

The Third Gender and *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*

Rhonda L. McDaniel



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Introduction: Gender, Memory, and Seeing Things Their Way

Gender in Relationship

It all began with women. Since the 1980s, a significant portion of the scholarship concerning gender across the disciplines in Medieval Studies has focused on women, asking such questions as: What social factors and attitudes framed and formed their lives? Did the influence of patriarchal Christianity always lead to oppression of women? Did early medieval women have a distinctly feminine form of spirituality? These questions provide a sampling of the issues and inquiries that have driven much of the research into the social status, daily lives, and the socially conditioned self-perceptions of women in the Middle Ages, opening up new areas of study and simultaneously providing new venues for interaction between Medieval Studies and Women's Studies.¹

The contributions of these projects to the field of Medieval Studies in general and to Anglo-Saxon Studies in particular have been invaluable both in terms of the new insights they have produced and the amount and fervor of scholarly discussion kindled by their results. In the field of Anglo-Saxon Studies, in particular, the 1980s, 1990s, and the early years of the new millennium saw first a small stream and then a veritable flood of articles and books focused on women in Anglo-Saxon history and in its literary texts, poetry and prose, Latin and Old English, but especially in studies of the works of Ælfric.² Most of these publications take the critical and interpretive stance of some form of feminism (broadly defined), centering their investigations on those aspects of Anglo-Saxon society and literature that address women and women's concerns. These books and articles discuss the topic of gender, but they do so as though gender were a term that mainly applied to women and often conclude that this feminine gender was portrayed in opposition to a normative hegemonic or heroic masculinity not available to women (with the possible exception of a few female virgin saints).³ In Anglo-Saxon Studies, as in so many other areas of

inquiry into women's history and the relationships between the genders, Julia M. H. Smith's observation that "gender history has often been women's history passing under a new name," rings true.⁴ There have been a few notable attempts to address this interpretive isolation, but despite a recent spurt of publications the study of masculinities in the small world of Anglo-Saxon Studies has not yet been able to close the gap with the study of gender as a means of studying women.⁵ In this book I seek in some small part to breach the relative isolation between the two approaches.

In order to accomplish this goal, I take as my starting point Jacqueline Murray's observation that "gender is only meaningful in relational terms,"⁶ and that the study of concepts of either femininity or masculinity in isolation from the other will inevitably result in reinforcing the kind of binary oppositions that so much feminist and gender criticism seeks to fight.⁷ The observation that isolated studies of women or of men unintentionally reinforce a polarized understanding could be applied to many analyses of Anglo-Saxon culture and hagiography that have principally taken the form of outlining and emphasizing the presence of misogynistic views established by the early church fathers or at least of interpreting Anglo-Saxon texts regarding women more or less from within such a framework. The conclusions drawn in these analyses differ depending on certain assumptions about the degree to which such patristic views influenced Anglo-Saxon culture.⁸ As a result, developing a more nuanced perception of the Anglo-Saxons' ideas about gender, especially in monastic environs, needs to return to the conceptions of gender put forward by the early church fathers and incorporated into late antique/early medieval hagiography, in order to determine which of these conceptions were known by and exercised influence on particular writers such as Bede, Aldhelm, or, later, Ælfric in Anglo-Saxon England. To that end, I combine a language and text-based approach to literature with aspects of gender studies, history, and theology in order to complicate and nuance contemporary scholarship on the topic of gender in Anglo-Saxon England. Initially, I focus on reconstructing an approximation of the early monastic conceptions of gender developed in the writings of the Latin Doctors, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. While these church fathers were not the only men writing about gender and the practice of chastity, their writings were prolific, and the first three strongly influenced the Latin hagiography produced in the fifth and sixth centuries that the Roman and Irish missionaries carried into Anglo-Saxon England. Both the patristic writings and early Latin hagiography, especially the legends of

the Roman martyrs, influenced early Anglo-Saxon writers and later shaped Ælfric's own understanding of the relationships between the genders and the sexes within and outside the monastery. His translations of the lives of female and male monastic saints for a vernacular audience reveal subtle aspects of Ælfric's own attitudes—some of which might surprise us.

