

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

Rhonda L. McDaniel



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MEDIEVAL INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
are available from the Library of Congress.**

ISBN: 9781580443098

eISBN: 9781580443104

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Chapter Three

Metagender in Genders

Eugenia: *Ecce Feminam!*

The first saint whose *passio* appears in Ælfric's collection is Eugenia, virgin and martyr (*LS* 2).¹ Ælfric's placement of Eugenia's legend on December 25 is unattested in any known English calendar from Ælfric's time, though Michael Lapidge notes that the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (CCL) commemorates her on this day.² This placement may have allowed Ælfric or the compiler of BL, Cotton Julius E.vii to make a connective wordplay based on her name between *LS* 1 and Eugenia's life. *Eugenia* in Latin means "well-born, nobly born" and in *LS* 1 Ælfric specifically refers to the *æðelboren* (nobly born) soul when he writes "seo an sawul is æðelboren þe ðonne lufað þe heo fram com" [only the soul that loves him from whom it came is nobly born].³ Alcuin, whose work Ælfric was translating, used *nobilis* (noble, nobly born). Ælfric could have translated Alcuin's word using *æðele*, *æðelcund*, or *æðellic* just as well, but chose the term *æðelboren* (nobly born) rather than just noble, suggesting that he may have intended his choice of words for *LS* 1 to resonate with the name of Eugenia and with each further use of *æðelboren* in other lives in the collection. Such a wordplay would not have been lost on Ælfric's patron, Æthelweard (who knew Latin well enough to translate one of the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicles* from Old English into Latin⁴), nor on a monastic audience familiar with Latin and yet non-Latinate audiences would have lost nothing by missing the connection to Eugenia's name. Accordingly, Ælfric may have been foreshadowing or suggesting for more educated audiences an interpretation of Eugenia's *passio* as the experience of the nobly born soul coming to love the God who created it.

Eugenia's reputation as one of the "transvestite saints" renders considerations about sex and gender in her case problematic from the start, especially in the Latin texts of her life.⁵ The Latin text of the *passio* of Eugenia preserved in the CCL bears the closest relationship to Ælfric's

translation (although the manuscripts of the *Legendary* itself postdate Ælfric) and Grau's *Pasionario Hispánico* (*PH*) provides the closest printed edition. Unlike his treatment of many other legends, Ælfric in this *passio* departs repeatedly and significantly from his Latin exemplar. The first part of the Latin life presents Eugenia's legend as both a journey and a liturgical progression from paganism into Christian faith that culminates in a symbolic apotheosis of the virgin, but when Ælfric translates the legend, it becomes instead an exemplum of how Eugenia "ðurh mægðhad mærlíce beah . / and þurh martyr-dom þisne middan-eard ofer-swað" [nevertheless by means of her glorious virginity and through her martyrdom overcame this world].⁶

The anonymous Latin author first describes Eugenia's background: born into a noble pagan family whose head is the prefect of Alexandria in Egypt, provided with the best education in Latin and Greek eloquence, and "etiam philosophiam docere permisit" [he even permitted her to teach philosophy].⁷ Ælfric does not have this last statement in his translation, and at first blush it seems as though he suppresses the idea that a woman might be able to teach philosophy. He may have left out this comment, however, because his Latin text reflected the variant found in the CCL: "etiam philosophiam doctrinam doceri permisit" [he even allowed her to learn (lit., to be taught) philosophical doctrine].⁸ Ælfric's Latin source probably gave the same variant reading because he combines Eugenia's philosophical instruction with her schooling in Latin eloquence when he writes that she went to school "þæt heo on woruld-wysdome wære getogen / æfter grecisre uðwytegeunge . and lædenre getingnyssse" [so that she might be established through Greek philosophy and Latin rhetoric].⁹ Instead of dismissing the idea that a woman could teach philosophy, Ælfric probably did not know a manuscript tradition in which Eugenia did so. More significantly, however, Ælfric from the start establishes the expectation that Eugenia would be well-grounded in all the mental and memorial skills associated with a classical education in rhetoric and philosophy.

The anonymous Latin author then observes that Eugenia "erat ... pulchra facie et eligans corpore, sed pulchrior mente et eligantior castitate" [was lovely in countenance and beautiful in body, but more lovely in mind and more beautiful in chastity].¹⁰ Here again one finds a different statement in the CCL: "Erat ergo eugenia pulchra mente et formosior castitate" [Therefore Eugenia was lovely in mind and more beautiful in chastity].¹¹ The version closest to Ælfric does not maintain the same focus on Eugenia's physical beauty that appears in Grau's edition, focusing on

her mind and virtue instead. Ælfric does not exactly follow either of these versions. He emphasizes Eugenia's strong mental qualities and the results of her education, noting that she "wel þeah on wisdom . and on uðwyte-gunge" [excelled very much in wisdom and in philosophy].¹² For an audience that may not have been familiar with the ethical aspects of education in Latin, Ælfric plainly states the results of Eugenia's intellectual training rather than leaving them implicit, but he does not mention her chastity at this point—perhaps because she has not yet become a Christian. In fact, Ælfric also omits the Latin text's narrative detail about how the saint-to-be refuses a proposal of marriage from Aquilius, son of the proconsul Aquilinus.¹³ He focuses the attention of his audience instead on how Eugenia obtained the teachings of the Apostle Paul, how "Þa wearð hyre mod mycclum on-bryrd / þuruh þa halgen lare" [thereupon her mind became greatly excited by means of the holy teachings].¹⁴ Ælfric presents Eugenia's response to Christian teaching as a response of the mind, of the rational soul, by implication the part of the soul that recognizes the God in whose image it has been made. This recognition, while not yet belief, produces a will (desire) to know: "Heo ... wolde swa cepan þære cristenra lare," [She ... desired to seek the teachings of the Christians], which causes her to leave her father's house and Alexandria itself in search of some "geleaffulne mann" [believing person] to instruct her in Christian doctrine.¹⁵ The departure from her father's house bears all the symbolism of a deliberate turning—a choice to leave the identity constructed in the context of her pagan family, culture, and upbringing in order to pursue what she desires through her wisdom but does not yet really know.

In the Latin text, as Eugenia departs from the city, she hears Christians singing: "Omnes dii gentium demonia, Dominus autem celos fecit" [All the gods of the peoples are demons, but the Lord made the heavens].¹⁶ With tears Eugenia addresses her two companions, eunuchs and schoolmates named Protus and Jacinctus, declaring her intention to cut her hair and go in disguise as a male with her companions to the Christians. (Ælfric, apparently concerned that his audience might not immediately understand the nature of a eunuch, explains without further comment that such men are *belisnode* "castrated."¹⁷) The psalm from the liturgy, the departure from the city, and the change of appearance from female to male all combine to illustrate the spiritual significance of the moment: Eugenia leaves her pagan childhood to begin a journey to Christian maturity, leaves her pagan father's house in search of a new home with a heavenly Father, leaves pagan Alexandria from whence all Christians have been

expelled to seek the City of God, leaves the pagan philosophy in which she has been educated in order to learn Christian wisdom, and leaves the figurative “womanliness” of pagan wisdom for the “manliness,” the *virum perfectum* symbolized by the eunuch, of Christian teachings and a life of virtue and chastity. For an audience familiar with the figural meanings of male and female discussed in chapter 1, Ælfric’s translation maintains the rich texture of these parallel movements and all of their multifaceted symbolism. Eugenia’s change of appearance “on wæpmonna wysan” [in the manner of men] especially symbolizes the Augustinian psychology of conversion, for now the “male” activity of Eugenia’s rational soul, overpowered and dormant while in unbelief, begins to assert itself, to recognize and long for its Creator.¹⁸ Even more, the donning of male garb reflects the concept discussed by several of the fathers of growing in spiritual strength (becoming the *virum perfectum*) as one turns from the world to Christ. As of yet, however, the change is only in appearance, for Eugenia has not yet been instructed in what to believe, and so the conversion is not yet complete. For a nonmonastic audience, there may have been an element of surprise upon hearing about Eugenia’s decision to disguise herself as a man. Ælfric, though, apparently did not believe the move would be offensive, especially given Eugenia’s reasons for doing so—namely her desire to learn about Christ and to avoid being found out and so expelled from among the Christians. To anyone hearing the legend without knowing the complex symbolism of the Latin context, Eugenia’s actions would suggest that the desire for Christ justified such a subterfuge and Eugenia might rightly be admired for her willingness to abandon the outward signs of her female identity out of desire for God. Ælfric is careful not to imply any real change of sex, however, for Eugenia only dresses “on wærlīcum hiwe . þæt heo ne wurde ameldod” [in the appearance of men so that she would not be discovered, betrayed].¹⁹

