searched for the shrine to no avail. Then, after matins one night, as the sacristan was heading to the sanctuary, 'suddenly from blessed Wulsin's resting place a loud voice rang out, clearly audible both to his ears and to those of all the brothers who were in the choir: "Revenge is mine, I will repay saith the Lord"'.[668] Just as Bishop Byrnstan reported voices coming from the graves, *e sepulcris*, the monks of Sherborne are said to hear Wulsin's voice coming from his resting-place, *a requie*. This location of the sound enables the percipients to identify the voice, although we also learn from Goscelin that at least one of the monks at Sherborne was old enough to have personally known Wulsin, and thus could have been thought to recognise his voice. As we have already seen, this was not the first time that Wulsin's living dead body was said to act of its own volition. In chapter two, we examined how this living corpse had moved to fit inside its sarcophagus. We might speculate that the principle that had enabled Wulsin's body to wriggle into its tomb was the same principle that facilitated his speech within it. However, this interpretation is complicated by Goscelin's comment that, upon hearing this voice, 'nobody doubted that this saying had been sent there from heaven'.[669] The voice had evidently come from Wulsin's resting place, but its words, its judgment, its *sententia*, had come from heaven. The movement from heaven complicates our interpretation in that it becomes unclear whether a soul has temporarily returned from heaven or whether a heavenly verdict has been communicated through an earth-bound body. Regardless, the apprehension of the thieves and restoration of the shrine prove to the monks that this voice had a prophetic, divine, quality.

The prophetic voices of the living dead, however, did not always have a divine quality. The case of the fugitives at Drakelow reveals the inverse, demonic, quality of the prophetic speech pronounced by the living dead. Before their hearts had been cast into the fire, releasing an evil spirit in the form of a crow, these living dead fugitives had been heard banging on the walls of houses and shouting, 'Move, quickly, move! Get going! Come!'.[670] Gordon has argued that this portentous speech not only invited the locals to follow the fugitives in death, but also reflected their instigating role in inciting social disorder.[671] Furthermore, in contrast with Guthlac's breath of healing, the speech of the

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[668] Goscelin, *Vita S. Wlsini*, 19, 83, 'subito a beati Wlsini requie personuit uox clara suis et omnium fratrum in choro assistencium auribus palam audita: Mihi uindictam; ego retribuam, dicit dominus'.
[669] Ibid., 'Nulli enim dubium hanc sententiam diuinitus ibi fuisse prolatam'.
[670] Geoffrey, *Vita S. Moduenne*, 47, 194-197, 'Promouete, citius, promouete! Agite, agite et uenite!'.
[671] Gordon, '"Agite, agite et uenite!"', 195-197.

Drakelow fugitives seems to have been carried on the breath of disease. A disease is soon said to have decimated the population at Drakelow, seemingly in fulfilment of the invitation from the living dead to follow them. The prophetic potential of the living dead to call upon others to join them points towards a contagious, demonically induced, disease spread by their speech.

The connection between speech and disease causation was implied centuries earlier when Bede reported on the outbreak of plague in the seventh century and its spread among the community at Barking. According to Bede, a young boy called Æsica, who was no more than three years old, lived under the care of the women until he was attacked by the plague raging across the country. As he neared death, Æsica is said to have called out 'Eadgyd, Eadgyd, Eadgyd!', calling upon one of the women in that community.[672] Æsica died and, on the same day, Edith died of the very same sickness. Bede explains that she was 'following him who had called her to the kingdom of heaven'.[673] This call upon individuals by name resembles the behaviour of the living dead Welshman in the story of William Laudun, whose neighbours fell sick and died when they were summoned by name.[674] The tone of Bede's narrative is decidedly different from that of Walter Map and Geoffrey, and yet each of these stories associate the speech of the living dead with the transmission of their sickness and the invitation to join their company.