Recognizing Masculinity

But why should the thought that Ælfric and other early medieval figures might have complex or unexpected (from the standpoint of modern assumptions) ideas about gender surprise us? In part, despite the surge in the scholarship of masculinity in recent years, there is still a dearth of scholarship on masculinity in the early medieval period in northern and western Europe in general and in Anglo-Saxon England in particular. Further, as Patricia Simons notes,

Much literary analysis of masculinity relies on the psychoanalytic model of anxiety and thus reinscribes, on materials from earlier periods, the conventional, modern concept of the phallus. Supposedly, masculinity is always self-consciously insecure, reliant on the ever-stable phallus to symbolize ideal patriarchal power. ... "Anxiety" is telling[ly] ascribed to the masculine gender alone without sufficiently explaining why it is not a driving force for women too. "Anxiety" is a symptom of patriarchal power, manifested by a group privileged both in its historical moment and in historians' interpretations. More importantly, far from offering an explanatory framework particular to any historical period the interpretive device of 'anxiety' reinforces the underlying ideological assumption that patriarchal masculinity is always in crisis yet forever triumphantly faces and overcomes every obstacle.⁹

Part of the difficulty with such psychoanalytic models lies not only in the assumption that women do not suffer from anxiety, again preserving a binary opposition between the sexes, but also in the failure of these models to acknowledge any other kinds of motivation or definition for masculinity than the desire to attain or maintain hegemony. The more recent discussion of multiple masculinities complicates the issue, illuminating the often contested and competing nature of masculine identities that were available in the early Middle Ages in the West, including the foreign (to the Anglo-Saxons) and ambiguous category of the eunuch. Most of the currently published scholarship on eunuchs examines the situation of the

eunuch in classical, late Roman, and early Christian contexts and brings to light social conceptions of the eunuch as constituting a third gender that in many cases was widely accepted in Byzantine and, more ambivalently, Roman culture.¹⁰ The Anglo-Saxons had no parallel social or cultural role, however, and the variety of terms used to translate Latin *eunuchus* into Old English illustrates the difficulty that Anglo-Saxon translators had with the concept they encountered in the Latin texts, for they had no native term that could convey the multivalent connotations carried by the term *eunuchus*.¹¹ Even without such a problematic category, by the time of Ælfric, the concept of masculinity seems to have become highly contested among the Anglo-Saxons against the background of renewed Viking invasions, the aftermath of the Benedictine Reform and anti-monastic reaction, and the mercurial reign of Æthelred II *Unred*. Janet Nelson observes that “In many times and places, gendered difference could be seen as straightforwardly supporting the political order. Sometimes, in circumstances of particular social stress, things were far from straightforward and, for the individuals living through those times, far from comfortable, as gender identity came under pressure, and had to be rethought and redefined.”¹² Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* itself becomes the arena in which he grapples with various secular and sacred masculinities and femininities as he translates and adapts the legends of male and female saints out of the cultural context of early Latin ascetic hagiography into the late tenth-century cultural context of his vernacular Anglo-Saxon audience. While I doubt that it was Ælfric’s primary intention to try to define gender roles through his translations, his sources and audience force him to address the issue on the way to his larger purpose of teaching and encouraging the nonmonastic men and women of his day in how to be pure and faithful Christians in troublesome times.

Memory and Holy Self-Fashioning

While many scholars have focused on Ælfric’s hagiographies in order to analyze his treatment of (usually feminine) gender and attitudes toward women, the *vitae* of saints are not primarily about gender. The lives translated by Ælfric are foremost stories of conversion—not only in the sense of turning from paganism to Christianity, but also of turning from one defining social *habitus* to another by committing to a life of single-minded devotion that often expressed itself through chastity. Ælfric’s selection of saints, chosen mainly from among the Roman martyrs and

Bede's accounts of early Anglo-Saxon royal converts, all illustrate a process of reorientation from the temporal concerns, desires, and gendered expectations of life shaped within worldly societies to the concerns of the eternal City of God, desire for the "angelic life," and other-gendered expectations formed by participation in a transcendent society shaped and governed by God. The effect of this reorientation of the saint's mind and motivations is dramatic. Just as conversion from one belief system to another involves learning and immersing oneself in a new community and a new way of thinking about deity or deities, so for Christians entering into the practice of chastity requires learning and immersion into a new network of defining relationships and memories—relationships and memories established and internalized not in earthly kingdoms or communities but in the City of God, the transcendent society of heaven itself.¹³ The saint becomes a new person, defined by new relationships, constructed by and constructing with new memories that reorient even the way gender is defined in the saint through the practice of chastity. The effects of such a reorientation are depicted in these hagiographies as profound, causing social unrest, familial disruption, economic shock, and even mental disarray in the lives of the saints' former communities and families.

