Chapter Five

The Physically Impaired

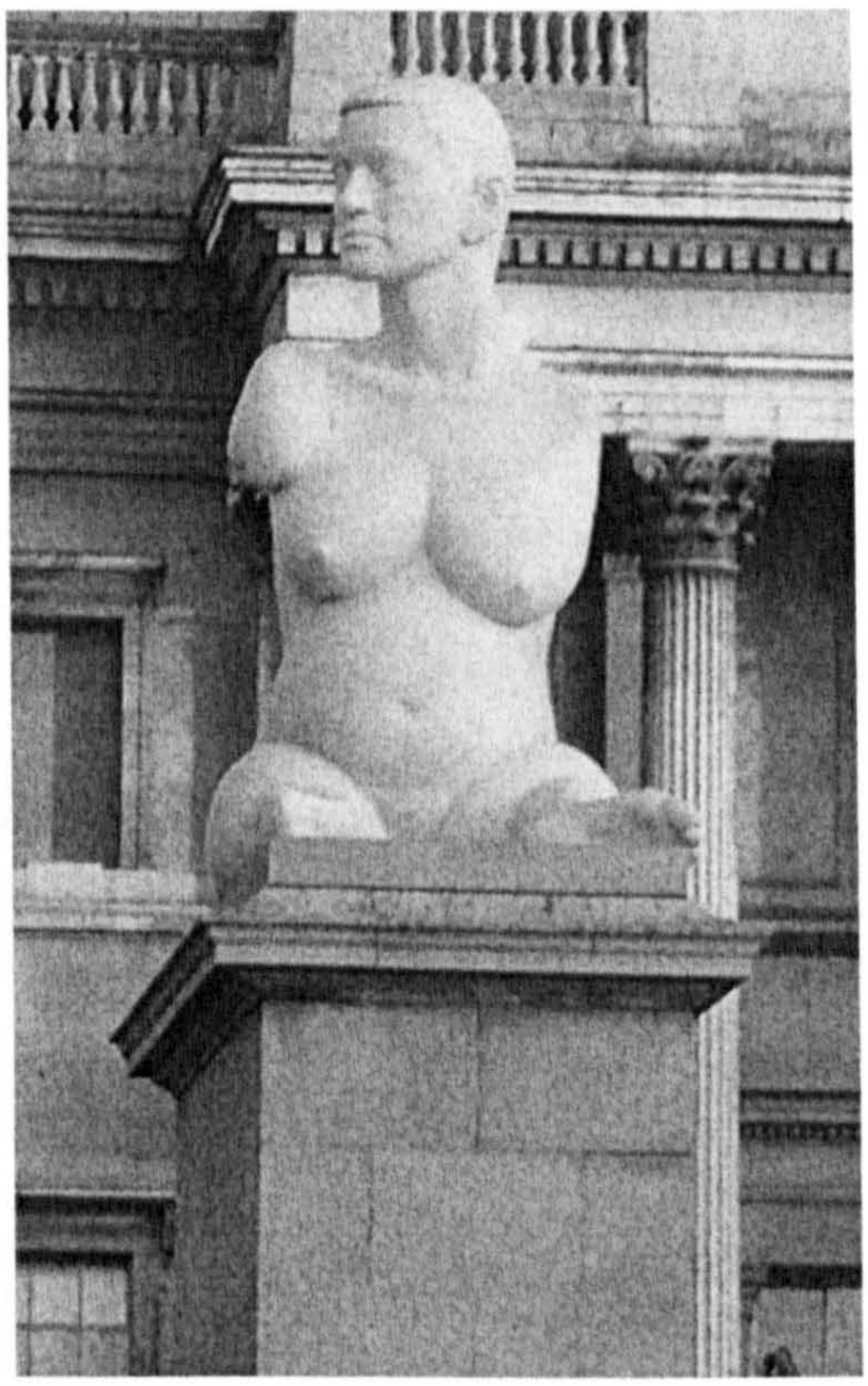

Fig 1: Marc Quinn, 'Alison Lapper Pregnant' (photograph: Matthew Phillpott, 16/10/05)

Responding to Marc Quinn's 'Alison Lapper Pregnant', erected on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square in September 2005, Robin Simon, editor of the *British Art Journal*, said:

> I think it's horrible. Not because of the subject matter, I hasten to add. I think she is very brave, very wonderful. But it's just a rather repellent artefact – very

> shiny, slimy surface, machine-made, much too big…It's just rather ugly. Not because of her, I hasten to add. It's just a bad piece of sculpture.[1]

Simon expressed his dislike of the sculpture in uncompromising tones, giving his professional judgement on Radio 4's 'Today' programme. But why did he feel the need twice to 'hasten to add' that his criticisms of the sculpture were not due to its subject, Alison Lapper and, almost in the way of a further apology, describe her as 'very brave, very wonderful'? And why did a member of the public, on observing the statue, qualify her assessment of it as 'grotesque' with the words '[t]his is not meant as a slur on Alison herself'[2] and yet another claim that she did not like to use the word 'disabled' in reference to Alison Lapper 'because I think everyone is normal, and everyone's good at something'?[3] At the time of its unveiling, Quinn's sculpture caused something of a furore, with opinions split between those who welcomed it as a 'very powerful sculpture of a disabled woman'[4] and those who dismissed it as 'all message and no art'.[5]

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1 'Today', Radio 4 (15/9/05).

2 M. Quinn, *Fourth Plinth* (Göttingen, 2006), unpaginated. Marc Quinn includes at the end of his *Fourth Plinth* numerous comments about his sculpture made by members of the public. It is striking that the only commenter to be listed as 'anonymous' is the most openly hostile towards the sculpture and, furthermore, is the only one to acknowledge the political incorrectness of his/her comments: 'I know you're not supposed to say it these days but I don't want to look at something like that. I'm sure there's a place for a disabled statue but I don't think it's appropriate in Trafalgar Square. It should have been a national hero like Winston Churchill.' If the owner of these remarks had looked more closely, he/she would have observed that the statue of Horatio Nelson in Trafalgar Square depicts him with one arm. The reluctance of this observer to have his/her identity recorded is understandable if viewed in the light of the comments made by another interviewee, 'Bridget, Chatham, England': 'I think the statue is brilliant. Disability is something which shouldn't be hidden away or be ashamed of. Good for Alison. *Shame on all those people who are against it.* Perhaps they should open their eyes' (my emphasis).