Groans

There is evidence that an auditory experience could, like a tactile experience, precede a visual encounter with the living dead. William of Newburgh, whose Buckinghamshire tale had begun with the wife's experience of a crushing sensation, likewise begins his story about the *Hundeprest* with the mistress's report of a terrifying auditory experience. William narrates that the living dead priest left his tomb at night 'and hovered chiefly, with loud groans and horrible murmurs, round the bedchamber of his former mistress'.[675] At this point, while the priest is said to have left his tomb, he has not been seen. Rather, the auditory manifestation of his groans and murmurs are the first indication that he is spatially displaced. In further similarity to the Buckinghamshire case, these auditory experiences are said to have repeated on successive nights, until the

[672] *HE*, IV, 8, 358-359.
[673] Ibid., 'illum, qui se uocauit, ad regnum caeleste secuta est'.
[674] Walter, *De nugis*, II, 27, 202-203.
[675] *HRA*, V, 24, 478, 'et maxime circa cubiculum propriæ quondam dominæ cum ingenti fremitu et horrendo murmure ferebatur'.

mistress enlisted the help of a monk. It was this monk, as we saw in chapter one, who saw the body of the priest and chased it back to its tomb. Even when seen as a body, however, the living dead priest still just produces a groaning sound, like that reported by the woman. During the altercation in the graveyard, the living dead priest is said to have rushed towards the monk 'with a terrible noise' (*cum terribili murmure*) and, upon being wounded by the monk, 'groaned aloud' (*sonore ingemuit*).[676] The repetition of *murmur* in the narrative, both around the mistress's chambers and at the graveside, denies the priest a chance to regain his power of speech, neither to confess his sins nor ask for help. The means by which he is forced to communicate, through roars and groans, point towards the non-speaking means by which the living dead were thought to alert the living to their presence. Such attempts at speech may represent requests for permission from the living to speak, for conjuration, a practice exhibited in tales examined previously, namely, in those of Roger and of Snowball. Speech, and its absence, communicates a power that the living dead are granted, or denied.

Crashes

When denied voices of their own, the living dead were also believed to communicate through other noises. An illustrative example of such noises was reported at Stratford Langthorne just before the death of William the cellarer. Peter of Cornwall describes how, just as William was believed to die, 'there resounded such a crash on the roof of the infirmary in which he was lying that now the whole building was shaken'.[677] At the sound, fear gripped the monks who were stood around William's deathbed. Then, William stirred and explained to them that 'the crash they had heard was from the arrival of souls of the dead for whom he still owed prayers'.[678] This terrifying crash, it is revealed, is an auditory reminder from the living dead of neglected prayers due to them. To make amends, William the cellarer asked for Abbot William and the attendant monks to help him complete the prayers that he owed these souls.[679] These souls seem to be obstructed, held back, by the roof of the building.[680] This infirmary seems to have been inaccessible to the souls, but they could still make their presence known through sound. The perceived

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[676] Ibid., 479.
[677] Peter, *Liber Reuelationum*, II, 892, 248-249, 'subito super tectum infirmarie in qua iacebat tantus fragor insonuit ut iam ipsa domus tota concuteretur'.
[678] Ibid., 'fragorem illum quem audierant esse ex animarum defunctorum aduentu quibus ille orationes adhuc debebat'.
[679] For a soul falling from the sky, see Alcuin, *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*, in *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. Peter Godman, *OMT* (Oxford: OUP, 1982), 104-105, 1337-1338.
[680] Gordon, 'Domestic magic', 65-84.

physicality of the noise, which struck the roof and shook the building, reveals the potential for the living dead to interact with structures and objects. The remaining stories studied in this chapter build further upon this interaction to investigate how inanimate buildings and items were interpreted as sites of auditory encounters with the living dead.

In a similar way to the story of William the cellarer, a strange noise was reported upon another roof in the late twelfth century. Once again, the noise is said to have been heard during a deathbed scene, this time upon the death of Bartholomew in his oratory at Farne in 1193. Geoffrey of Coldingham recounts that the monks who came to attend to Bartholomew had sat down to wait for his passing, when 'suddenly there was a noise in the room like that of jumping mice, and on the roof like sparrows crawling with their claws and beak'.[681] Terrified, the monks discuss the noises among themselves to confirm that they could all hear, but not see, them. At this point, Geoffrey narrates how a strange, doglike, mass (*moles quasi canis immanissimi*) descended from the corner of the room and struck one of the monks in the back. This doglike mass is described by Geoffrey as an evil spirit (*malignus spiritus*), which was confronted and expelled by Bartholomew. The intermingling of images, of mice, sparrows, and dogs, hints at an unstable, transforming, presence at his deathbed. Moreover, the references to sparrows and dogs correspond with the animals commonly deployed in narratives about the living dead, such as the sounds of howling dogs, discussed in chapter three.