As Eugenia, now in disguise, approaches a monastery she again hears the Christians singing an antiphonal response: “Via iustorum recta facta est; iter sanctorum preparatum est” [The path of the just has been made straight; the way of the holy ones has been prepared].²⁰ In the Latin text, the young woman once more turns to her companions and recounts (in case the audience has missed the point) how she and the two eunuchs, having been instructed by the first song they heard, turned from the pagan gods to seek Christian salvation and now the singing is pointing their way to this monastery. Upon learning about the saintliness of the Bishop Helenus, who rules the monastery, Eugenia asks that she and her

two “brothers” be allowed to come into the monastery. She and her companions enter singing a hymn: “Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templo tuo” [We have received, O God, your mercy in the middle of your temple].²¹ Once again, the liturgy within the Latin version tells the story as Eugenia’s entry into the monastery concretely symbolizes her entry into Christian belief and life. Ælfric, however, omits most of this scene. He provides and translates the first antiphonal response, but then abbreviates the conversation between Eugenia and her companions, only rendering the gist of her comments in indirect discourse, and does not provide either the text or a translation of the psalm with which Eugenia and her friends enter the monastery. From this point onward, the entire liturgical theme found in the Latin version disappears from Ælfric’s translation. He brings his nonmonastic audience with Eugenia and her companions to the “rihtwisra wæg” [the way of the just],²² but leaves them outside the monastery by leaving off any further references to the liturgical progression into a monastic life followed in the Latin text. The focus from this point onward in Ælfric’s Old English text is on Eugenia’s example following the way of the just.

At this time in the story, the bishop Helenus, having received the disguised virgin and her companions into the monastery, has a dream “in quo ad simulacrum feminae ducebatur, ut illi sacrificaret” [in which he was led to an image of a woman, in order that he might offer a sacrifice to her].²³ Instead of offering a sacrifice, however, Helenus commands the goddess (*dea*) to know that she is a creation of God and not to permit herself to be worshiped. At once she comes down to Helenus and promises to remain with him until such time as she might be restored to her Creator and maker.²⁴ From this point, Ælfric begins to make significant omissions from his translation of Eugenia’s legend. He has already said in the Latin preface to *Lives of Saints* that “reticemus de libro uitæ patrum, in quo multa subtilia habentur quæ non conueniunt aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere” [We keep silent concerning the book *Lives of the Fathers*, in which many matters that require discernment are contained (and) which are not fitting to be disclosed to the laity, nor are we able to fully treat them ourselves],²⁵ and apparently Helenus’s dream fits Ælfric’s description of something requiring discernment. He does not describe the dream nor does he mention the fact that in the Latin text Eugenia’s name is not given in the dream—Helenus has to figure out that the dream referred to her. Ælfric notes only that “him wearð geswutelod on swæfne be þy-sum” [it was revealed to him in a dream about this matter], and adds

that the dream reveals Eugenia's intentions to Helenus by way of explaining how Helenus knows who she is despite her disguise.²⁶ Ælfric possibly considers the content of Helenus's dream too prone to misunderstanding to set forth in his translation, but he still includes the story of the dream in order to show that Helenus's spiritual insight leads him to the truth despite outward appearances.²⁷ In the Latin text, the dream serves as a foreshadowing device and later on in the story it works in coordination with the continuing liturgical elements to create a rich narrative resonance. Ælfric leaves all of these elements out of his translation, changing the texture of the legend but at the same time demonstrating his own skill as a storyteller by retaining the drama, as we shall see.

In the Latin, after waking from his dream, Helenus ponders its meaning and a man arrives to ask that Eugenia and her comrades be admitted to the monastery. Helenus draws Eugenia aside and questions her apart from her "brothers." When she gives her name as Eugenius (the masculine form of Eugenia), Helenus responds: "Recte ... vocaris Eugenius, quia viriliter agendo, virum perfectum in agone dominico te obtulisti." [Rightly ... do you call yourself Eugenius, because by behaving courageously you have presented yourself a perfect man for suffering with the Lord]. After making this point, Helenus orders the virgin to remain in her man's clothing (*virili habitu*) in the monastery.²⁸ Again, Ælfric changes the details passing over how Eugenia calls herself Eugenius and then changing Helenus's response: "He genam hi þa onsundron . and sæde hyre gewislice / hwæt heo man ne wæs" [He took her apart (from her companions) and said to her truly that indeed she was no man].²⁹ Ælfric avoids any suggestion of Eugenia actually becoming Eugenius, and he omits Helenus's comment about her behaving in a "manly" manner or becoming the *virum perfectum*. Even if Ælfric declines to use the language of "manliness" only in order to avoid confusing a nonmonastic audience, the emphatic denial that Eugenia might even figuratively become a man affirms the saint both in her body and in her spirit as a woman. Ælfric affirms the reality of Eugenia's feminine body by insisting on her femaleness instead of following the Latin text in moving her towards androgyny or maleness; he affirms her spiritually by following the example of Alcuin and asserting her capacity as a woman for the same spiritual growth and strength as men without her having to "become a man" in the process. In Ælfric's version of the legend Eugenia's male disguise is precisely that: an entirely outward appearance and a covering.

Ælfric continues to emphasize Eugenia's femaleness as he describes her life in the monastery after Helenus secretly baptizes her and her

companions. In the Latin text, Helenus “iussit eam sic in uirili habitu permanere” [ordered her to continue thus in the condition of a man].³⁰ The Latin term *habitus* (clothing, condition, habit, bearing or nature, character, disposition) loads this statement with connotations of more than just a change of clothing. Eugenia’s life in a masculine *habitus* suggests an ongoing metamorphosis of gender from materially female to the spiritual *virum perfectum*. Ælfric, however, creates a distinction between wearing a man’s clothing and becoming a man. Instead of recreating the symbolism of outward sign and inward reality found in the Latin, Ælfric insists upon establishing the independence of the two, saying “be-bead se biscop þam gebogenan mædene / þæt heo swa þurh-wunade . on þam wærlicum hiwe” [the bishop ordered the converted maiden to continue thus in that manly appearance].³¹ In Old English, *hiw* means “appearance, pretense” or else “kind or species.” If Ælfric had used Old English *wise* (custom, habit, manner and condition, state, circumstance), or *cynd* (nature, quality, character), he could have matched the semantic range of Latin *habitus* more closely. Ælfric, however, has shown himself to be precise about his choice of words in the translations, and so he no doubt chose *hiw* deliberately. This choice limits the possibilities of interpretation for his nonmonastic audience and, in context, limits Eugenia’s “masculinity” to the outward appearance of maleness while showing her attaining spiritual maturity and virtue as a woman.

And so Eugenia remains at the monastery with her “brothers,” Protus and Jacinctus. The anonymous Latin author tells the audience:

Illa vero virili habitu et animo, in praedicto virum monasterio permanebat: que ita in divinis eruditionibus profecit, ut intra secundum annum omnes pene scribturas dominicas memoriae retineret. Tanta ei erat tranquillitas animi, ut unam eam dicerent ex numero angelorum. Quis enim eam deprehenderet quod esset femina quum ita virtus Christi et virginitas immaculata protegebat, ut imitabilis esset etiam viris? Sermo autem eius erat humilis in caritate, clarus in mediocritate, vitio carens, et facundiam fugiens, omnes in humilitate superabat. Nullus illi ad orationem inveniebatur anterior, tristem consolabatur, leto congaudebat, irascentem uno sermone mitigabat; superbientem ita suo edificabat exemplo, ut ovem subito factam ex lupo, credere delectaret.