3 Quoted in C. Higgins, 'Sculpture's unveiling is pregnant with meaning', *The Guardian* (16/9/05).

4 Comment made by Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission as quoted in M. Kennedy, 'Pregnant and proud: statue of artist wins place in Trafalgar Square', *The Guardian* (16/3/04).

5 H. Freeman, 'Why shouldn't my body be art?', *The Guardian* (17/3/04) which contains an interview with Alison Lapper. Freeman uses the phrase 'all message and no art' to summarise comments made about the piece but does not herself share that opinion. The phrase was used by numerous other critics and journalists.

However, although some did remark on the fact that Lapper was depicted naked,[6] almost all focused immediately on her bodily impairment – a result of the congenital condition phocomelia which translates literally from the Greek as 'seal limb'[7] – despite the title of the piece which calls attention to Lapper's pregnancy. Lapper's impairment is severe but, perhaps more importantly, it is also highly visible; it is impossible not to find her lack of arms and foreshortened legs arresting. How observers of 'Alison Lapper Pregnant' engaged with the statue's subject matter and articulated their views about it reveals a certain contemporary nervousness about discussing impairment and disability. These are emotive topics that are now bound within complex ideologies of political correctness, a development that occurred as a result of the growth in awareness in the latter part of the twentieth century about the stigmatisation and discrimination that disabled people face.[8] Indeed, Alison Lapper herself has described the difficulties she has encountered throughout her life, particularly growing up in a children's home during the 1960s and 70s.[9] Discussing any topic which is currently so highly-charged is not easy and these contemporary political resonances still sound even if the discussion

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6 A member of the public who attended the unveiling of the statue told the BBC that 'I don't like the fact the statue is naked and pregnant…the face is beautiful but the rest of it makes me gasp'. 'Square's naked sculpture revealed', *bbc.co.uk*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/05/uk_square0s_new_statue_unveiled/html/5.stm, published 19/9/05, accessed 18/7/07].

7 'Phocomelia', *Online Medical Dictionary*, [http://cancerweb.ncl.ac.uk/cgi-bin/omd?query=phocomelia, accessed 18/7/07].

8 For an overview of this growth and the anti-discrimination acts produced in the west in the 1990s, see C. Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination: a Case for Anti-Discrimination Legislation* (London, 1991); B. J. Doyle, *Disability, Discrimination and Equal Opportunities: a Comparative Study of the Employment Rights of Disabled Persons* (London, 1995). Notable legislation includes the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990); Australia's Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the United Kingdom's Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which states that it is 'an Act to make it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the disposal or management of premises; to make provision about the employment of disabled persons; and to establish a National Disability Council.' The Disability Rights Commission was established in 2000 with the aim of ending discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people in England, Scotland and Wales.

9 A. Lapper and G. Feldman, *My Life in My Hands* (Cambridge, 2005).

is located in the remoteness of the early medieval period. Despite these difficulties, the ways in which impaired individuals have been perceived and (mis)treated across time is a subject which is attracting ever more academic attention. This growing intellectual interest forms part of a wider movement which has seen an explosion in the number of studies dedicated to understanding the body in all its many manifestations. Over the last thirty years, academics have questioned and re-questioned their approaches to the body in search of a comprehensive theory of how it should be understood. It is for this reason that this chapter will begin with a review of the most significant elements of this historiography before it moves on to consider in detail issues of the impaired body and disability in Anglo-Saxon England.

Understanding the body

Since the early 1970s, academics from across the social sciences and humanities have become increasingly interested in the body. Social anthropologists, philosophers, archaeologists, linguists and historians alike have together produced a bewildering array of literature that all purports to address 'the body' as its main subject.[10] Under this heading come studies on biology, medical history, sex, sexuality, sensuality, demography, iconography, art, sin, pain, disease, death, resurrection. The list could go on. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to locate the impetus for this new literary

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10 C. Bynum, 'Why all the fuss about the body? A medievalist's perspective', *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995), 1-33 at 3; reprinted in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. V. E. Bonnell and L. Hunt (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California and London, 1999), pp. 241-280.

enterprise within the culture of 'permissiveness' that characterises the second half of the twentieth century.[11] The feminist campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s with, in particular, their calls for women's control over their own bodies, the sexual revolution, the decriminalisation of homosexual acts and the fight for racial equality all raised academic sensitivity to how the body is conceptualised and understood.[12] Academic feminism played a central role in this movement with early scholarship in this vein focusing on 'scientific misreadings of female bodies',[13] but it also made attempts at 'bringing to light issues that had previously been considered too vulgar, trivial, or risqué to merit serious scholarly attention.'[14] Works with evocative and somewhat solemn titles such as *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: a History of Infant Feeding* (1986);[15] *Wet Nursing: a History from Antiquity to Present* (1988);[16] *The Curse: a Cultural History of Menstruation* (1988);[17] and *Blood Magic: the Anthropology of Menstruation* (1988)[18] are representative of the literature about the female body that emerged in this period.

For the medieval period, the publications of Caroline Walker Bynum, particularly her *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*

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11 R. Porter, 'History of the body', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. P. Burke (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 206-232 at 207.

12 L . Helps, 'Power, body and desire: mapping Canadian body history', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41 (2007), 126-50 at 126.

13 L. Schiebinger, 'Introduction', in *Feminism and the Body*, ed. L. Schiebinger (Oxford, 2000), pp. 1-21 at 4. See, for example, E. Fee, 'Nineteenth-century craniology: the study of the female skull', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 53 (1979), 415-33.

14 Schiebinger, 'Introduction', p. 1. See also P. Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), p. xvi.

15 V. A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: a History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh, 1986).

16 V. A. Fildes, *Wet Nursing: a History from Antiquity to Present* (Oxford, 1988).

17 J. Delaney, M. J. Lupton and E. Troth, *The Curse: a Cultural History of Menstruation* (New York, 1977); revised edition with new afterwords by M. J. Lupton and J. Delaney (Illinois, 1988). See the useful review of this volume by M. Eliasson in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990), 175-177.

18 *Blood Magic: the Anthropology of Menstruation*, ed. T. Buckley and A. Gottlieb (Berkley, California and London, 1988).

(1987) and Rudolph Bell's *Holy Anorexia* (1985) stand out as works that explore female relationships with their bodies.