How does such a reorientation happen? How can the saint deliberately redefine him- or herself to the point of becoming, or at least habitually performing, an entirely new gender? For early medieval Christians, the answer lies in *memory*. I do not mean memory as in the ability to memorize and recall the times tables or information for an examination, but memory as it was understood by classical and early Christian rhetoricians—a means for invention not only of speeches, but of the self and one's own moral character (though most of the Roman martyrs and Bede's royal saints are also skilled teachers and debaters). In his *Confessiones* Augustine exclaims, "Magna uis est memoriae, nescio quid horrendum, deus meus, profunda et infinita multiplicitas; et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum" [O my God, profound, infinite complexity, what a great faculty memory is, how awesome a mystery! It is the mind, and this is nothing other than my very self].¹⁴ Augustine equates the mind with memory and memory with what he himself is, and he is awed by its remarkable and boundless nature. It is complex, powerful, and beyond his ability fully to comprehend. It is also implicitly and explicitly at work in hagiographies in the formation of the saints to such a degree that Mary Carruthers observes that "prodigious memory is almost a trope of saints' lives," and yet it has received very little attention either in itself or as it might pertain to gender.¹⁵

The importance of the mind and/or memory in the saint's moral and spiritual reconstruction into a citizen of heaven opens the question of whether the lives of saints demonstrate different routes to sanctity for men and women. And what might commitment to an "angelic life" of chastity and virginity mean in terms of gender roles and definitions? What kinds of gender-shaping memories would the early Latin hagiographies create for monastic audiences? What kinds of gender-shaping memories might these legends create for Ælfric's vernacular audiences and does this consideration influence his translations?

"Seeing Things Their Way"

Studying the concepts of gender in the context of a religious culture of the past is a delicate matter that has not always been handled delicately. As Lisa Bitel notes, "Except for some self-identified religious and intellectual historians, too many scholars assume that Christianity was a feature of the medieval background that needs no direct reference in relation to topics of social, political, or economic history. Just as medievalists once could not imagine the importance of gender for the study of politics or trade, most still fail to examine these phenomena through the lens of religious belief and practice."¹⁶ Such an examination is rife with booby traps, for the examination of the impact of religious belief on literary, social, or political history has often swung between what Andrea Sterk and Nina Caputo refer to as the extremes of a totalizing approach that exaggerates the influence of religious ideas and of a marginalizing approach that ignores the impact of religion or reduces religious belief and institutions to invisibility.¹⁷ I seek here to pursue a *tertium quid* that engages seriously with the textual evidence of the power of religious belief and memory to influence behavior and practice while striving for the always incompletely attained goal of objectivity. By addressing religious belief in a way that accepts its presence in the shaping of the intellect, of social structures, and of the experiences of men and women and communities,¹⁸ I desire to illuminate the ways in which early ascetic theories defined femininity, masculinity, a third gender, and other abstract values such as goodness and justice in gender relationships as found in the works of the early church fathers. Ælfric received a tradition of orthodox Christianity that was widely acknowledged by the learned clerics of his day. His conception of Christian orthodoxy—based on the fathers and on the Bible—was for him a universal standard and a comprehensive philosophical structure that molded his understanding

and interpretation of the world, the texts, and the people around him. *Lives of Saints* reflects this belief in and understanding of Christianity as received from the church fathers and shaped by the Benedictine Reform in late Anglo-Saxon England—a belief and understanding that the evidence of the time in history and the text shows to have been considered both good and just, precisely because Ælfric (and presumably his audiences) believed in the goodness and justness of God.¹⁹ In examining the concepts of gender expressed by the Latin Doctors and in Ælfric's translations my goal, in the words of Quentin Skinner, is “not of course to enter into the thought-processes of long-dead thinkers; it is simply to use the ordinary techniques of historical [and literary] enquiry to grasp their concepts, to follow their distinctions, to appreciate their beliefs and, so far as possible, to see things their way.”²⁰ Revisionist criticism has its purposes in the twenty-first century, but part of the value of any study in the humanities lies in the encounter and exploration of ideas and perspectives different from one's own. Within this humanistic framework, understanding the attitudes of medieval authors such as Ælfric and describing them in reference to their own historical context rather than our own moment in time takes priority.²¹ Indeed, such an understanding is necessary if there is to be comparison, contrast, and any meaningful dialogue about the differences between the perspectives of the past and twenty-first-century views of gender. It is not always easy or comfortable to grant the reasonable nature of ideas and concepts vastly different from those considered normative in the twenty-first-century social and cultural context in the West but the goal is worthwhile, especially if it enables us to attain a more complete and accurate understanding of Ælfric's conceptions of gender within his own historical and religious framework and of how those conceptions may have influenced his audience.