[She, in fact, in the manner and mind of a man remained as a man in the aforesaid monastery (or in CCCC 9: in the monastery of men): in this fashion she progressed in divine teachings to such an extent

that within two years she retained almost the entire scriptures of the Lord in memory. So great was her calmness of mind that they called her one of the number of angels. Who might detect that she was a woman when the manliness of Christ and spotless virginity covered her to such a degree that she was truly imitable of men? Her conversation, nevertheless, was humble in charity, distinguished in moderation, without fault, and avoiding excessive eloquence she surpassed all in humility. None was found superior to her in prayer: she consoled the sad, rejoiced with the joyful, soothed the wrathful with one word. She instructed the proud by her own example so that, having been suddenly made a sheep from a wolf, he delighted to believe.]³²

The Latin text continues the theme of Eugenia's progression toward the *virum perfectum*: she grows in knowledge of Christian doctrine, memorizes nearly all of the scriptures(!), and sets the rest of the monastery such an example in speech that the anonymous author exclaims that Eugenia is truly able to be imitated by men. The feats of memory described here are the root of everything else, for memory is the place of self-formation. As Kurt Danziger observes, "Clearly, monastic memory was different from [memory necessary for constructing arguments and ordering information] in that its primary domain was the fostering of the virtuous life. This it accomplished when the individual became immersed in textual depictions of virtue to the point that they took over his or her life."³³ A memory full of the scriptures and teachings of Christianity would be both a treasure-house and a temple, a place in which to know God, define oneself in relationship with God, and from which to construct and enact the virtues of the *virum perfectum*. The tone and context of this passage make clear that Eugenia's imitability is not a matter of her example shaming men so that they will do better—after all, within the context of the life, the men in the monastery did not know that she was a woman—but rather of Eugenia truly surpassing men at being "manly" in Christ. Not only does she have a better-equipped intellect than the rest of her "brothers," she is the meta-gendered *virum perfectum* and they are not. The tone of the Latin work expresses no envy, no competitiveness, just straightforward admiration. In the Latin version, the clothes do not conceal Eugenia's womanhood, rather her moral excellence (*virtus Christi*) and her virginity transcend the fact of her female sex, rendering the biological clothing of her soul irrelevant. Ælfric, on the other hand, never allows his audience to forget that Eugenia is a woman. In his translation, she triumphs not through sexless-

ness but by demonstrating under cover in her own body that women can be not only men's equals in virtue, but their betters as well.

The Old English translation of the Latin passage above is the only place where Ælfric adopts the language of manliness when referring to Eugenia herself: "Eugenia þa wunode on þam mynstre / mid wærlicum mode . þeah þe heo mæden wære" [Eugenia then remained in that minster with a manly (or heroic) mind, although she was a young woman].³⁴ Ælfric still carefully insists that Eugenia is a woman, though, and never lets his nonmonastic audience think that having a "manly or heroic" mind could in any way change her physical womanliness. And what kind of characteristics did Ælfric want his audience to associate with Eugenia's "manly" mind? He outlines them as he describes how Eugenia

heold on hyre þeawum halige drohtnunge / ðurh modes liþnesse .
and mycelre eadmodnesse / and þurh halige mægnu . þam hælende
ge-cwæmde. / Heo þeah on lare . þæs rihtan geleafan / and on
godcundlicum gewrytum mid godum wyllan / and wearð awend of
wulfe to sceapec .

[maintained in her conduct a holy way of life through gentleness of mind and great humility, and by means of holy might she served the Savior. She flourished in the teachings of true belief and in spiritual writings with great determination, and became changed from a wolf into a sheep.]³⁵

Ælfric emphasizes gentleness and humility, focuses upon pleasing or serving the Savior through holy strength and the study of spiritual writings. Interestingly enough, he does not mention her virginity; even more interestingly, he does mention the change from wolf to sheep that is found in the Latin, but his translation (in which Eugenia is the one changed from a wolf into a sheep) shifts the focus of the change from the proud one instructed by Eugenia in the Latin text to Eugenia herself, creating an interpretive dilemma in the process. How would Ælfric have explained such a change in the saint, since, as Paul E. Szarmach notes, "Eugenia has hardly been wolvis in any of her actions or thoughts"?³⁶ This characterization of her as a former wolf does not seem to fit the context that Ælfric has provided, even though it does (in a rather heavy-handed way) accurately illustrate her moral redirection. On the other hand, Gopa Roy asserts that "It is not clear in the Old English, however, whether the reference to her turning from a wolf to a sheep denotes her spiritual growth, her progress from paganism to Christianity—or, at the same time, to

her having become, in some way, though a woman, like a man. Perhaps Ælfric has not been careful enough about possible ambiguities in his adaptation.³⁷ While the possibility of a textual variant in the Latin exemplar may explain the enigma of Ælfric's portrayal of Eugenia as a wolf, it still does not explain how he and his audience might have made sense of such a depiction. Ælfric uses the wolf as a symbol for unbelieving people and the sheep to represent those who believe in his homilies and other hagiographical works and so the most likely interpretation Ælfric and his audience would have attached to this comment would be in line with the context in which it appears: a description of Eugenia's transformation into a new person. No longer defined by the pagan wolfishness of unbelief, she exemplifies in mind and deed the ideal of the humble sheep of Christ.

To this point, Ælfric has directed the attention of his audience toward the change of character and identity that Eugenia experienced as a result of her study and practice of right belief.³⁸ Now, however, he returns to the Latin account of Eugenia's pagan family and describes their mental state in contrast to the virgin's: "Philippus ða se fæder forweard on mode / and seo modor claudia . mid murnunge wæs for-numen / and eall seo mægð on mode wearð astyred / and sohten þæt mæden mid myclere sarnysse" [Then the father, Philip, sickened in mind and the mother, Claudia, was consumed with sorrow; and all the household became anxious in their minds and searched for the young woman with great distress].³⁹ The Latin text also depicts the family's response to Eugenia's disappearance as one of overwhelming grief: "Erat itaque planctus inextimabilis, fletus inmensus: lugebantque universi inconfuse; parentes filiam, sororem fratres, servi dominam; et tenebat universos meror, et infinita animi tribulatio" [Therefore the lamentation was incalculable, the weeping immeasurable: the whole household mourned unashamedly; the parents for their daughter, the brothers for their sister, the servants for their mistress; and grief possessed them all, and boundless distress of mind].⁴⁰ Both versions describe the grief of the entire household—parents, brothers, and servants—but Ælfric's translation imposes rather more restraint upon the scene and emphasizes the debilitating effect that the distress has upon their minds. In the extremity of their sorrow, Philip and Claudia consult sorcerers and their pagan gods to find out what has become of their daughter. Upon being told (falsely, the Latin author and Ælfric point out) that Eugenia has been stolen into the heavens by the gods, Philip orders a golden image of his daughter to be made, so that she might be worshiped along with the other gods. Their minds disordered by grief, ignorant as

yet of the God whose image they bear, the members of Eugenia's spiritually blind family seek consolation from their pagan gods and sorcerers but receive only deception and false hope. Their devotion to Eugenia, however, leads to the fulfillment of bishop Helenus's dream in the Latin text about the virgin in which he had been brought to the golden figure of a goddess and had then commanded her to know that she was a creature and not to allow herself to be worshiped. This dream connects Helenus directly to Eugenia's father, Philip.

The parallel oppositions in the Latin text between the bishop Helenus and Philip are striking: Philip is left behind and Helenus is sought; Philip loses a daughter and Helenus gains a "son"; Philip has a disordered mind that cannot perceive spiritual realities, but Helenus has a mind restored to right order by God and so sees beyond outward appearances to the truth about Eugenia; Philip is deceived into worshiping an image of his daughter, but Helenus orders the image in his dream not to allow herself to be worshiped. Eugenia's two "fathers" contrast sharply the states of disordered unbelief and rightly ordered belief. The disorder of Philip's mind, however, shows most vividly in his anger.