The location of the sounds, especially that of sparrows scratching the roof at Farne, seems particularly significant. The rooftop features frequently as a preferred place for the living dead to linger in the Old Icelandic sagas.[682] Nor was this the first time that a strange noise had been heard upon the roof of Bartholomew's oratory. On an earlier occasion, a Durham monk who had come to visit Bartholomew heard strange knocking sounds on the roof. Geoffrey reports that 'the evil spirit appeared invisibly, and striking the roof with stones from above, as if with a human hand, gave the signal of his approach with this sound'.[683] In both instances at Farne, an evil spirit serves as the interpretative lens for understanding the broader, auditory, experience. And yet, as we have seen in the stories at Berwick, Anant, and Drakelow, the interpretation of an evil spirit need not refute the presence of the living dead, rather it might be thought to have explained or accompanied their presence. In like manner, this knocking upon the roof at Farne is both

[681] Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 30, 321, 'Subitoque factus est in atrio sonitus quasi murium saltantium, et super tectum quasi passerum ungulis et rostro reptantium'.
[682] For examples, see n. 133.
[683] Geoffrey, *Vita Bartholomæi*, 13, 306, 'malignus spiritus invisibiliter affuit, et quasi humana manu desuper tectum lapillis percutiens, hoc sonitu sui adventus signum dedit'.

explained by reference to the appearance of an invisible evil spirit and the likeness of a human hand (*quasi humana manu*). Rather than distinguishing a demonic from a human agent, the narrative deploys both images and explanations to bring plural interpretations to bear on these mysterious auditory experiences.

Keeping vigil near church tombs seem to have rendered percipients particularly receptive to auditory experiences. It seems fitting to return to Christ Church, Canterbury, and examine a very different noise to the singing reported by Godwin. Among Earl Leofric's experiences, one episode describes how he often frequented Christ Church with his servants at night, praying and keeping vigil as close to Dunstan's tomb as he could get. One night, however, Leofric:

> gehyrde he færinga swyðe ungerydelic gelyd þam gelicost þe he ærost swylce þæra muneca setl færlice feollon ealle togedere 7 wæs æfre swa lengre swa hluddre 7 menigfealdre 7 ungeryddre.
>
> suddenly heard a very violent noise, most like, at first, as if the monks' stalls suddenly collapsed together, and the longer it lasted the louder and more varied and violent it became.[684]

The agent responsible for the growing crashing noise heard at Dunstan's tomb is not identified. Given the location and preoccupation of the percipient, we might speculate that the noise was somehow connected to Dunstan himself. In fact, loud, violent, actions seem to have been especially associated with Dunstan. For instance, his earliest anonymous hagiographer related a story from Dunstan's life when, tormented by nightmares, he awoke ready to fight a demon, only to be heard repeatedly striking the church wall with his staff, 'making a tremendous din for all to hear throughout the building'.[685] The violent sound of crashing stalls would thus appear to be in keeping with other elements of Dunstan's legends, indicative of a fierce, almost uncontainable, personality at the heart of Christ Church. Dunstan's intent towards Leofric remains ambiguous, and yet the violence of this noise is immediately followed by an appearance of light. When the noise had stopped, Leofric is said to have perceived a light shining from the east end of the church, illuminating the area under the right arm of the altar cross. The combination of images here, one of which directs Leofric's attention back to Christ, is perhaps intended to recast a disturbing noise during vigil as a divine sign, as if sanitising or exonerating Dunstan's auditory antics.

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[684] *Visio Leofrici*, 549.
[685] B., *Vita S. Dunstani*, 17, 56-57, 'maximum plausum per omne templum audientibus reddens'.