In addition to the interpretive hazards discussed above, there looms the shadow of the passionate theological debates contributing to the modern “tortured battle to bring feminism and Christianity together.”²² Hagiography and the views of the Latin Doctors are often drawn into these theological discussions and the views of feminist theologians likewise get drawn into literary examinations of hagiographical texts, but the goals of contemporary feminist theologians and those of historical inquiry into the beliefs and practices reflected in medieval texts do not always accord. For example, many feminist theological reinterpretations cited by literary scholars have been largely influenced by the foundational scholarship of Elaine Pagels and Rosemary Radford Ruether, among others, and are

often concerned with constructing a spirituality for women in the present day by deconstructing patristic writings from late antiquity. Usually they do not seek to understand how women within early Western medieval Christianity could see their place within that tradition as just and good but rather assert, in Ruether's words, that "classical justifications of women's subordination as due to natural inferiority, subordination in the order of creation, and punishment for sin are *assumed* to be false ideologies constructed to justify injustice. The domination of men over women is sinful, and patriarchy is a sinful social system."²³ The problem inherent in applying Ruether's view or similar views to the historical or literary analysis of texts that address the beliefs of past cultures is that, by assuming injustice, one excludes the possibility of a different interpretation and rules out *a priori* any possible interpretation of late antique and early medieval orthodox Christianity other than the modern perspective stated above. Within such an interpretive framework, the writings of Augustine, Alcuin, Ælfric, and others have no option but to be instruments of male anxiety and domination; the belief and devotion of medieval female audiences is then ejected from the realm of choice and agency and reduced to helpless complicity in their own subjugation. Such conclusions follow logically from such assumptions about the church fathers (and medieval Christianity) as stated above, but they oversimplify a complex situation and do little justice to the intelligence and beliefs both of the writers and of the audiences in question, men and women alike. The writers of early hagiography firmly root their perspectives in patristic theologies and operate on different hermeneutical grounds from current feminist theological discussions. My purpose here is not to enter into the twenty-first-century "struggle" between Christianity and feminism, but rather to provide an historically contextual basis for understanding Ælfric's translations of saints' lives in their tenth-century Anglo-Saxon milieu. As a result, I rarely refer to feminist theological interpretations and mainly use feminist theologians only to establish the early background for the discussion on the Latin Doctors. My goal is not to enter modern theological debates but to conduct an analysis that situates the early medieval discussions and representations of gender in their own historical, religious, and cultural contexts.

This sort of study of the religious context of the *Lives of Saints* brings its own set of difficulties specifically within literary circles because such a project may remind too many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century methodology of positivism or of the later twentieth-century method of patristic exegesis, both of which have passed into disfavor for

good reasons.²⁴ When the writings of the church fathers form the basis of the ideas found in the saints' lives, however, hagiographical scholarship should be able to say so and demonstrate the influence of patristic theories without being confused with Robertsonian exegetical criticism. Another cause for discomfort is that admitting the medieval Christian belief system into any hypothetical construction that aims at understanding a past culture and its people means dealing with that belief system by its own definitions at that time in history, thus necessitating a discussion of early medieval theology.²⁵ Such an approach when applied to medieval works always runs the risk of being misconstrued as a Christian apologetic instead of an attempt to interpret past works within the beliefs that shaped the view of reality in that time and place. But the goal of understanding, however limited, incomplete, and prone to correction that understanding ultimately may be, is reached not solely through the application of modern paradigms that analyze in terms of twenty-first-century sociocultural theories or postmodern ideologies or theologies, but also by suspending disagreement or disbelief long enough to construct an understanding of the writings from *within* the text's own framework of belief. In pursuing such a goal, however, I try to remain aware that the reconstructed framework is only approximate and that my own assumptions may be impinging on my interpretation of the past in unknown ways. The problem in constructing past frameworks of belief "is not that we cannot learn what [past readers] learned but that we must develop the ability to think as if we had forgotten what has been learned since."²⁶ None can do so perfectly, but my goal remains to lay a foundation of the early medieval concepts of gender as they appear in treatises and hagiographical works that will allow readers from the twenty-first century somewhat to understand, if not appreciate, the way those ideas could be considered good, just, and worthy of emulation by Ælfric and devout Anglo-Saxons at the end of the tenth-century.