After several years, Philip sees Eugenia again for the first time, but he does not recognize her as his daughter. In the intervening time, she has been made the abbot of the monastery after Helenus's death by acclamation of the brothers, and has gained a reputation as a miraculous healer. One of her female patients, having been overcome with lust for the "abbot" after being healed of a disease, attempts to seduce Eugenia and receives a crushing rebuff for her efforts. Melantia, the woman scorned, rushes to Philip and accuses the "abbot" of attempted rape, whereupon Philip becomes violently or exceedingly enraged, *vehementer irascitur*,⁴¹ a state of mind consistently associated with the hegemonic masculinity of non-Christian rulers in the narratives of the Roman Martyrs. This same kind of language characterizes Philip's conduct of Eugenia's trial as the Latin author describes him as *vehementer iratus* (exceedingly or violently wrathful) (although the CCL version has *vehementer commotus* [exceedingly or violently moved or excited]).⁴² Ælfric preserves the same characterization of uncontrollable rage when he translates *vehementer irascitur* as Old English *swiðe gehat-heort*, literally "exceedingly hot-hearted" or "exceedingly enraged." In both versions Philip then imprisons Eugenia and her brethren while he prepares various tortures such as fire and beasts and other punishments for the Christians, although Ælfric does not name the tortures as the Latin does: "Abtantur eculei, verbera,

ferae, flammae, tortores; et caetera, quae solent abscondita cordis exculpere, praeparantur" [The rack, scourge, wild animals, fires, and tortures are made ready; and other things that customarily force out the secrets of the heart are prepared].⁴³ In omitting these details, Ælfric's translation loses the concrete vividness of words such as *flammae* "flames" and *ferae* "wild beasts" that illustrate some of the connotations of the Latin word *ira*.⁴⁴ Tyrannical Philip's own bestial ferocity illustrates the inward condition of his mind: he is like a beast, ruled by violent passion rather than by reason. Augustine describes the process as one in which fallen humankind, "incipiens a peruerso appetitu similitudinis dei peruenit ad similitudinem pecorum" [beginning from a distorted appetite for being like God they end up by becoming like beasts].⁴⁵ Augustine concludes that "cum sit honor eius similitudo dei, dedecus autem eius similitudo pecoris: *Homo in honore positus non intellexit; comparatus est iumentis insensatis et similis factus est eis*" [since his honor consists in being like God and his disgrace in being like an animal, *man established in honor did not understand; he was matched with senseless cattle and became like them*].⁴⁶ For a learned monastic audience, the theme would resonate with Ambrose's description of the "manly" lion that refused to attack the virgin of Antioch and the "bestly" men that were ready to brutalize, rape, and martyr her.⁴⁷ As with the Latin text, Ælfric repeats the idea of the tyrant's violent anger when he says that Philip addresses Eugenia (before he knows who she is) "mid ful-lum graman" [with utter rage].⁴⁸ Because Philip has made himself like God by making his own daughter into a goddess (in fulfillment of Helenus's dream) and by driving the Christians from Alexandria, Philip has fallen within his own soul from reflecting the image of God down to the level of unreasoning beasts, ruled by his own passions instead of by the *imago Dei* within himself. Ælfric's picture of the unbelieving tyrannical ruler is nothing but grim.

"Þa wearð se geræfa . þearle gebolgen" [Then the prefect became violently angry].⁴⁹ Philip's anger only increases as all of Melantia's servants falsely testify against Eugenia, describing how the "abbot" tried to rape their mistress on her sickbed. At this moment of heightened intensity and imminent danger, as the full wrath of the court hangs suspended over Eugenia's head, Philip demands to know how Eugenia can ever prove her innocence. In the Latin text, this climactic confrontation brings the two opposing states of mind into sharp contrast. Eugenia's mind, rightly ordered through belief in Christ, exemplifies gentleness, humility, calmness, and perfect self-control in the midst of a seemingly hopeless

situation; Philip's mind demonstrates the bestial nature of the fallen, disordered, deceived mind of the unbeliever. As the two face each other, every eye and every ear focuses upon Eugenia as she responds:

Tanta enim virtus est nominis eius, ut etiam femine, in timore eius positae, virilem obtineant dignitatem. Neque enim diversitas sexus inveniri potest in fide, quum beatus Paulus, magister omnium christianorum, dicat quod apud Deum non sit discretio masculi et femine: omnes enim in Christo unum sumus. Huius ergo normam animo ferventiori suscipiens confidentiam, quam in Christo habui, nolui esse feminam. Consideravi enim non esse inimicam honestatis simulationem per quam femina virum simulat, sed magis hoc iure puniri, si pro affectu vitiorum vir feminam fingat. Et hoc iure laudandum, si pro amore virtutum sexus infirmior virilem gloriam imitetur. Idcirco nunc ego, amore divino religionis accensa, virilem habitum sumsi, et virum gessi perfectum, virginitatem Christo fortiter conservando.

[So great, indeed, is the power of his (Christ's) name that even women standing in awe of him may obtain manly esteem. For in the faith no difference of sex is able to be found, since the blessed Paul, teacher of all Christians, says that with God there is no distinction of masculine and feminine, for all are one in Christ. Therefore, fervently receiving in my mind the confidence of this standard, which I possess in Christ, I did not desire to be a woman. I truly considered that pretense through which a woman plays the part of a man not to be adverse to virtue, although this is more rightly to be punished if a man feigns a woman through a disposition for vices. And this is rightly to be praised if, for the love of virtue, the weaker sex imitates manly honor. For that reason, kindled by the divine love of religion, I now have chosen a manly condition, and I have displayed the *virum perfectum* by courageously maintaining my virginity for Christ.]⁵⁰

In this climactic moment in the Latin life, as the beastly man and the manly woman face each other in a highly symbolic confrontation between paganism and Christianity, Eugenia proves herself to be the *virum perfectum* by the very act of proving herself to be a woman. She tears apart her upper clothing and reveals the womanly feature of her breasts for all to see, thus proving herself innocent of the charge of rape.⁵¹ She obtains the status of *virum perfectum* first by refusing marriage (in the Latin text), then by preserving her virginity even though surrounded by men, and by

not lapsing into the love of luxury and of seductive lust displayed in her accuser, Melantia. Indeed, she has proved in her own body that in Christ there is neither male nor female by clothing herself outwardly as a man, but inwardly clothing herself with Christ so that she did not become a man, but became metagendered in Christ, reflecting both the feminine and masculine virtues of Christ's character. By living bodily and mentally as a metagendered *virum perfectum* among gendered men striving for the same, she set the example of Christian virtue for men and ruled over them in the monastery.

By the same token, her two companions, Protus and Jacinctus prove the same point in the opposite direction through their status as eunuchs, for they "imitabantur eam, et erant in omnibus obtemperantes ei" [imitated her and were conforming (or submitting) to her in all matters].⁵² The unmanned men follow Eugenia toward perfect "manliness" in the *schola Christi*.⁵³ By placing a woman and two eunuchs at the center of an exemplary narrative about achieving perfect "manliness," the anonymous Latin author emphasizes the figurative and symbolic nature of this third gender whereby it becomes a sign of a greater reality that has nothing to do with sex and everything to do with spiritual and moral strength. The sign of Eugenia's perfection is the strength by which she preserves her virginity in Christ while becoming more like Christ in humility and other virtues in the process. The sign that she has accomplished this perfection is her own distinctly female body, her own breasts.

Eugenia's entire speech about obtaining the *virum perfectum* receives only indirect and monothematic treatment in Ælfric's translation. By means of indirect discourse, Ælfric focuses on the saint's preservation of her virginity through her male disguise, again limiting Eugenia's "masculinity" to her appearance, resolutely insisting upon her physical reality as a woman while simultaneously exalting her spiritual strength in maintaining her virginity and keeping her secret for so many years. This indirect treatment blunts the drama of the symbolic transformation of identity in Eugenia's spiritual quest found in the Latin text, but it also circumvents any opportunity for confusion on the part of Ælfric's lay audience. In the Old English text, the desire for Christ and preservation of virginity are the only acceptable reasons for Eugenia's transvestitism; there are no other symbolic implications to the disguise.

Eugenia's revelation of her womanhood, however, remains the dramatic focal point in the Old English life: "Æfter þysum wordum heo to-tær hyre gewædu / and æt-æwde hyre breost . þam breman philippe / and

cwæð him to . þu eart min fæder” [After these words she tore her clothing and showed her breast to the raging Philip, and said to him, ‘You are my father!’]⁵⁴ The violence of the motion in the verb *to-teran* (tear to pieces, lacerate, cut out, destroy) and the direct, blunt immediacy of Eugenia’s assertion that the raging Philip is her father compensate for the loss of dramatic capital in Ælfric’s handling of the previous section. In the Latin text, Eugenia immediately covers her breast as soon as she has exposed it and before she says anything to Philip. In Ælfric’s translation, however, the revelation of Eugenia’s womanly body and of her relationship to her judge are simultaneous. Eugenia’s statement in the Latin version is an almost leisurely observation: “Tu quidem mihi secundum carnem pater” [Surely, you are my father according to the flesh], whereas Ælfric renders Eugenia’s words as a stark, forceful, almost accusatory declamation as she bares her breasts.⁵⁵

In addition, Ælfric does not translate the Latin line wherein Eugenia immediately covers her breasts. Rather, he leaves Eugenia exposed, leaves her covering of her breasts indeterminate. In this instance, at least, the Latin original shows more modesty than Ælfric’s translation, calling into question the idea that Ælfric possessed “a certain nervousness about the power of the gaze and the knowledge it yields.”⁵⁶ Instead, Ælfric’s translation makes Eugenia’s bare torso the dramatic focal point of the story, inviting the gaze with electrifying results. The knowledge revealed by her body joins with the knowledge of relationship revealed by her words to effect not only the conversion of her family, but also of the crowd of spectators who witness the event—making Eugenia their spiritual mother.