A similar experience was reported in London, at the tomb of Bishop Erkenwald, whose remains were translated in 1140. Around the time of this translation, Arcoid, a canon of St Paul's, recorded the testimonies of those who came to the tomb to seek the bishop's help. One of these supplicants was called Adam, a noble cleric and physician, who, Arcoid tells us, stayed at this writer's house for a few days after being healed. Of the many things Adam related to Arcoid during his stay, there was one story that Adam is said to have repeated most often:

> Videbatur, inquit, mihi dum in ecclesia pernoctarem audiri strepitus circa hominis dei sepulturam. Quotienscunque usque ad candelabrum ligneum, cui impressa fuerat, ignis consumpserat candelam, concitus ilico altius cereum inherebam, sed si paulo lumina clausissem, statim sonitum audiebam; unde timore perterritus, iterum cereum subleuabam.
>
> "When I was spending the night in the church", he said, "it seemed to me that I heard noises by the sepulchre of the man of God. As often as a flame burned a candle down to the wooden candlestick into which it had been thrust, I would quickly push the candle down deeper inside; but if I were to diminish the light a little, I would immediately hear a noise, at which in my terror I would raise the candle back up again".[686]

Adam's account locates terrifying noises at the bishop's tomb but, unlike Leofric's experience, heightens the terror of the experience through darkness and the percipient's attempts to make for himself some form of light. Upon hearing Adam's story, Arcoid provides his own interpretation; Arcoid suggests that the noises had been intended to urge Adam on in his prayers. Indeed, it had been the vigils, fasts, and prayers at Erkenwald's tomb that had restored Adam to health. And yet, this miraculous lens, which unsurprisingly frames the stories in Arcoid's miracle collection, has a more ambiguous motif, noises in the night, at its core. Moreover, the claim that Adam repeatedly retold this aspect of the story in particular suggests that the auditory experience had done far more than just encourage his devotions. The church, a familiar space for songs and prayers, reverberates with unfamiliar sounds, associated with the unseen agents residing therein.

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[686] Arcoid, *Miracula S. Erkenwaldi*, in *The Saint of London: The Life and Miracles of St Erkenwald*, ed. and trans. E. Gordon Whatley (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989), 11, 146-147.

The range of sensory experiences associated with the living dead indicate the intensity of their interactions with percipients. The extending, permeating, powers of the living dead are shown to have generated intense senses of presence, concentrated on not only locations, but people. To a greater extent than any other theme discussed in this thesis, these sensory experiences of the living dead focus our attention onto the living percipients in these tales. While chapter one investigated how these percipients might be deceived by illusory appearances, the stories analysed in this chapter show a greater dependence upon the testimonies of their reported witnesses. As such, this investigation into the sensory manifestations of the living dead also illuminates the mental or bodily states of their percipients and all that they felt and heard between waking and sleeping.

Conclusion

> Conventions are what make literature work: they initiate active participation from the audience in the creation of meaning, through resonances with what is currently known and therefore living. Moreover, they only become conventional if they are in some way true to experience.[687]

This thesis has shown that the categorisation of the living dead as 'revenants', 'saints', and 'ghosts' obscures the instability in their representations in medieval literature. The living dead did perform varied narrative functions, but the vitality of these narratives depended upon their participation with mutually reinforcing ideas and images that contributed to a shared storytelling repertoire. By dissolving the boundaries and categories that fence our field, the literary building blocks available to medieval writers when imagining the living dead are brought to the fore. This stock of motifs and tropes was a rich source of creative potential, reiterating, reinforcing, and reshaping their imaginative power in tales of the living dead. A holistic approach to studying these narratives, and a focus on their literary elements, has enabled us to weave together this source material in an original way. The connections introduced in this thesis seemed impossible when our approach was determined by boundaries and categories. A new methodology, that includes neglected sources, opens a fresh way of analysing the living dead that warrants further study.