Roman Martyrs and Anglo-Saxon Saints

The Anglo-Saxon scholar Bede was the first to call Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great the Doctors of the Church and the designation has taken root and remained in use in the Western church since. These early fathers have long been considered the most influential in the West and are credited (or blamed) for having done the most to shape Western ideas about gender and especially about women during the Middle Ages.²⁷ The idea of misogyny in the church shaped by the early

fathers has come to be treated as a given, something everybody knows, and has served to evoke an impression of the early fathers and later monks and bishops as men riddled with subconscious resentment and anxiety over the sexual power of women or as men who feared that their own hegemonic, masculine cultural power and social dominance might be jeopardized if women were allowed out of the home and the cloister.²⁸ The four Latin Doctors, especially Jerome and Augustine, receive so much attention from scholars (both medieval and modern) because much of the Western Christian doctrine of asceticism was hammered out, distilled, or transmitted through their writings. Both churchmen and churchwomen in the early European Middle Ages actively participated in inspiring, preserving, and transmitting the works of the Latin Doctors, whose influence eventually reached every principal city and wilderness outpost of medieval Western Christianity.²⁹ Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine all wrote treatises in support of the practice of virginity and chastity for men and women, revising the earlier theological foundations and shaping, along with John Cassian, the perception and practice of monasticism in the West. The hagiographers of the fifth and sixth centuries took up the themes and theologies found in their works and those of other supporters and wove them into their narratives of the heroic asceticism of the desert fathers and the valiant deaths of the Roman martyrs. How, then, would their thoughts and ideas have been received by early medieval Christians beyond the former Roman Empire, especially in Anglo-Saxon England?

The image of the Christian saint confronting the secular tyrant and his military forces held a vivid place in the imaginations of these Latin hagiographers during the rise of Christian monastic observance in the West. The *passiones* of the Roman martyrs in particular formed a staple of early Latin hagiographical literature, constituting a subgenre all of its own favored by those who pursued ascetic or monastic practice. In these legends, the secular tyrant was often the emperor himself and, according to Matthew Kuefler, “the emperor acted as focus and *exemplum* for Roman masculinity generally”³⁰ and so set the tone in the minds of the hagiographers for those officials who ruled locally in his behalf in the legends. Within the context of the events described in the *passiones* of the Roman martyrs, the emperor’s masculinity would have been the dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity, defined by Julia M. H. Smith as “a dynamic masculinity which lacks fixed content but is rather the culturally specific legitimation of the dominant form of masculinity within any particular gender order, by which femininities and other masculinities are marginal-

ised or subordinated.”³¹ The pagan emperors and their military aides in the *passiones* are what Clare A. Lees calls the “‘hegemonic’ males—the kings, princes, lawmakers, and so forth,”³² and often exemplify disordered, bestial behavior that illustrates the outworking of what the hagiographers considered to be their disordered, unbelieving minds. The depiction of the hegemonic male in the confrontation between the Christian saint and pagan tyrant worked to establish a new kind of gender for practitioners of the Christian faith, a gender based not upon earthly political, legal, sexual, or military power, but upon moral virtue defined by steadfast belief in, love of, and loyalty to Christ and the ability to reproduce spiritually by means of example and teaching. This new gender was open to males and females who deliberately shunned secular displays of wealth, force, and dominance through physical weapons, militarism, law, and sexual intercourse in order to show spiritual and moral fortitude demonstrated through steadfast loyalty to Christ as a citizen of his transcendent kingdom in the face of earthly trial, temptation, torture, and martyrdom.³³

Such were the examples in the passions of the Roman martyrs that came with the Roman mission to the Anglo-Saxons at the end of the sixth century. Michael Lapidge asserts that “if we wish to understand the spirituality of Anglo-Saxon England, and before it that of sixth-century Rome, there is no more informative vehicle than the *passiones* of the Roman martyrs.”³⁴ These legends show the hegemonic masculinity of rulers and warriors in contention and confrontation with a new third gender of Christian virtue, reflecting what Peter Brown has shown to be the slow and grudging acceptance of monastic vocation as the performance of a viable gender.³⁵ According to D. M. Hadley, the moral milieu inhabited by both secular and ecclesiastical men at this time “was one constructed and disseminated largely by ecclesiastical authors through the medium of text, and it is apparent that there was resistance to the views of appropriate masculine behavior presented in those texts, both within the Church and among the laity.”³⁶ The development and acceptance of a new kind of gender was no easy thing, but text and memory were crucial to its accomplishment.