Whilst academic feminism must be credited with taking an energetic lead in the initial stages of this new interest in the body, feminist research did not aim solely to insert the female body into academic consciousness. Academics (feminist or otherwise) endeavoured to formulate new understandings and theories about the body in general that rescued it from dualistic understandings of the mind and the body which had, according to Roy Porter, 'elevated the mind or soul and disparaged the body.'[19] The rise of social constructionism and, later, the 'cultural turn' provided scholars with new intellectual environments in which to rethink the body and encouraged them to address the ways in which the body is constructed and conceptualised. Central to this are the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu who examined the ways in which the body can reflect an individual's social class through his/her social location (the material circumstances of their daily lives); through his/her '*habitus*', a concept which stresses the importance of the body in negotiating the social and cultural expectations of daily life and through the development of 'taste' (choices and aspirations determined by material constraints).[20] For example, in an examination of male relationships with food, he suggested

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[19] Porter, 'History of the body', p. 206.

[20] C. Shilling, 'The body and difference', in *Identity and Difference*, ed. K. Woodward (London, Thousand Oakes, California and New Delhi, 1997), pp. 63-120 at pp. 88 summarises Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the body. For a definition of *habitus*, see P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge and New York, 1977), pp. 72 and for 'taste', see his *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (London, 1984). Bourdieu applied his theories about the body most clearly in his examination of sport in which he surveyed the distribution of sporting activities by educational level, age, sex and occupation: 'Sport and social class', *Social Science Information* 17 (1978), 819-40 and 'Program for a sociology of sport', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5 (1988), 153-61. Terence Turner discusses Bourdieu's ideas about bodies as 'tokens of class and status distinctions' in relation to sexual and reproductive potentiality: 'Bodies and anti-bodies: flesh and fetish in contemporary social theory', in *Embodiment and Experience: the Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, ed. T. J. Csordas (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 27-47 at p. 28.

(somewhat risibly) that working-class men regard fish and fruit (except bananas) as unsuitable foods because they are light and '"fiddly"' and have to be eaten in an unmasculine manner in small mouthfuls at the front of the mouth and the 'tips of the teeth': 'The whole masculine identity – what is called virility – is involved in these two ways of eating, nibbling and picking, as befits a woman, or with whole-hearted male gulps and mouthfuls...'[21] Bourdieu's ideas about the body are perhaps best explained by the phrase 'symbolic values' which maintains that the ways in which individuals appreciate their bodies varies depending on their social class and that these differences are continually reproduced thereby reinforcing class distinctions.[22] Erving Goffman was also interested in 'symbolic values', but he was more concerned to explore how individuals display these and negotiate with daily life through the vocabularies of the 'body idiom' (forms of non-verbal communication).[23]

Both Bourdieu and Goffman focussed primarily on the body in contemporary society, but others have offered new approaches to conceptualisations of the body in past societies. In terms of long-lasting influence, the work of Michel Foucault must rank highly; all serious studies on the body since the publication of his *Discipline and Punish* and his *History of Sexuality* take account of his work.[24] Foucault explored the ways in which bodies could be made productive and useful. He focussed on how 'knowledge' of

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21 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 190.

22 P. Bourdieu, 'The forms of capital', in *Handbooks of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (New York, 1986), pp. 241-58.

23 Shilling, 'The body and difference', pp. 79-80. The work of Erving Goffman is central to the development of the idea of 'body idiom' within the humanities: *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (London, 1969); *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour* (New York and London, 1972) which is a collection of his papers; *Gender Advertisements* (London and Basingstoke, 1979), especially, pp. 1-9.

24 M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (London, 1977); *The History of Sexuality*, trans. R. Hurley (New York, 1978-86, 3 vols.).

the body can be used in the exercise of power and portrayed the body as a site which received meaning: '…the body is also directly involved in the political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies to emit signs.'[25] Peter Brown's *Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (1988) has also enjoyed enduring attention, particularly from those studying the body in the late Roman and early medieval periods. In this authoritative work, Brown demonstrates admirably the value of studying the body; in the first few pages the body appears as a simple biological entity in descriptions of Roman medical reasoning about reproduction, but almost immediately it becomes something much more meaningful and serves as a conduit for exploring many facets of early Christian society: gender distinctions and roles, religious asceticism, theology, sexual practices, sensuality and desire.[26] Other publications on the history of the body have narrower foci, but still locate the body within wide contexts and, in doing so, make the body stand for more than itself alone. For example, medieval women's relationships with food and control over their bodies sit at the centre of publications by both Bell and Bynum mentioned above but, as Bynum herself explains, Bell situated his work within a psychological context whereas Bynum concerned herself with the cultural context of food symbolism.[27] Bodily extremes and peculiarities have been at the heart of the more recent work about the medieval body; Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser have explored asceticism and idealised

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25 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 25-31, with quotation at p. 25.

26 Brown, *The Body and Society*.

27 C. W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast. The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1987), p. xiv; R. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago and London, 1985).

bodies where as Jeffrey J. Cohen has turned his attention to the other end of the spectrum and has investigated medieval conceptualisations of the monstrous body.[28]

Since the beginning of the rise of interest in the body it has appeared in many different guises and for many different purposes, but there is now agreement amongst academics that the body should be approached as something more than just an entity of flesh and blood. Bodies are now understood conceptually as socially-constructed, systematically-coded, products and sites of experience or, as Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin have put it, 'carriers of potent symbolic value'.[29] The intensity of this theoretical shift has provoked some to observe that the material, physical body has become somewhat lost amongst all these new conceptual frames. In an energetic and brave article, Caroline Walker Bynum mused that 'no-one in the humanities seems really to feel comfortable with the idea of essential "bodiliness"' and expressed her discomfort with 'intellectually imprecise and cruel' attacks on those who demonstrate an interest in the body as 'a kind of "flesh dress"'.[30] She begins her article with an account of comments made by a friend

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[28] C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2000); 'Masculinity in flux: nocturnal emission and the limits of celibacy in the early middle ages', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. M. Hadley (London and New York, 1999), pp. 103-120 uses Mary Douglas's idea that matter which crosses the margins of the body (spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces, tears) is likely to be regarded as 'dirty'. See M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966). K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); K. Cooper and C. Leyser, 'The gender of grace: impotence, servitude, and manliness in the fifth-century West', *Gender and History* 12 (2000), 536-51. J. J. Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis, Minnesota and London, 1996); *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, Minnesota and London, 1999); *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis, Minnesota and London, 2003).

[29] S. Kay and M. Rubin, 'Introduction', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. S. Kay and M. Rubin (Manchester and New York, 1994), pp. 1-9 at 1.