Throughout this thesis, our study has repeatedly found that explanatory frameworks were neither consistently nor uniformly deployed in relation to the living dead. Instead, our findings draw our attention to the malleability of storytelling elements, which were transformed by individual writers to suit the demonizing or sanitizing lenses of their texts. Medieval storytellers carefully shaped their selection and adaptation of available literary building blocks to create positive, negative, or even sceptical representations of the living dead. It was through this creative process that common ideas and images were presented in diverging ways to construct different moods or messages. As a result, the canine pursuits of the demonic agents around the villages of Berwick and Dunfermline strike a different tone to that of the saintly king's head in the woods at Hægelisdun. One nightwalker might stalk the Fens as an exile whilst another stalks the

[687] Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, 15.

church at Bury as a physician. Likewise, the blood that poured out of the corpse at Anant was said to have been stolen whereas that of Edith in the church at Wilton found its rightful place in her corpse. The core ideas that connect these narratives reveal the mutually reinforcing images that authenticated positive and negative representations of the living dead. Ultimately, these writers were warning and wondering about appearances and behaviours that were shared among the living dead.

Defying language, typology, and ontology, the living dead combined images and ideas associated with life and death in manifold ways. Representations of living death thrived on transformations, variations, and apparent contradictions, which were made possible by shared expectations about the instability of the living dead. These expectations allowed medieval storytellers to shape living dead characters and presences to suit their texts, audiences, and agendas. While necessarily limited in their selection, the case studies assembled and analysed in this thesis have foregrounded the creative processes by which medieval storytellers drew from and contributed to a diverse repertoire of literary elements, which, when viewed together, are synonymous with the literary existence of the living dead.

As stated in the introduction, this thesis aimed to find a way to study the living dead without imposing boundaries and categories upon their narratives. New connections and neglected examples have been introduced into this discussion by dissolving these boundaries and categories. However, the resulting picture is unsurprisingly messy. In some cases, a single story can capture this messiness, by presenting multiple elements and explanations or different versions and variations. Moreover, in studying the living dead holistically, this thesis is in effect studying an overwhelmingly broad range of phenomena. And yet, the messiness of this assemblage of living dead agents more accurately corresponds with medieval representations of the forces at work in their world.[688] By embracing this messiness, celebrating the instability invested into these literary phenomena, I believe that this thesis has brought us to a better understanding of the living dead in medieval imaginations as they were captured in the stories written about them.

The repertoire of images covered by this thesis evidently spanned diverse traditions and cultures over a broad span of time. However, the thesis has not searched for origins for these different images.[689] Instead, it has revealed a receptiveness to these

[688] Jakobsson, 'The Taxonomy of the Non-existent', 205-206.
[689] Caciola, *Afterlives*, 14.

images in medieval England c. 700-c. 1200. The connections drawn between case studies in this thesis have often spanned several centuries to track patterns across the surviving literary record. The predominance of certain narrative models, from the otherworld vision to the village exhumation, suggests shifting literary trends as well as religious and cultural influences in circulation during this period. In a similar way, the efflorescence of interpretations of white birds as doves in the eleventh and twelfth centuries indicate a growing consensus on the most appropriate species for the avian imagery associated with the living dead. And yet, by comparing hitherto disparate sources, this thesis has shown that a wide range of circulating images continued to remain available to medieval storytellers across this span of time. This conclusion thus provides a response to attempts to chart the rise or fall of these images, especially the body.[690] Images circulated widely and deeply, mediated by old and new stories and their retellings, and were given crystalised forms in accounts written centuries apart.

Rather than creating a taxonomy of the living dead in medieval literature, this thesis has examined the literary building blocks that medieval storytellers used to describe or explain encounters with them. The first chapter started by identifying narrative models and patterns used to explore the concept of a living dead body. Its stories found varied ways to connect the personalities, appearances, and corpses of the living dead through discourses of fear, wonder, doubt, and scepticism. Chapter two revealed that certain parts of these bodies became representative of the forces that enlivened them and diffused into the world around them. The zoomorphic building blocks examined in chapter three highlighted common expectations about not only the shapes assumed by the living dead but also the animal behaviours connected to their presence. The study of the dove in chapter four exemplified how a single literary building block, so frequently used in medieval literature, was encoded with multiple different meanings in stories about the comings and goings of the living dead. Further exploring these presences and movements, chapter five uncovered the interconnected elements deployed to reflect the qualities of living death. Lastly, the final chapter examined one of the most fundamental aspects of any encounter with the living dead, that is, the sense of presence.