What then was the role and significance of text and memory in constructing genders in Anglo-Saxon culture at the end of the tenth century? As Mary Carruthers points out, a text could bind a community together, for “The Latin word *textus* comes from the verb meaning ‘to weave’ and it is in the institutionalizing of a story through *memoria* that textualizing occurs. Literary works become institutions as they weave a community together by providing it with shared experience and a certain kind

of language, the language of stories that can be experienced over and over again through time and as occasion suggests.”³⁷ The *passiones* of the Roman martyrs entered Anglo-Saxon society as mainly monastic texts, cooperating with Scripture to construct and shape a new kind of monastic gender that was performed within its own circumscribed subculture, but in his hagiographical works Ælfric releases these legends from enclosure within monastery walls to address the complexities of the last decade of the tenth century by giving his lay patrons and other members of Anglo-Saxon society the memory of the exemplary stories of saints honored by the monks and nuns. Ælfric translated and adapted the works in *Lives of Saints* against the backdrop of renewed Viking attacks, confusion in the military defense of Æthelræd Unræd’s kingdom, and potential treachery and collaboration with the Vikings by one of the king’s *ealdormen*.³⁸ Mechthild Gretsch observes that “after forty years of peace, [the Viking attacks] must have come as a tremendous shock to the men and women of Ælfric’s generation, a shock that was soon to develop into an endless nightmare.”³⁹ In this time of increasing danger and chaos, Ælfric claims to produce *Lives of Saints* at the request of his patrons, but as a pastor he probably also means the collection as a way of instructing and imparting courage even to the people beyond his immediate care, perhaps even the king and his *witan*, in the midst of uncertainty and constant threat. In the process, he often withholds definition of the third gender of his saints while seeming also implicitly to defy certain expected cultural definitions of gender. Ælfric’s very refusal to define the gender that his saints perform, however, opens up a space for his audience—a space in which men and women might choose this new gender even without a monastic profession and so define themselves in a new context like their examples, the saints. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe has defined agency as “an improvisation within conflicting structures” and if this definition is applied to Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints*, we can observe how he creates a place within the memories of his audience in which they might improvise and define themselves in relationship to the saint and to God.⁴⁰

* * *

The project carried out in the following chapters entails the reinvention (in the medieval sense of finding again) of the interpretive context that Ælfric and his religious audiences might have brought to their reading and hearing of saint’s lives, especially to their understandings and interpretations of women, men, and gender. Reinvention, however, should not

be confused with an apologetic for the late patristic and early medieval beliefs outlined below, nor should it be perceived as an argument for a return to such beliefs in the present, for neither is my aim. Instead, by analyzing the ideas about gender put forward by the four Latin Doctors and noting the presence of their concepts in early Latin hagiography and so (among other ways) appearing to Ælfric and his vernacular audience, I aim to build a basis upon which to offer an historically and theologically situated reading of gender in a selection of the lives of holy men and women translated in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*.