[30] C. Bynum, 'Why all the fuss about the body?', 2 and note 3. Bynum here echoes sentiments expressed by Roy Porter a few years earlier: 'It is right for sensitive scholars to insist upon the conceptual complexity of the history of the body. But it is at least as important to avoid floating off into the stratosphere of discourse analysis, and neglecting the more everyday and tangible materials available. And in fact we need not be so dismissive about the possibilities of investigating the history of the body through the use of mundane empirical methods.' Porter, 'History of the body', p. 210.

who was leaving America in order to establish a women's studies programme in Eastern Europe:

> 'There is so much written about the body', she groans, 'but it all focuses on such a recent period. And in so much of it, the body dissolves into language. The body that eats, that works, that dies, that is afraid – that body just isn't there. Can't you write something for my students that would put things into a larger perspective?' I said I would try.

Bynum's friend's complaints encapsulate the difficulties with the historiography of the body – that 'the body' can now mean many different things to different authors (not to mention Kay and Rubin's assertion that '*bodies*' in the plural is a useful term 'because the body is capable of such plastic conceptualisation').[31] Mirroring Bynum's criticisms, Chris Shilling has called for a 'third position' on the body that avoids the 'dissolving of the material body associated with extreme social constructionism' while also avoiding a return to biological essentialism.[32]

Shilling's sensible appeal for a *via media* in our understanding of the body is one that can be answered to some extent by exploring impairment and disability or, to put it simply, bodies that have 'gone wrong'. Of course, bodies that have 'gone wrong' have been explored before,[33] but the relatively new field of 'disability studies' is driven by the desire to understand both the practicalities and conceptualisations of bodily dysfunctionality and thus, by extension, functionality.[34] Appreciation of the body as a

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31 Kay and Rubin, 'Introduction', p. 3.

32 Shilling, 'The body and difference', p. 66.

33 Most obvious here is the corpus of work that examines disease and pain and, to some extent, bodily extremes such as asceticism and, notably, 'holy anorexia'. E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford, 1985) explores the vulnerability of the human body and difficulties in formulating ways to express and understand pain.

34 S. Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York, 1998), p. 2.

material 'thing' is important in this academic sphere of study – the physical frame and structure, the 'flesh dress', arms, legs, head, trunk, facial features and the internal organs (including the brain, as distinct from the 'mind'). Included also are the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) that are connected to bodily organs as well as mental faculties but with the important difference that these can only exist in animate bodies. In essence, this definition of the body embraces all the material 'stuff' and faculties that would be expected to be found in a normal, functioning body. The introduction here of normality is where we leave biological essentialism and move into the realms of social constructionism for it is through socio-cultural forces that we form our expectations about how bodies should normally perform. What a body *should* look like and what it *should* do are grounded within cultural contexts, but, importantly, so too are the limits of what is accepted as bodily 'normal'; there is a fine line between what a body should look like and should do and that which it should not. In the study of disability, this physical-cultural dualism in definitions of the body is present in the important distinctions that some commentators have drawn between the terms 'impairment' and 'disability' in what is known as the 'social model' of disability. In this model 'impairment' is used to designate the physical state of an individual's body with 'disability' as the socio-cultural construction of impairment that includes recognition of the marginalisation and discrimination experienced by impaired individuals.[35] Drawing

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[35] Descriptions of the social model of disability can be found in numerous recent publications on disability. See, for example, C. Barnes and G. Mercer, 'Breaking the mould? An introduction to doing disability research', in *Doing Disability Research*, ed. C. Barnes and G. Mercer (Leeds, 1997), pp. 1-14 at 1-2; C. Barnes, G. Mercer and T. Shakespeare, *Exploring Disability. A Sociological Introduction* (Cambridge and Malden, Massachusetts, 1999), pp. 2-3, 6-7; E. Stone, 'Disability and development in the majority world', in *Disability and Development: Learning from Action and Research on Disability in the Majority World*, ed. E. Stone (Leeds, 1999), pp. 1-18 at 2; W. I. U. Ahmed, 'Introduction', in *Ethnicity, Disability and Chronic Illness*, ed. W. I. U. Ahmed (Buckingham and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2000), pp. 1-11 at 1. The social model of disability has been criticised for prioritising the social construction of

divisions between these two concepts may seem unnecessarily pedantic, but it is important to do so for, as Irina Metzler has noted, 'far from being "just words", concepts such as "disability" inform the way people think about themselves and others. If people do not know what "disability" is then they cannot label people as disabled.'[36] In her recent publication *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment in the High Middle Ages*, Metzler explains her understanding of the difference between 'impairment' and 'disability' through two valuable and powerful case studies from the early-twentieth century:

> Snowy Harding, suffering from muscular dystrophy all his life, spent his childhood in the 1930s in London's East End, participating in the activities and play of the other children in his area, albeit having to do everything crawling (as his mother could not afford a wheelchair), which was accepted by the other children. Interviewed, Harding said: '*I didn't know I was disabled* [Metzler's emphasis] until during the war, when I was 14 and the other kids were evacuated to families in the country. I was sent to an institution'. *Whereas impairment is a*

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impairment over and above the practical, physical experiences of individual impaired bodies. However, this perhaps has more to do with the way the social model has been applied and explored rather than in inherent problems with the model itself. Liz Crow outlines the problems in the application of the social model from a personal perspective in her 'Including all of our lives: renewing the social model of disability', in *Exploring the Divide. Illness and Disability*, ed. C. Barnes and G. Mercer (Leeds, 1996), pp. 55-72. For a defence of the social model, see M. Oliver, *Understanding Disability: from Theory to Practice* (London, 1996), pp. 35-7 and 'If I had a hammer: the social model in action', in *Disabling Barrier – Enabling Environments*, ed. J. Swain, S. French, C. Barnes and C. Thomas (London, Thousand Islands, California and New Delhi, 2004, second edition. First edition 1993), pp. 7-12. I. Metzler, 'Disability in medieval Europe: approaches to physical impairment during the High Middle Ages, *c.* 1100-1400' (University of Reading, PhD, 2001) and *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment in the High Middle Ages, c. 1100- c. 1400* (Abingdon and New York, 2006) uses the social model in her exploration of impairment and disability in the medieval west.