In some cases, medieval writers present their narratives as regionally specific. For instance, narratives about wonderful companies of women, including that of Morgan, were often associated with Welsh and Breton settings. However, a degree of caution is required whenever a medieval writer introduces regional or cultural descriptors into their

[690] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 294.

narratives. Localised settings may have been informed by narrative models of otherness and exclusion as opposed to intellectual realities. Assertions of culturally specific belief ought not to be taken at face value. The extent to which an image encoded by a writer in one part of England could be decoded by an audience in another can only be inferred from the deployment of such images in diverse contexts. Movement of peoples and cultural exchanges complicate attempts to assess how far the imagery studied in this thesis was influenced by broader cultural trends. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, the adoption of a similar methodology in future studies of British and European narratives about the living dead would refine our understanding of the cultural exchanges that may have shaped this literary repertoire.

The scope of this thesis has inevitability been restricted by the constraints of time and word limit. The literary building blocks studied here thus cannot claim to survey all the images associated with the living dead and their varied reiterations. Further work will undoubtedly uncover more correspondences across this rich literary corpus. One line of inquiry that ultimately fell outside the parameters of the thesis may yet yield new conclusions through future research, namely, the link between living death and birth. When discussing thresholds of human life, we seem predisposed to consider the presences that come from after, rather than before, life as we know it. However, medieval stories about the experiences of pregnant women reveal that pre-natal presences were imagined in similar shapes and forms to post mortem presences. From the dove residing in one pregnant woman's tunic to the fire igniting another pregnant woman's candle, creation narratives suggest correspondences with images associated with living death.[691] Birth and death are trauma-ridden thresholds, through which not only the living dead, but also the not-yet-living, or even the unborn, cross into this world and out of it.

The shift in focus onto the reported experiences of percipients in chapter six indicated how psychological factors were implicit in these narratives. Narrative representations of witness testimonies, encountered throughout this thesis, receive a special importance when they describe not just familiar imagery, but also shared human experience. The experiences of our medieval subjects are inaccessible beyond the literary forms that claim a semblance to them. However, there may be more to learn by comparing medieval and modern narratives of the living dead for insights into anomalous

[691] Flowers, 'The Journey of Young Souls', 125-129.

experiences.[692] In fact, the dissolution of boundaries and categories in medieval studies proposed in this thesis could facilitate such comparisons. Recent studies in neuropsychology, as well as parapsychology, indicate that there are correspondences in medieval and modern reports of sense of presence, especially among bereavement narratives.[693] Future study of these processes of meaning-making over time might furnish us with a greater understanding of these stories and why they in some ways might feel 'true to experience'.

As this thesis comes to a close, the analogy of the doorway between life and death, with which we opened this study, reminds us of the shortcomings in our thinking about the divide between life and death. The messiness of this doorway reflects the messiness of the paradox that we have studied as 'the living dead'. Perhaps also sensitive to the limits of their language, medieval storytellers looked to, and subverted, architectural imagery to convey the unpredictability of the phenomena that they described. The living dead unlocked doors, flew through windows and down fireplace vents, banged upon walls and rooftops, seeped through cracks, and brought unseen pressures and noises into the safety of the bedroom. Our familiar structures take a beating when the living dead perform their presence in unpredictable ways. Through further study, the literary building blocks studied in this thesis may continue to offer new ways to conceptualise the living dead and understand the concerns of those who brought them to life.

[692] For a comparative study of medieval and twentieth-century accounts of near-death experiences, see Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[693] Pablo Sabucedo, Chris Evans, and Jacqueline Hayes, 'Perceiving those who are gone: Cultural research on post-bereavement perception or hallucination of the deceased', *Transcult Psychiatry*, 60:6 (2023), 879-890; Michael Nahm, 'The role of animals as co-percipients of apparitions in the work of Emil Mattiesen (1875–1939)', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 80:2 (2016), 119-121.

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