In chapter 1, each of the four Latin Doctors receives an individual exploration of his writings on virginity, Creation and Fall, the soul, and memory. The segment on Jerome examines *Adversus Jovinianum* in the context of several other works and letters to see how he constructs the idea of an ascetic third gender. Ambrose of Milan wrote at the same time as Jerome and each knew some of the other's works in defense of the practice of chastity, but the segment on Ambrose looks principally at his *Exameron*, *De virginibus*, and a range of other works to construct his views about gender and the practice of virginity. As Augustine's first teacher in the Christian faith, Ambrose leaves traces of influence upon Augustine's thought. The next segment, however, explores how Augustine developed his own psychology of gender grounded in his understanding of Creation and Fall and his psychology of memory, as well. The segment on Gregory the Great demonstrates the crucial synthesizing role that Gregory played in communicating the views of the earlier fathers to early medieval audiences, including audiences in Anglo-Saxon England. Throughout this first chapter I cross-reference in the endnotes where the ideas under discussion may be found in the works of the other Latin Doctors and in relevant works of Bede, Aldhelm, and Ælfric himself. This seems to me to be the most efficient way to indicate broadly held ideas and their presence in Anglo-Saxon England without constantly breaking the flow of my argument to discuss whether the patristic ideas were or may have been known to the Anglo-Saxons. These cross-references are not exhaustive and do not include all of the works of the Anglo-Saxon authors, but are meant to be suggestive of Ælfric's potential for exposure to such concepts or to show that he actually knew them or ideas parallel to them. Further, when each patristic work is first quoted, I include in an endnote whether the work was cited by Anglo-Saxon authors (as indicated in Michael Lapidge's *Anglo-Saxon Library* and in *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*) and the manuscript evidence that indicates the presence of that work in Anglo-Saxon England up to

Ælfric's time based upon Gneuss and Lapidge's *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*. I do this knowing that many will be interested in how the patristic ideas under discussion may have been known to Ælfric, but with the awareness that the evidence of the surviving manuscripts is frustratingly incomplete and the evidence of citations limited by the purpose and audience of the work in which they were used, as well as by how little such brief excerpts can tell us about the source(s) from which they were taken. Ælfric may well have read rather more on the topic of virginity and the third gender than he would ever have considered mentioning in his *Catholic Homilies* or *Lives of Saints*.

Moving the focus of study to Anglo-Saxon England, chapter 2 outlines the transmission and movement of the works of the Latin Doctors to the island kingdoms and into the hands of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin. Though the works of these scholars do not receive treatment in depth, I provide some brief examples of how some of the ideas about gender discussed in chapter 1 inform their works and are passed along to Ælfric in the tenth century.

The last five chapters explore Ælfric's treatment of the concepts of gender and the third gender by comparing his translations of selected saints' lives in Old English to the closest known Latin texts, always bearing in mind that we do not have Ælfric's exact Latin source for most of these lives. This selection includes all of Ælfric's lives of female saints, five of whom are among the Roman martyrs (Eugenia, Agnes, Agatha, Lucy, and Cecilia, whose life is really a double life with Valerian) and the remaining one an Anglo-Saxon queen (Æthelthryth). It also includes a comparable selection of male lives of Roman martyrs (Alban, Sebastian, George, and Abdon and Sennes) and Anglo-Saxon kings (Oswald and Edmund). Finally, there is one double life of the Roman martyrs (Chrysanthus and Daria). The chapters are arranged not according to the dates of the *Sanctorale*, but rather to bring male and female lives into relationship to each other as I explore various themes of gender and virginity that were established in chapter 1, so that neither masculinity, femininity, nor the monastic third gender appears in isolation. Chapter 3 brings the *passiones* of Eugenia and Alban together, to see what Ælfric does with concepts of the third gender (metagender), femininity, and masculinity presented in the Latin texts. The legends of Agnes, Sebastian, and George provide the material for comparing Ælfric's handling of the ideas of brides and soldiers of Christ in chapter 4. In chapter 5 my analysis reflects upon Ælfric's treatment of material and spiritual bodies in the stories of Agatha, Lucia, and

Abdon and Sennes. Material and spiritual rulership informs the examination of the lives of the Anglo-Saxon royal saints Æthelthryth, Oswald, and Edmund in chapter 6, and then in chapter 7, the spiritual marriages of Cecilia with Valerian and Chrysanthus with Daria round out the treatment of saints' *passiones*. Finally, the conclusion offers a few reflections on what has been discussed and offers some ideas for future research.

NOTES

¹ Bennett, "Medievalism and Feminism," 7–29.

² See, for example, Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*; Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow*; Chance, *Woman as Hero*; Damico and Olsen, *New Readings on Women*; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*; Lees, *Tradition and Belief*; Ælfric, *Women Saints' Lives*, trans. Donovan; Dockery-Miller, *Motherhood and Mothering*; Foot, *Veiled Women*; Horner, *Discourse of Enclosure*; Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*; Klein, *Ruling Women*; Gulley, *Displacement*.

³ See Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow*, 27; Chance, *Woman as Hero*, 53, 58.

⁴ Smith, Introduction to *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, ed. Brubaker and Smith, 7.