[36] I. Metzler, Personal Communication, 6/12/06. Henri-Jacques Stiker makes a similar point in his *A History of Disability*, trans. W. Sayers (Michigan, 1999), p. 14 that the concepts of 'disability' and 'the disabled' cannot exist outside of precise social and cultural constructions. My sincere thanks to Dr. Metzler for her numerous communications with me and for her generosity in sharing many of her ideas and thoughts about a wide range of issues all of which have been invaluable in the formulation of my ideas not only about impairment and disability in the medieval period but also about the related concepts of disadvantage, need and charity.

non-negotiable reality, disability, in this instance, is very much a matter of perception, both by others and by the individual concerned [my emphasis]. A similar discrepancy between self-perception and the gaze of society as a whole was already found in a 1918 US study, the so-called 'Cleveland Cripple Survey'. Among the impaired participants of the survey '[s]ome were amazed that they

> should be considered cripples, even though they were without an arm or a leg, or perhaps seriously crippled as a result of infantile paralysis. They had never considered themselves handicapped in any sense'.[37]

It is axiomatic to state that Anglo-Saxon society contained impaired individuals, but the extent to which these individuals would have regarded themselves as disabled or been perceived by others as disabled is much more questionable. Were commonalities drawn between those with physical impairments in Anglo-Saxon England to form a concept of 'the disabled' as we would understand it today or were there simply crippled, blind, deaf and dumb individuals?[38] Furthermore, did the physical conditions of the impaired put them at a disadvantage in comparison to those of a similar age, sex and social status and, if so, was this disadvantage recognised and addressed by contemporaries? These questions will, then, form the basis of the following discussion.

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37 Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 7.

38 I am aware that my terminology here and indeed throughout the following discussion may be a cause of offence to some readers. As far as possible, my language is based on a rendering of original terms into the nearest modern English equivalent in order to avoid as far as possible layering my discussion with linguistic anachronisms. Some leniency and understanding is requested.

Attitudes to the body in Anglo-Saxon England

In this discussion of physical disadvantage in Anglo-Saxon England it seems sensible to begin with an examination of broader conceptualisations of the body (*líc*), before we turn to address more specifically the issue of how Anglo-Saxons responded to impaired members of their society. Bodily functionality was important within Anglo-Saxon England, not only because of the centrality of physical activity to the everyday workings of society, but also because of the characteristics that were deemed necessary for successful fulfilment of various social roles. Understanding the part played by the body in the creation of these social identities can help us to appreciate the value that was attached to bodily competence and, by extension, to suggest ways in which bodily incompetence could affect an individual's ability to satisfy the expectations that were ascribed to these different identities. This is no easy task to accomplish as it is an issue that is muddied by the complex interplay between other defining facets of identity such as gender, age, social status and occupation. For example, what role (if any) did his epilepsy play in the attempt to remove Charles of Provence, 'who was thought to be incompetent and unsuited to hold the office and title of a king', from the position of king in 861?[39] And, furthermore, how would the effects of the epilepsy of a king have differed from that of, say, a *ceorl* (assuming parity between the severities of the

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39 *Annals of Saint Bertin*, 861. *Les Annales de Saint Bertin*, ed. F. Grat, J. Vielliard, S. Clémencet (Paris, 1964); trans. J. Nelson, *The Annals of Saint Bertin* (Manchester, 1991). D. Pratt, 'The illnesses of King Alfred the Great', *Anglo-Saxon England* 30 (2001), 39-90 at 41 states: 'This physical weakness [epilepsy] provided the justification for an attempt to depose him [Charles of Provence] in 861 on the basis that Charles was simply "useless and unsuitable for the office and title of king"'. Pratt thus suggests that Charles's epilepsy was a motivating factor in the attempt to depose him. However, Charles's condition is not mentioned in the annal for 861 (but is mentioned in the record of his death in 863) so we cannot be certain that it was his epilepsy that rendered him 'incompetent and unsuited for the office and title of a king'.

epilepsies)? The matter is made yet more problematical by the nature of our extant sources which were composed chiefly (although not exclusively) by ecclesiastical men. Much of the historiography surveyed above addresses the role of the body in identity-creation and some of it does so in much more detail than can be attempted here. Nevertheless, it is still important at this point to explore how the body was conceptualised and valued in Anglo-Saxon England so that the implications of bodily impairment can be more fully appreciated.

The body and the law

As we might expect, the body was treated differently in the separate literary contexts in which it appeared but collectively these various source types allow us to explore what was perceived as essential for a healthy body (as well as a healthy soul) in Anglo-Saxon England. The law-codes provide the easiest route into this complex issue; curt statements list the amounts of compensation to be paid by those who injured another individual and from these directions it is possible to observe the value judgements that were attached to various body parts and senses.[40] As O'Brien O'Keeffe has eloquently stated, the law-codes are useful 'for the matrices they offer in which body parts are

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[40] It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the injury tariff laws are gender specific; they repeatedly refer to injuries to or by a '*man*' which can be translated both as 'man' and as the indefinite pronoun 'anyone'/'someone'. However, although the law-codes include laws about offences involving women, they offer a principally male discourse about crime and punishment. So, whilst it is not inconceivable that compensation payments could have been claimed by and imposed upon women, it is likely that law-makers assumed that claims for injuries would usually involve men. For a more detailed discussion of gender specification in the laws and the use of *man*, see C. Hough, 'Two Kentish laws concerning women: a new reading of Æthelberht 73 and 74', *Anglia* 119 (2001), 554-78 at 574-6 and note 98.

counters within an economy of pain, payment and value.'[41] Only in the laws of Æthelberht of Kent (d. 616) and those of Alfred of Wessex (871-99) can we find injury tariffs, but both of these codes contain plentiful material for discussion.[42] Amounts of compensation existed on a sliding scale that was determined not only by the severity of the bodily disfigurement but also by its visibility, features which can also be found in continental Germanic law.[43] Taking first the issue of severity, we can observe that in the earliest English law-code of Æthelberht compensation values ranged from ten sceattas

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41 K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Body and law in late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 27 (1998), 209-32 at 212.