This moment of vindication and of recognition leads to a joyful reunion that includes the populace of Alexandria that had gathered for the spectacle of the trial and the tortures that had been prepared. Instead of hellish punishments, however, “deferuntur vestimenta auro texta, et licet invita, induitur, atque in excelso tribunali inposita, in sublime adtolitur, et ab omni populo conclamatur: Unus Deus, Christus, unus et verus Deus christianorum” [vestments woven with gold were brought, and although unwilling, she was clothed and placed upon the highest tribunal, raised up on high, and all the populace shouted: “There is one God, Christ, the one and true God of the Christians.”]⁵⁷ Ælfric renders the passage in this fashion: “Hi þa gefretewodon . þa fæmnan mid golde / hyre un-þances . and up gesætton to him” [Then they adorned the virgin with gold—she, unwilling—and placed [her] up with them].⁵⁸ Philip has been seated on his tribunal, his two sons beside him, so that they formed a sort of family trinity

as they sat together. Eugenia has now been brought to the highest tribunal (*in excelso tribunali*), clothed in gold, and seated with them. The mental image created by this scene is of Eugenia enthroned with three men in a highly suggestive parallel to artwork that places Mary with the Trinity in glory. Eugenia's unwillingness to be so honored resonates with the Virgin Mary's well-known humility. The symbolic apotheosis of the virgin in the text mirrors the apotheosis of the Virgin Mother of God.

Following this scene and its accompanying mass conversion of all those present, including Eugenia's family, both the Latin life and Ælfric's translation narrate in short order the martyrdom of Philip (murdered while praying in the church), the departure of Eugenia and the rest of the family to Rome, and the martyrdoms of Basilla (one of Eugenia's converts), Protus, and Jacinctus, before describing Eugenia's own torments and martyrdom. Campbell Bonner, in his early analysis of possible folkloric elements in the Latin life, observes that "it will probably be conceded by most critics that the martyrdom of Eugenia and her family is a pious addition to the legend, which originally concluded with the scene of recognition and reunion."⁵⁹ Certainly this second part of the Latin story lacks the male/female dynamic of the first part, drops the liturgical elements entirely, and unlike the earlier part gets distracted into the sub-life of a virgin named Basilla. By the time the legend reaches Ælfric, all the martyrdoms listed above have accreted to the story and he includes them in his translation. Ælfric's version of the story as a whole, however, is more uniform in tone and theme than the Latin version because Ælfric has removed the male/female imagery and has removed the liturgical progression of the first part of the legend out of his translation, so the original story blends more smoothly with the martyrdoms that were added later. When Ælfric's readers come to the added part in the Old English version, there is nothing to signal that anything has changed from the original story. The two themes that remain constant across the two sections are Eugenia's virginity and perfected mind. Ælfric uses these ideas as his unifying concept, creating a more coherent work in the process.

As Eugenia's life nears its end, she again appears before a hostile judge. By refusing to worship an image of Diana, indeed, by bringing down the goddess's temple through prayer, Eugenia receives the emperor's condemnation. Various means of inflicting death are attempted, such as tying a stone around her neck and throwing her into the river, burning her in an oven, and then starving her of food and light for twenty days in prison when the first two methods failed. God miraculously saves Eugenia

from all of these executions, first by breaking the stone and making her sit on top of the water. While she is in prison, Christ appears, illuminating the prison “mid heofonlicum leohte” [with heavenly light] and providing the saint with a white loaf of bread.⁶⁰ The symbolism here is clear: Christ provides spiritual food and light to Eugenia’s soul, which in turn sustains her body. Then Christ tells her, “Noli timere, Eugenia, ego sum salvator tuus, cui tota et integra semper mentis devotione servisti: eodem te die in celo suscipiam quod ipse descendi ad terras.” [“Do not fear, Eugenia, I am your Savior, whom you have always served by complete and total devotion of mind. I will receive you into heaven on the same day that I descended to earth”].⁶¹ Christ’s words point out the mind that Eugenia has preserved with complete integrity rather than the body, valuing the mental integrity that Augustine outlines in *De civitate Dei* and that Ambrose depicts in his life of the Virgin of Antioch.⁶² Ælfric translates, “Ic eom þin hælend . þe þu healice wurðost / and mid eallum mode . and mægne lufast / On þam dæge þa scealt cuman to me . þe ic com to mannum / and on minre gebyrd-tide / ðu bist on heofonum gebroht” [I am your Savior, whom you worship profoundly and love with all your mind and might. You will come to me on the day that I came to men and women, and you will be brought to heaven on the feast day of my birth].⁶³ In Ælfric’s translation, these words of Christ to Eugenia are the first that are given in direct discourse in the entire second part, making them the climactic focal point of the events following Eugenia’s self-revelation. Again, no mention is made of Eugenia’s bodily virginity. Christ instead recounts how she had always loved him with all her might and mind. Ælfric wants his audience to know that bodily purity means nothing without the purity of a mind devoted in love to Christ. In its reference to the totality of Eugenia’s mental devotion the Latin text distantly echoes the wording of Mark 12:30: “Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et ex tota anima tua et ex tota mente tua et ex tota virtute tua hoc est primum mandatum” [You will love the Lord your God with your entire heart, with your entire soul, with your entire mind, and with your entire strength. This is the first commandment].⁶⁴ Ælfric recognizes the allusion and brings the thrust of the biblical passage to the forefront when he departs from the Latin wording by having Christ place the emphasis on the action of love rather than the action of service. The primacy of Eugenia’s love for Christ demonstrates the right ordering of her mind and exemplifies the harmony of restored relationship to God that manifests itself in her love for Christ and her reflection of his metagendered *imago*.

Accordingly, in translating the Life of Eugenia to show the journey of the soul for nonmonastic people, Ælfric still focuses upon the right ordering of Eugenia's mind, showing her progress toward the spiritual ideal of the *virum perfectum* in Christ (though he never calls it that). First, he contrasts her restored mind with the disordered mind of her father before his conversion, and then points out that the sign of a rightly ordered mind is wholehearted love for the Savior. Ælfric does not deny the female body in his text—far from that, he affirms it by insisting upon the reality of Eugenia's womanhood. But even Eugenia's virginity seems to come second to the transformation of her mind through her love for Christ. In Ælfric's version of her *passio*, Eugenia enacts an unnamed gender that highlights the soul as it is supposed to be: reigning like a queen over the body by keeping it in chastity and shaping itself to the highest level of virtue through study and memory then practice. This undefined gender has only one true characteristic—an unshakable single-minded and single-hearted love for Christ.