⁵ See Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, though the articles on male saints do not specifically explore concepts of masculinity; Frantzen, *Before the Closet*. While Frantzen's book does address issues of masculinity, its focus is not on masculinities per se, but on finding evidence for same-sex love in Anglo-Saxon and other texts. See also Lees, *Medieval Masculinities*, though this collection is not specifically about masculinity in Anglo-Saxon England. There are scatterings of articles on Anglo-Saxon masculinities in Cullum and Lewis, *Holiness and Masculinity*; McWilliams, *Saints and Scholars*; and Pasternack and Weston, *Sex and Sexuality*, but no concentrated, book-length treatment of the topic.

⁶ Murray, Introduction to *Conflicted Identities*, x.

⁷ Fenster, "Preface: Why Men?" 10.

⁸ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 6.

⁹ Simons, *Sex of Men*, 17.

¹⁰ See Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*.

¹¹ Lendinara, *Glosses and Glossaries*, 45–46 and 66.

¹² Nelson "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity," 123.

¹³ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 44.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.17.26; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.17.26.

¹⁵ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 14.

¹⁶ Bitel, Introduction to *Gender and Christianity*, ed. Bitel and Lifshitz, 6.

¹⁷ Sterk and Caputo, Introduction to *Faithful Narratives*, 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹ See, for example, Ælfric's comments in "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," in *Lives of Saints*, edited by Skeat (*LS*) 1.88–96.

²⁰ Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way*, 2, qtd. from Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3.

²¹ Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, 20.

²² Coakley, *Powers and Submissions*, 11 and 3.

²³ My emphasis. Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 8. See also Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* and *The Gnostic Gospels*.

²⁴ See O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Reading Old English Texts*, 1–8.

²⁵ Szarmach, "Ælfric and the Problem of Women," 572 and Kitchen, *Saints' Lives*, 12. Also White, *How Should We Talk About Religion?*, 7.

²⁶ Jackson, *Historical Criticism*, 71.

²⁷ See, for instance, Salisbury, "Gendered Sexuality," 81–102.

²⁸ See, for example, Klein, "Ælfric's Sources," 116; Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, 5; Power, *Veiled Desire*, 238–39; Pulsiano, "Blessed Bodies," 14; and Barr, "The Vulgate Genesis," 122.

²⁹ See Bischoff, "Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften," 17–35; Cloke, "*This Female Man of God*" 16; and McKitterick, "Nuns' Scriptoria," in *Books, Scribes, and Learning*, 7.1–35. (This book is a Variorum collection of reprints and therefore does not have consecutive pagination.) McKitterick says of the nuns' scriptorium at Chelles: "The quality of the texts copied is high; these scribes were competent, and understood what they were copying. The implications of the high quality of the texts, all main-line patristic writings or authoritative texts of the Christian church, are that we are dealing with well-educated scribes, who are as well-equipped intellectually as any other copyists we can identify from the eighth and ninth centuries." "Women and Literacy," in *Books, Scribes and Learning*, 13.4. From Eugippius' prologue to his collection of excerpts from the major works of Augustine, we know that Proba kept an extensive collection of Augustine's works, which she allowed Eugippius to use to make his compilation. Eugippius, *Eugippii Excerpta*, 1. Also see Hurst, introduction to *Bede the Venerable*, 8; Gorman, "The Manuscript Traditions," 389.

³⁰ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 90.

³¹ Smith, Introduction to *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, ed. Brubaker and Smith, 6.

³² Lees, Introduction to *Medieval Masculinities*, 15.

³³ For discussions of early medieval views on violence and Christianity, see, for example, Nelson, "The Church's Military Service," 15–30; for Ælfric's views in particular see Earl, "Violence and Non-Violence," 125–49; Maginnis, "Warrior Saints," 27–51; Damon, *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors*, 192–246 and 264–74; Whatley, "Hagiography and Violence," 217–38; and Halbrooks, "Ælfric, the Maccabees," 263–84.

³⁴ Lapidge, "Roman Martyrs," 115.

³⁵ Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, 429–32.

³⁶ Hadley, Introduction to *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 4.

³⁷ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 13–14.

³⁸ For the events of the reign of Æthelred II *Unræd*, see Ashdown, *English and Norse Documents*; Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*; Lavelle, *Aethelred II*; Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*; and Howard, *Reign of Æthelred II*.

³⁹ Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints*, 57.

⁴⁰ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, 53.