42 It seems puzzling that Æthelberht should discuss compensation for bodily injuries and such rulings should then only re-appear under Alfred. Hlothere (d. 685) and Eadric (d. 686), who jointly issued the next surviving Kentish code after that of Æthelberht, stated explicitly that they 'extended the laws of their predecessors' and Wihtræd of Kent (d. 725) added his laws to the 'legal usages of the people of Kent'. Both codes largely cover different ground to that of Æthelberht, so it is conceivable that Æthelberht's rulings on compensation for wounds were still in force in Kent and that his successors did not feel that it was necessary to re-record his rulings on such matters. See P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: Alfred to the Twelfth Century. Volume 1: Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999, 2 vols.), I:101-2; '"Inter cetera bona genti suae': law-making and peace-keeping in the earliest English kingdoms', *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo* 42 (1995), 963-96 at 974-5; reprinted in his *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West. Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London and Rio Grande, 1999), pp. 179-199 at 186-8. As far as is known, the first king of Wessex to produce legislation was Ine (688-726). His code does not contain any directions for compensation for bodily injuries, but that of Alfred does. I can think of no satisfactory reason why this should be the case; Ine's code survives only as an attachment to Alfred's so it is plausible that Alfred edited Ine's text. However, I tend to agree with Patrick Wormald that 'Alfred did not tamper himself with the text that had descended to him. If not all his own work, Ine's code was at least not an Alfredian paraphrase': *Making of English Law*, I:103. The disappearance from the law-codes of compensation for bodily injuries after Alfred's code is more easily explicable and follows developmental trends in the design and purpose of law which became more concerned with establishing appropriate punishments for offences rather than financial restitution. The body still appears in the later Anglo-Saxon law-codes, but it is found most notably in laws that specify physical chastisements for offences. These later laws are informative, particularly those that demand condign punishments (e.g. Alfred, 6 and 6.1; II Æthelstan, 14.2), but are not immediately relevant here as they tell us more readily about the workings of justice rather than perceptions of bodily competence. The use of physical punishment for offences has been discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, but see also O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Body and law in Anglo-Saxon England' and M. P. Richards, 'The body as text in early Anglo-Saxon Law', in *Naked Before God. Uncovering the Body in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. B. C. Withers and J. Wilcox (Morgantown, West Virginia, 2003), pp. 97-115 at pp. 113-5 who both suggest that the shift in emphasis from compensation to punishment occurred because legislation was used increasingly to satisfy social and religious concerns. Physical punishment left marks which would display an individual's guilt, but also that they had undergone a process of restitution. For a more general discussion about the changes to the purposes of law in the tenth century, see S. Keynes, 'Crime and punishment in the reign of King Æthelred the Unready', in *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500-1600. Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. I. Wood and N. Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 67-81.

43 See, for example, *Pactus Legis Salicae* XVII and XXIX, ed. K. A. Eckhardt, *MGH, Legum Sectio I, Leges Nationum Germanicarum* IV.I (Hanover, 1962); trans. K. F. Drew, *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1991), pp. 32-3 and 92-4.

for the loss of a toenail (thirty sceattas for the nail of the big toe) to fifty shillings if an eye was knocked out, a foot struck off and, if we combine all tariffs for the destruction of thumb and fingers, if a hand was severed.[44] In one of his laws, Æthelberht paid particular attention to the destruction of the eye or foot of a servant (*esne*).[45] It is striking that he should have done so since almost all his other rulings about injuries are generic and are delineated by type or severity only, but what is more striking still is that the king demanded the servant's full value be paid as compensation (*ealne weorþe hine forgelde*). We can begin to see here the usefulness of the law-codes for understanding Anglo-Saxon bodies. 'Full values' were most commonly demanded as compensation after an individual's death; indeed, the law immediately preceding this one states that an *esne* who kills another who had 'committed no offence' should 'pay his full value' (*ealne weorðe forgelde*).[46] We saw in chapter four some of the activities that would have occupied servants and slaves in their daily lives and how Ælfric used the hard, physical labour of the ploughman as best representative of the work of the 'unfree'. With this in mind, it is not difficult to imagine the potential impact on a servant's ability to perform his or her duties following the loss of an eye and foot. According to Sally Crawford, the high level of compensation stipulated by Æthelberht if such injuries did occur thus indicates that he or she was deemed no longer able to function as a useful

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[44] Æthelberht, 72-72:1; 43; 69 and 54-54:5.

[45] Æthelberht, 87. I have amended Attenborough's translation from 'eye *and* foot' to 'eye *or* foot' in line with the translation in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. and trans. F. Liebermann (Halle, 1803-1916, 3 vols). '*And*' in early Old English could mean the conjunctive 'and' or the adversative 'or'. See L. Oliver, *The Beginnings of English Law* (Toronto, 2002), p. 55.

[46] Æthelberht, 86. The 'full value' demanded here equates to the Anglo-Saxon 'wergeld' system which becomes the standard term for payments following the death of an individual in which there was some form of culpability. II Edmund, 7-7:3 sets out the procedure for payments of wergelds.

person.[47] It is perhaps more appropriate, however, to argue that a servant who lost a foot or eye was considered unable to function successfully in his role as a servant with the wergeld payment here compensating for the 'death' of his identity as an *esne* rather than, as Crawford has implied, for the 'death' of an individual *per se*.

Like Æthelberht, King Alfred (871-899) reserved the highest compensation payments for the most brutal and physically damaging of injuries. At eighty shillings, compensation following the severance of an arm or leg placed them amongst the most costly of injuries,[48] but Alfred's code also includes more subtle compensation arrangements which consider the possibility that less severe injuries to the extremities could nevertheless cause long-term difficulties:

> If the large sinew is damaged, and if it can be treated medically so as to make it sound, 12 shillings shall be given as compensation. If someone becomes lame (*healt*) as a result of the damage to the sinew, and if he cannot be cured, 30 shillings shall be given [to him] as compensation.[49]

Here Alfred distinguished between injuries with short-term impact and those that would have affected a man for the rest of his life, more than doubling the amount of compensation required if an individual was permanently impaired. He made similar arrangements in another law which stipulated twenty shillings for damage to the hand that could be healed, but forty shillings if 'half of it [the hand] comes off'.[50] As these two laws refer to medical intervention, some of the difference between these

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47 S. Crawford, 'Disease, disability and the burial ritual', paper presented at the 'International Medieval Congress', Leeds, 11 July 2006.

48 See Alfred, 66 and 72.

49 Alfred, 75-75:1.

50 Alfred, 69-69:1.

compensation amounts could be explained by the discrepancy between the doctor's fees for the two types of injury; indeed, two of the clauses in the *Pactus Legis Salicae* which deal with wounds specify that the perpetrator should make a separate payment to cover the cost of initial medical attention.[51] However, the eighteen extra shillings of compensation required if an individual was made lame also takes into account the comparative magnitudes of the consequences from a leg wound that could be cured and that which could not. In another of his laws, Alfred fixed his highest level of compensation for severe neck wounds:

> If someone damages the tendons in another's neck, and wounds him so severely that he has no control over them, but [if] nevertheless he continues to live so wounded, 100 shillings shall be given to him as compensation, unless the councillors award him a juster and greater sum.