Alban: *Sanctus Humilior*

St. Alban holds pride of place as both a Roman martyr and as a native British saint.⁶⁵ Ælfric's source, Bede, sets the scene for his *passio* by briefly describing the persecution that took place during the reign of the emperors Diocletian and Maximianus. Alban becomes a target for the fury of a local Roman magistrate when he shelters a fugitive priest during this widespread persecution of Christians. Bede describes the coemperors as ordering "uastari ecclesias, affligi interficique Christianos" [churches to be wasted and the Christians to be persecuted and slain].⁶⁶ Ælfric only describes Diocletian and is much less reserved than Bede. The emperor is *cwealm-bære* (murderous) and "reðe cwellere . / swa þæt he acwealde and acwellan het" [a violent killer, such that he killed and commanded to kill].⁶⁷ Further, Ælfric writes that the men who carry out the emperor's orders do so "mid ormetre wodnyssse" [with excessive frenzy/madness],⁶⁸ a detail not found in Bede, but that perhaps suggests the Vikings of Ælfric's own day. Diocletian's magistrate who ultimately orders Alban's execution is similarly described by Bede and Ælfric as enraged and full of fury when he encounters Alban.⁶⁹ All of these descriptions emphasize the uncontained violence and mindless fury that characterize the emperor and his representatives, the hegemonic men with power to condemn and to kill in the legends of the Roman martyrs. They exemplify the dehumanizing

effects of the vice of *ira* and the worship of idols, evidence of a disordered soul that lacks self-control, which suffers from a kind of insanity and lack of health-giving knowledge that leads to a masculinity either bestial or devilish in its unjust aggression and unrestrained violence.⁷⁰

Against this fiery and threatening background, both Bede and Ælfric introduce Alban as a haven of hospitality, even though Alban is himself a pagan. We receive no background on Alban, no clear indication of his social rank or of his economic standing except that he has his own house and can support at least himself and the fugitive priest. Ælfric refers to Alban as “*se æþela martyr*” (the noble martyr),⁷¹ but Ælfric may have been thinking of the *Te deum*’s reference to the “noble army of martyrs” rather than noting Alban’s worldly social rank. Bede never refers directly to Alban as being of worldly noble rank and, further, the magistrate who later carries out the persecution against the saint has to ask Alban’s name and who his family is. This is a stock device in hagiography, but it seems reasonable to expect that a local or even regional official will be familiar with the local nobility, but in this case the judge apparently only knows who Alban is not—the priest the magistrate wants to prosecute—and has no idea who Alban actually is. Further, neither Bede nor Ælfric indicate Alban’s marital status. No mention is made of wife or children nor of any decision on Alban’s part to remain unmarried. If Alban had a family, they disappeared into irrelevance for Bede and Ælfric.

Alban’s path to martyrdom begins when he provides shelter for the priest who is fleeing the persecution. Bede focuses his readers’ attention on Alban’s action, how he provides hospitality to the priest then observes the man as he prays.⁷² In Ælfric, however, the priest is the actor, escaping from the frenzied persecutors and running in secret to Alban’s house and hiding there.⁷³ Alban provided a place of safety to the priest and “*þa began se preost swa swa he god lufode / his gebedu singan and swyðe fæstan . / and dæges and nihtes his drihten herian*” [then the priest, because he loved God, began to sing his services and fast very much and praise his Lord by day and by night].⁷⁴ Ælfric provides more information about the priest’s activities than Bede does, who only mentions that the man keeps vigils and prays continually. Ælfric instead foregrounds the priest’s love for God (a detail not found in Bede), his singing and fasting, and praising—none of which appear by name in Bede. Ælfric mentions no books and seems to assume that the priest had his offices memorized because of his love for God so that he could continue his regular services of worship in the temple of his memory, regardless of whether in a church or not.

Carruthers remarks that “prodigious memory is almost a trope of saints’ lives,” usually as an example of the desire of the saint to know and become more like Christ by memorizing and “embodying” the Gospel as Eugenia did, but applicable here to the nameless priest.⁷⁵ Intimate knowledge of the services of God and the willing performance of them is the proper work of the clergy and necessary for the well-being and safety of the laity according to Ælfric. Singing and praying may not seem to accomplish much compared to fighting and farming, but Ælfric makes his case for the value of the clergy’s services of worship in “De oratione Moysi” (*LS* 13) when he writes, “Be ðysum man mæg tocnawan þæt micclum fremiað / þam læwedum mannum . þa gelæredan godes ðeowas . / þæt hi mid heora ðeow-dome him ðingian to gode . / nu god wolde arian eallum ðam synfullum . / gif he þær gemette tyn riht-wise menn” [By this one may know that the learned servants of God greatly benefit the unlearned people, that with their divine service they (the clergy) intercede for them (the laypeople) to God since God wished to spare all the sinful ones (of Sodom) if he found ten people who did rightly].⁷⁶ From Ælfric’s perspective, if it were not for the faithfulness of the monks, nuns, and other clergy in the praise of God, the people of England might have suffered even worse things than the Viking attacks because of their sins.

In addition to singing the offices, however, the faithful priest also uses the time between his services “secgan ðone soðan geleafan / þam arwurþan albane . oþþæt he gelyfde / on ðone soðan god” [to speak of the true faith to the honorable Alban until he believed in the true God].⁷⁷ The psalms were considered to be a comprehensive text of “the true faith” and the priest would have known them all by heart as a standard part of his education along with the scriptures used in the liturgy so that he was able to teach Alban all that was needful for him to become a believer in Christ. Thus, through faithful love and performance of his service to God and from the library of his memory, the fugitive priest speaks to Alban, who is instructed, converted, and strengthened in his faith. The priest continues to dwell with Alban until the local magistrate discovers his whereabouts. Bede’s version simply notes that divine grace led Alban to imitate the behavior he saw in the priest and, being instructed bit by bit, Alban “Christianus integro ex corde factus est” [becomes a wholehearted Christian].⁷⁸ Ælfric does not mention the action of divine grace in Alban’s soul, but rather makes the priest the actor in bringing Alban to salvation.

The strength of Alban’s faith comes to the test fairly quickly, for Diocletian’s magistrate discovers that Alban has given refuge to the priest

and “mid fullum graman” [with utter rage] sends his officers to bring the priest to judgment.⁷⁹ Alban, however, “eode ut to þam ehterum / mid ðæs preostes hakelan swylce he hit wære . / and hine nolde ameldian ðam manfullum ehterum” [went out to the persecutors wearing the vestment of the priest as if he were that man, and he would not betray him to the wicked persecutors].⁸⁰ Alban uses what means he has to protect the life of the man of God. He apparently is not a military man for he has no weapons to use or to lay aside. He protects the priest by taking advantage of the fact that the officers do not know who they are looking for except by his clothing, but he also proclaims his new faith by putting on garments that unmistakably identify him as Christian. Mary Harlow notes that “proponents of Christianity seem to have used dress as a marker from an early date” and the saints’ legends reflect this practice.⁸¹ The change of garment was a frequent motif in Ambrose and became a popular feature of hagiography, especially in the legends of former military men where much is made in the Latin *passiones* of taking off military dress and donning identifiably Christian garments. Alban, however, is apparently not a military man and so has no identifiably military clothing or equipment to shed when he takes on the priest’s vestments. Though he takes advantage of the ignorance of the guards, the change of clothing is not so much a disguise as a statement, and the magistrate understands it very well when he sees and recognizes that Alban is not the man he meant to arrest.

A further point may be taken from Alban’s action here, and may have been part of Ælfric’s decision to include this legend in his translations. Alban demonstrates a nonmilitary layman’s valuation of the faithful clergy and at the same time enacts a nonhegemonic but nonetheless heroic kind of masculinity. Having seen the priest’s faithfulness and received soul-saving instruction from the learned man, Alban values his work enough to give his own life to protect the man of God. Protecting a guest is his obligation as a host who has given shelter to a man in need, but that obligation did not require Alban to take on the priest’s clothing and surrender himself to the authorities instead of simply seeing the priest to another place of safety and refusing to reveal him.⁸² No, by taking the priest’s identity Alban attempts to free the priest to go without fear and continue his work of worship and instruction. Whether he was ultimately successful in this goal or not Ælfric does not say, but the example remains: even a nonmilitary layman can enact a heroic gender associated with nobility in the kingdom of heaven (martyrdom) to protect the clergy, those who in turn defend him spiritually by means of their faithful prayers and teaching. The

example of Alban serves to illustrate what Ælfric says more directly in the “Item alia: Qui sunt oratores, laboratores, bellatores” (*LS* 25) found at the end of his translation of the Maccabees:

Nu swincð se yrðlincg embe urne bigleofan . / and se woruld-cempa
sceall winnan wið ure fynd / and se godes þeowa sceall symle for
us gebiddan . / and feohtan gastlice . wið þa ungesewenlican fynd .
/ Is nu for-þy mare þara muneca gewinn / wið þa ungesewenlican
deofla þe syrwiað embe us . / þonne sy þara woruld-manna þe
winnað wiþ ða flæsclican . / and wið þa gesewenlican feohtað . /
Nu ne sceolon þa woruld-cempan to þam woruld-licum gefeohte /
þa godes þeowan neadian fram þam gastlican gewinne . / forðan þe
him fremað swiðor þæt þa ungesewenlican fynd / beon ofer-swyðde
þonne ða gesewenlican .