For the usually terse law-codes, this clause is markedly elaborate and shows that Alfred again set high levels of compensation for severe wounds that caused permanent difficulties. It also suggests that some individuals who suffered acute damage to their bodies could, nevertheless, be expected to survive. Alfred's laws thus demonstrate that he not only envisaged ways in which the body could be damaged, but that he anticipated and appreciated variations in the consequences of injuries according to their severity.

Damage to the male genitalia also carried high compensation tariffs under Æthelberht and Alfred. Æthelberht stipulated that three times a man's wergeld should be paid if the 'generative organ' (*gecyndelice lim*) was destroyed, perhaps with the curious use of the wergeld here standing for the potential children that the man would

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51 *Pactus Legis Salicae*, XVII.7 and XXIX.18.

no longer be able to produce.[52] Alfred was more explicit in his legislation about the consequences of damage to the testicles and stated that eighty shillings should be paid to a man whose injury rendered him unable to 'beget children' (*þæt he ne mæge bearn* [*gestrienan*]), thus equating the inability to conceive children with the loss of a limb.[53] Æthelberht and, in particular, Alfred's laws reveal the importance attached to a man's ability to produce children; indeed, the *Penitential of Theodore* specified proven male impotency as one of the only reasons why a woman could forsake her husband and take another.[54] Female fertility also concerned Alfred and one of his laws that discusses rape (*niedhæmd*)[55] is one of the more instructive of the (relatively few) Anglo-Saxon laws that focus specifically on the female body. Alfred 26 (29 in Frederick Attenborough's

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[52] Æthelberht, 64. Æthelberht's establishment of compensation for this injury according to a man's wergeld is intriguing as he determined all other injury tariffs (except for the law regarding damage to a servant's eye or foot) by wound-type alone. Although later in the Anglo-Saxon period the wergeld came to be used as a way of assessing fine payments for various offences, it was originally used almost exclusively for restitution following homicides. Thus the suggestion that Æthelberht was here arranging compensation for imagined future offspring is not as far-fetched as it may at first seem. Indeed, I myself had come to this conclusion before discovering that others had also offered just such a hypothesis: Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*, p. 99; Richards, 'The body as text in early Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 105.

[53] Alfred, 65. The continental laws also set high compensation rates for damage to the genitals. The *Pactus Legis Salicae* XXIX.17-18 demanded one hundred solidi from anyone who castrated a man or cut into his penis so that he was debilitated (*mancus*) and two hundred solidi if he cut away the man's penis entirely (with an extra nine solidi for doctor's fees). One hundred solidi was also the tariff for maiming of the hand and foot as well as the eye, ear, nose and tongue (*Pactus Legis Salicae*, XXIX.1 and 15) so, as in Alfred's code, damage to the genitals was equated to injury to the extremities.

[54] *The Penitential of Theodore*, II.xii.33. Editions of the text of the penitential can be found in *Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Überlieferungsformen*, ed. P. W. Finsterwalder (Weimar, 1929), pp. 285-334; *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche nebst einer rechtsgeschichtlichen Einleitung*, ed. F. W. H Wasserschleben (Halle, 1851), pp. 182-219 and *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (Oxford, 1869-1878, 3 vols.), III:173-204; trans. J. T. McNeill and H. M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York, 1938), pp. 182-215. An earlier clause of the penitential states that 'A woman may not put away her husband, even if he is a fornicator, unless, perchance, for [the purpose of his entering] a monastery' (II.xii.6) The penitential is contradictory, however, as it later states that a woman may separate from her first husband if he made himself 'a slave through theft or fornication or any sin' (II.xii.9). In contrast, the penitential is more definitive about adulterous wives - it was up to the husband to decide whether or not to separate from her (II.xii.5, 12).

[55] M. Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present* 108 (1985), 3-35 at 12 suggests that *niedhæmd* in fact means 'elopement' and should be distinguished from *niedham* for 'rape'. Cf. S. Turner, 'The language of rape in Old English literature and law', in *Sex and Sexuality in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. C. Pasternack and L. M. C. Weston (Tempe, Arizona 2004), pp. 149-181 at p. 160 and note 30 who demonstrates that here *niedhæmd* must mean rape.

translation) is not strictly an injury tariff law but it is typical of the type of concerns that law-makers expressed about female bodies – that they could be subject to sexual violence.[56] In a new translation and interpretation of this clause, Carole Hough has demonstrated its particular usefulness because here, she has argued, Alfred equated young girls with post-menopausal women and so, by implication, placed women of childbearing age in a separate and (probably) more valuable category.[57] Her case rests on the translation of *gewintred* which in the standard Modern English translations by Frederick Attenborough and Dorothy Whitelock is rendered as 'an adult' or 'full-aged person': 'If anyone rapes a girl who is not of age, the same compensation shall be paid to her as is paid to an adult'.[58] Hough, however, makes a cogent argument that Alfred used *gewintred* to mean 'old or advanced age' and she strengthens her position through an examination of continental laws which allocated women of childbearing age much higher wergelds than young girls and older women.[59] Here Alfred reserves his promotion of fecund women to cases of rape, perhaps because it was only these women who were at risk of becoming pregnant with their rapist's child following enforced

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[56] For further discussion of rape in Anglo-Saxon England, see Clunies Ross, 'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England'; J. Coleman, 'Rape in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. G. Halsall (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1998), pp. 193-204; C. Hough 'Alfred's *Domboc* and the language of rape: a reconsideration of Alfred, Chapter 11', *Medium Ævum* 66 (1997), 1-27; Turner, 'The language of rape in Old English literature and law'. The numbering of clauses from Alfred 25 to 31 differs between manuscripts which accounts for the discrepancy between the numbering by Hough and that followed by Frederick Attenborough in his *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge, 1922).

[57] C. Hough, 'A new reading of Alfred, ch. 26', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 41 (1997), 1-12.

[58] Alfred, 29. *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, ed. and trans. Attenborough; *EHD*, no. 33. Felix Liebermann also has 'adult' (*erwachsene person*) in his German translation: *Die Gesetze der Angelsachen*, ed. and trans. F. Lieberman (Halle, 1903-16. 3 vols.), I:64-7. Hough's new translation reads: 'If anyone rapes a girl not of age, that is to be the same compensation for a woman past child-bearing age'. Hough, 'A new reading', 12. Although Alfred did not provide us with the tariffs for the rapes of young/old women and women of childbearing age in this clause, it is almost certain that the latter would have been valued more highly than those in the former group. See Hough, 'A new reading', 6-8.