[Now the farmer works for our food, the worldly warrior must strive against our foes, and the servant of God must always continue praying for us and fighting spiritually against the unseen foes. Now greater is the warfare of the monks against the unseen devils that lay snares around us than may be that of the worldly men who strive against the fleshly foes and fight against visible enemies. At this time the worldly champions must not force the servants of God from the spiritual battle to that worldly warfare, because it will benefit them more that the unseen foes be overcome than those that are seen.]⁸³

While each order of society has its purpose and each order needs the support of the others, the spiritual battle undertaken by the clergy is the most foundational and important, for other problems are just the visible manifestations of laxity and neglect in this area. Ælfric carries the point home in “De oratione Moysi” by calling to remembrance that in the so-called “golden age” of Anglo-Saxon England when monastic vocation was honored, there was peace and the laity were prepared to defend against any foes, then asking “Hu wæs hit ða siððan ða þa man towearp munuc-lif . / and godes biggengas to bysmore hæfde . / buton þæt us com to cwealm and hunger . / and siððan hæðen here us hæfde to bysmre” [How was it then afterward when people cast away the monastic life and held the services of God in disgrace except that plague and hunger came to us and afterward the heathen hosts held us in contempt]?⁸⁴ Alban’s example of sacrificial regard for the faithful priest who loved God enough to continue to sing his offices even when alone and in hiding would continue in the memories of Ælfric’s audience, perhaps to influence their own actions should the

occasion arise. The Anglo-Saxon laymen who heard Alban's legend might find in it an acceptable construction of gender that they could enact themselves, while all layfolk in general, men and women, would learn to hold the work of their priests in high regard.

The Roman magistrate in the legend, however, practically raves in his anger over Alban's conversion and protection of the priest. His aggressive, violent, lack of self-control depicts an unredeemed hegemonic masculinity that seeks to dominate and destroy whatever opposes it. When he sees Alban he immediately recognizes that the saint is *not* the man he was expecting and also recognizes the meaning of his clothing. "Deofollice gram" [devilishly furious], the judge then threatens Alban with the same torments he had planned for the priest unless Alban recants his Christian faith and bows to the official's gods.⁸⁵ Ælfric then shows that it is better to be a soldier for God's kingdom than for any earthly emperor's (or Viking's), saying that "albanus næs afyrht for his feondlicum þeow-racan . / forðan þe he wæs ymb-gyrd mid godes wæpnum / to þam gastlicum gecampe" [Alban was not frightened by his hostile threats because he was completely armed with the weapons of God for that spiritual battle].⁸⁶ Both Bede and Ælfric invoke the image of the *milites Christi*, but only Ælfric actually mentions weapons and a little later refers to Alban as "se godes cempa" [the champion of God].⁸⁷ If not a military man before, Alban now served as a soldier of Christ armed with the weapons given to him by God: memory of faithful instruction from the priest, a bold confession, and patient fortitude under torture.⁸⁸

Once Alban's execution had been ordered, his martyrdom is delayed by a crowd of men and women who were moved to go with him. Bede suggests that they were led by divine inspiration, but Ælfric simply notes they were *onbryrde* (stirred up).⁸⁹ Everyone in town seemed to be part of the crowd, so that Bede observes "Denique cunctis pene egressis iudex sine obsequio in ciuitate substiterat" [In fact almost everyone had gone out so that the judge was left behind in the city without any attendants at all]. Ælfric slips a bit of humor into his translation, saying "Hit gelamp ða . swa þæt se geleafleasa dema / ungereordod sæt . on ðære ceastra oð æfen / butan ælcere ðenunge unþances fæstende" [It came about that the unbelieving judge sat without food in the town until evening, and without attendants besides, grudgingly fasting].⁹⁰ All of the judge's household apparently had joined the procession with Alban. Alban performs a miracle in order to cross the river without using the bridge blocked by the crowd, and the executioner who witnesses the miracle throws down

his sword and converts to Christianity. Bede says that “ergo is ex persecutore factus esset collega ueritatis et fidei” [therefore from a persecutor he was made a companion in truth and faith], or, as Ælfric puts it, “He wearð þa gean-læht mid anrædum geleafan / to ðam halgan were” [he then became united with single-minded belief to that holy man], joined by a common faith to a common fate.⁹¹ There follows an awkward moment in which none of the other executioners move to pick up the sword to carry out the execution. Whether they were astonished by Alban’s miracle or by the unexpected conversion of their comrade, none of the soldiers seems to want to carry through with the deed. The one who finally does pays for his irreverence by both eyes bursting out of his own head as he strikes off Alban’s head, and all hit the ground together.⁹² Gruesome as that event is, it does not deter the rest of the soldiers from also beheading the soldier who converted before they report back to the hungry judge. So great was the reverence they communicated, that the judge who ordered Alban’s death put a halt to the persecutions in his precinct out of reverence for the martyr.⁹³

In Ælfric’s *passio* of Alban, this nonmilitary saint constructed through his actions a heroic, nonviolent kind of masculinity that transformed the violent masculinity of one executioner into martyrdom and reduced the hegemonic masculinity of the judge to fasting. Characterized by the virtues of hospitality, self-sacrifice, faith, courage, and desire for God, this unnamed Christian gender for laymen possessed nothing of worldly power, yet overcame all the earthly powers that arrayed themselves against it. Alban’s choice of identity and alliance with Christ led to his choice of martyrdom as a means of enacting his desire to be with God. And behind Ælfric’s depiction of Alban’s nonhegemonic “masculinity” was another, even less hegemonic gender enacted by the priest—quieter yet more necessary because of being foundational to Alban’s faith: the faithful and loving obedience of the unnamed priest to his duties of praising God and instructing layfolk like Alban to conversion and faith. This is the gender that Ælfric himself enacts and that Helenus, Protus, and Jacinctus exemplified in the *passio* of Eugenia. In the *passio* of Alban, Ælfric reminds his audience that despite its lack of visible, earthly power, it is the most important, yet underrated and difficult, performance of gender of all when he writes “sy wuldor and lof þam welwillendan scyppende / seðe ure fæderas feondum æt-bræd . / and to fulluhte gebigde þurh his bydelas” [Glory and praise be to the benevolent Creator who rescued our fathers from the fiends and persuaded them to Christianity through his

preachers].⁹⁴ Within Ælfric's conception of masculinities, this "masculinity" of the chaste, faithful, learned man is the most counterintuitively effective and generative of all, for while drawing little attention to itself it is necessary to make saints of others.

* * *

This last paragraph presents some difficulties with language in discussing the alternative "masculinities" illustrated in Ælfric's *passio* of Alban, for the two men discussed here do not conform to the hegemonic masculinity defined by the emperor and his representatives. Rather, Alban and the priest (and briefly the converted executioner) construct and enact identities defined independently of the visible society around them and not subordinate to it, identities that are based in their relationships within the transcendent society of God's kingdom. In the legends of Eugenia and Alban, Ælfric affirms the physical sex of the saint, especially Eugenia's, but avoids explicitly defining the gender(s) they enact. Eugenia is a woman defined by her knowledge, wisdom, persuasive skill, gentleness, humility, virginity, courage, and love for Christ. Alban is a man defined by his hospitality, self-sacrifice, faith, courage, and desire for God. The unnamed (and unvenerated) priest is not a monk but is faithful in his prayers, service to God, and instruction of others because of his love for God. Rather than boldly going to his own martyrdom, he flees and hides from the persecution and gives Alban his identifying garments so that Alban may go to martyrdom in his stead. Such behaviors may seem cowardly, and yet his very flight results in Alban's conversion and Alban's sacrifice insures that the faithful priest may continue to serve God through worship and through instruction of others. The priest has a mission to carry out in life, and Alban fully supports him in this purpose. By these examples, Ælfric, without saying so, begins to construct the concept of a third gender for his nonmonastic audience that is defined by belief and love for God but leaves room for interpretation of how that love would best be expressed in any given situation. For a woman, this might include the bold extreme of disguising herself for a time as a man in order to preserve her purity (or avoid marriage), even though Ælfric opposes cross-dressing for any other reason. A nonmilitary layman might courageously sacrifice himself to protect the clergy. A secular priest may bravely flee from Vikings in order to continue his work of worshiping God and bringing others to salvation. Ælfric teaches in these legends that the motive for the action, the will and love that define it, can justify performances of gender that defy societal expectations.

NOTES

¹ *LS*, 2. The published Latin edition of the Life of St. Eugenia that is closest to Ælfric's version is "Vitae Eugeniae," in *Pasionario Hispánico (PH)*, ed. Grau, 1.83–98. The text may also be found in *PL* 21.1105–22 and as part of the *Vitae Patrum* in *PL* 73.605–20. The manuscript version considered to be closest to Ælfric's source may be found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College (CCCC) MS 9, 410–26. According to Gneuss and Lapidge's *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, the manuscripts that compose the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (CCL) (CCCC MS 9 [Gneuss and Lapidge #36] and BL, Cotton Nero E.1, vols. 1 and 2 [Gneuss and Lapidge #344]) date from the second half of the eleventh century, well after Ælfric translated his collection of lives, and, as Whatley notes, we cannot be certain at this point that the CCL versions were identical to Ælfric's exemplar ("Eugenia before Ælfric," 367). For further analysis of the relationship between Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and the CCL, see Zettel, "Saints' Lives in Old English," 17–37. See Jackson and Lapidge, "Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary," 131–46, for a brief history and list of the contents of the Legendary. E. Gordon Whatley provides details the transmission of Eugenia's legend in "Eugenia before Ælfric," 349–67 and details about the version of Eugenia's life known in Anglo-Saxon England in "Eugenia," in "Acta Sanctorum," 195–96. Whatley's monumental "Acta Sanctorum" outlines the information available on the sources for Ælfric's saints' lives. For an eloquent statement of the frustrations inherent in doing source study from the printed hagiographical collections and the need for studies of the complete manuscript traditions of individual saints' lives, see Cross, "Saints' Lives in Old English," 38–40. The foremost work in the Anglo-Saxons' Latin hagiographical manuscripts may be found in Zettel, "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources."

² Lapidge, "Ælfric's *Sanctorale*," 123.

³ *LS*, 1.92–93.

⁴ *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 9.

⁵ See also Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," 146–57; Roy, "Virgin Acts Manfully," 1–27; and Gulley, *Displacement*, 67–81; Horner, *Discourse of Enclosure*, 156–64. For a more general study of transvestitism and transvestite saints, see Bullough, "Transvestites," 1381–94; Anson, "Female Transvestite," 1–32.

⁶ *LS*, 2.3–4. For a closer examination of the "systematic contraries" in the Life, see Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," 154–55. Andrew Rabin explores the political resonance of Eugenia overcoming *þisne middan-eard* in his article, "Holy Bodies" 243–55.

⁷ "Vitae eugeniae," *PH*, §3.

⁸ CCCC MS 9, p. 411. In this instance, the reading found in *PL* 21.1107A is closer to Ælfric than the version found in *PH*. This example of textual variation (and others that will be noted below) illustrates a point made by E. Gordon Whatley: "We need to find out as much as possible about the Anglo-Saxons' own

Latin recensions of the legends before we can approach the vernacular versions with critical confidence." Whatley, "Old English Prose Hagiography," 14.

⁹ *LS*, 2.20–21.

¹⁰ "Vita Eugeniae," *PH*, §3.

¹¹ *CCCC* 9, p. 411.

¹² *LS*, 2.23. Andrew Rabin points out that Eugenia's education was that of the "forensic orator," learned in legal practice and argument, in "Holy Bodies," 244.

¹³ "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," *PH*, §3. The CCL makes Aquilinus a consul instead of a proconsul. *CCCC* 9, p. 411.

¹⁴ *LS*, 2.26–27a.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28–32.

¹⁶ "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §3.

¹⁷ *LS*, 2.46. Werferth uses *belisnian* in the Old English translation of Equitius' dream about being made a eunuch in Gregory's *Dialogues*. Werferth, *Übersetzung der Dialoge*, 26. The Anglo-Saxons wrestled with the translation of *eunuchus*, however, as Patrizia Lendinara's survey of Old English words coined and used to translate the word demonstrates. Since the patristic authors used the idea of the eunuch as a figural concept as well as to refer to actual *castrati*, the problem of translation into a culture that had no comparable social role was problematic. Lendinara, *Glosses and Glossaries*, 45–46 and 66.

¹⁸ *LS*, 2.50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁰ "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §6.

²¹ "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §9. Psalm 47:10.

²² *LS*, 2.61.

²³ "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, §10.

²⁵ *LS*, praefatio. 12–14. Cf. Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 119.

²⁶ *LS*, 2.64.

²⁷ See Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 407.

²⁸ "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §11. The text of the CCL essentially agrees with Grau's edition here: "Recteque inquit uocaris eugenius quia enim viriliter agendo uirum perfectum te in agone dominico obtulisti." *CCCC* 9, p. 414.

²⁹ *LS*, 2.77–78a.

³⁰ "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §11.

³¹ *LS*, 2.89–90.

³² "Vitae Eugeniae," *PH*, §13.

³³ Danziger, *Marking the Mind*, 72.

³⁴ *LS*, 2.92–93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95–100.

³⁶ Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints," 149.

³⁷ Roy, "Virgin Acts Manfully," 17.

³⁸ *LS*, 2.98.

³⁹ Ibid., 104–7.

⁴⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §12.

⁴¹ Ibid., §21.

⁴² Ibid., §25; CCCC 9, p. 419.

⁴³ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §22.

⁴⁴ This aspect of concrete illustration is especially true of *bestia*, which literally indicates an “animal without reason.”

⁴⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.16.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.16. [The italics of both the Latin and the English are in the originals.]

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, 2.3.20. This lion/human opposition is also illustrated in the *passio* of Chrysanthus and Daria.

⁴⁸ *LS*, 2.199.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 223.

⁵⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §25. [Grau indicates that “norman” is the form in his base manuscript, but that the grammatically correct form, “normae,” is found in other manuscripts.] Roy has extensively analyzed the assumptions of masculine superiority and feminine inferiority in this passage in “Virgin Acts Manfully,” 8–13.

⁵¹ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §26.

⁵² Ibid., §13.

⁵³ Ibid., §26.

⁵⁴ *LS*, 2.233–35.

⁵⁵ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §26.

⁵⁶ Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, 131.

⁵⁷ “Vita Eugeniae,” *PH*, §26.

⁵⁸ *LS*, 2.253–54.

⁵⁹ Campbell Bonner, “Trial of Saint Eugenia,” 253–64.

⁶⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §41; *LS*, 2.403.

⁶¹ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §41.

⁶² Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.18; Ambrose, *De virginibus*, 2.24.

⁶³ *LS*, 2.407–08.

⁶⁴ *Biblia Sacra*, ed. Weber.

⁶⁵ The most popular version of Alban’s legend (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* [BHL] 206–10) is told by Bede in *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*HE*) in *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 1.7. See also Whatley’s entry on Alban in “Acta Sanctorum,” 62–64.

⁶⁶ Bede, *HE*, 1.6.

⁶⁷ *LS*, 19.2 and 5–6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 33 and 41. Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁷⁰ For the argument for just warfare in the works of Ælfric, see Whatley, “Hagiography and Violence,” 217–38.

⁷¹ *LS*, 19.13.

⁷² Bede, *HE*, 1.7

⁷³ *LS*, 19.16–21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 23–25.

⁷⁵ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 14.

⁷⁶ *LS*, 13.216–20. The comment follows Ælfric's description of Abraham's intercession for the city of Sodom.

⁷⁷ *LS*, 19.26–27.

⁷⁸ Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁷⁹ *LS*, 19.33. On Ælfric's use of such epithets, see Corona, "Ælfric's Schemes and Tropes," 298–300.

⁸⁰ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.35–37.

⁸¹ Harlow, "Clothes Maketh the Man," 62.

⁸² Gautier, "Hospitality," 31.

⁸³ *LS*, 25.819–32.

⁸⁴ *LS*, 13.147–55 (only 152–55 are quoted).

⁸⁵ *LS*, 19.41 and 48; Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁸⁶ *LS*, 19.49–51; Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁸⁷ *LS*, 19.61.

⁸⁸ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.61–79.

⁸⁹ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.88.

⁹⁰ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.90–92.

⁹¹ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.103–4. Ælfric uses the same language of one person becoming *annæd* with another in faith to describe the spiritual union of Chrysanthus and Daria in *LS*, 35.122.

⁹² Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.116–22.

⁹³ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.127–32.

⁹⁴ Bede, *HE*, 1.7; *LS*, 19.152–54.