[59] Hough, 'A new translation', 8-11, surveys the *Leges Alamannorum*, *Pactus Legis Salicae* and *Lex Ribvaria* and shows that girls were equated to women past childbearing age for the purposes of compensation following a homicide and that they were worth less than women of childbearing age.

intercourse. Nevertheless, through Hough's minor emendation of this clause she offers us a new insight into how female bodies and, by extension, women themselves were valued in Alfred's code. Academics have used the traditional translation of this law to suggest that Alfred regarded rape of a child as a serious offence, but Hough's revised interpretation shifts the emphasis of the clause and so reveals that in his legalisation the king considered both male *and* female fertility to be important and worthy of special protection.[60]

A final informative element of Æthelberht's and Alfred's laws is that both kings distinguished between wounds that were visible and those that could be hidden, for instance, under the hairline or clothing. A law of Æthelberht states quite simply that 'for the slightest disfigurement three shillings, and for a greater six shillings',[61] but other laws were more specific. For example, a blow that left a black bruise 'under the clothes' carried a tariff of twenty sceattas but if the bruise was visible thirty sceattas was necessary as compensation.[62] Æthelberht set tariffs for knocking out teeth on a sliding scale which seems to be determined by their visibility in the mouth: six shillings for the front teeth; four shillings 'for each of the teeth which stand next to these'; three shillings for the ones next to these and, finally, one shilling for each tooth positioned beyond these.[63] Alfred similarly graded teeth; for the loss of a 'front tooth' (*toð onforan*) he doubled the level of compensation for a molar tooth (*wongtoð*; literally 'cheek tooth'); however, he also valued the canine tooth (*tux*) more highly than both at fifteen shillings,

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60 For use of the standard translation and interpretation of this law, see Coleman, 'Rape in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 198-9; S. Turner, 'The language of rape in Old English literature and law', in *Sex and Sexuality in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. C. Pasternack and L. M. C. Weston (Tempe, Arizona 2004), pp. 149-181 at p. 160.

61 Æthelberht, 56.

62 Æthelberht, 59-60.

63 Æthelberht, 51.

perhaps due in part to its important biting functions but, we could hypothesise, also due to its distinctiveness and uniqueness.[64] In another of his laws, Alfred made explicit distinction between inch-long head wounds 'inflicted under the hair' (one shilling compensation) and those 'inflicted in front of the hair' (two shillings compensation), and in yet another he stated simply that 'for every wound in front of the hair, and below the sleeve and beneath the knee, the compensation shall be doubled'.[65] The wounds covered by these laws are minor and largely cosmetic and so would have caused minimal physical trauma in comparison to some of the other injuries mentioned in the tariffs. But the fact that Æthelberht and Alfred stipulated compensation for such disfigurements indicates that the two kings held that individuals were entitled to enjoy a visibly perfect body. Furthermore, in demanding higher payments for wounds inflicted on publicly visible parts of the body, the kings acknowledged the perpetrator's liability for preventing his victim from displaying a perfect body.

Thus far we have focused on mutilations of the body and the compensation tariffs contained within the law-codes of Æthelberht and Alfred. These tariffs are somewhat crude; they list potential injuries and state the amounts that the two law-makers thought to be appropriate compensation following damage to various body parts. In doing so, however, the injury tariffs offer a useful way to understand how the body was valued. Presently we will move away from the law-codes, but before we do so it is important to pause here in order to pull together the various strands of the issues

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[64] Alfred, 49-49.2. Richards, 'Body as text', p. 109 states that Alfred gave the incisors the highest value. However, the Old English *tux* means either 'tusk', 'canine tooth' or sometimes 'molar tooth' (although it cannot mean 'molar tooth' here as this is already rendered as *wongtoð*).

[65] Alfred, 45-45:1 and 66:1. See O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Body and law in late Anglo-Saxon England', 215 and note 24.

discussed above. Most importantly, we have determined the types of injuries that carried the highest compensation payments and so can infer that these body parts and associated functions were considered the most precious. It is not difficult to comprehend why severance of feet or arms incurred the greatest compensation as such mutilations would have been the most debilitating, but we have also been able to observe the importance attached to the ability to reproduce and the right to possess a cosmetically perfect body. Also note-worthy is the fact that the two kings offered comprehensive guidelines for determining correct levels of compensation based on the severity of injuries. For example, an individual would have to pay twelve shillings for damaging the sinew of another's leg, but thirty shillings if, despite medical intervention, he rendered his victim permanently lame. According to Mary Richards, the scales of compensation amounts in the codes reflected the relative levels of embarrassment and emotional distress associated with different injuries; of Alfred's law about neck wounds, for example, she writes that '[t]he high compensation for this condition underlines the embarrassment caused to the victim who cannot control his neck or, by implication, his head'.[66]

Recompense for potential embarrassment may indeed have been one of the intentions of compensation payments, particularly for minor, visible wounds, but composition for severe mutilations must also have been designed to assist the victim in adapting to their new circumstances. Wounds such as the loss of an arm or a foot not only dramatically altered an individual's bodily form, but would have also dramatically altered his or her existing lifestyle patterns and affected his or her economic usefulness

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66 Richards, 'Body as text', p. 110, note 20.

and independence. Given the documentary silence on the finer points of this issue, it is difficult to determine with any certainty the impact of severe wounds on an individual's daily life. We can, however, speculate about *potential* consequences of the most debilitating of injuries – not altogether a satisfactory exercise, but not an entirely worthless one either. An article by Stuart Airlie is useful here as in this he offers a list of the characteristics that he considers to have been the defining features of a Carolingian male, lay, aristocrat: noble descent; marriage and having a family; office-holding; war; hunting and, finally, feasting.[67] Items on this list demonstrate the extent of the physical expectations that were made of male members of the Carolingian aristocracy but even the most cursory of glances through the 'standard' texts for Anglo-Saxon England such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* would reveal the applicability of Airlie's definition to Anglo-Saxon high-status males; indeed, Richard Abels has argued that King Alfred relied heavily on bishops, ealdormen, king's thegns, reeves and court officials for advice, warmongering, defence and the dispensation of justice, all of which would have required certain levels of physical and mental competence.[68] The importance of warfare is one characteristic that can be applied more widely as men of lower social status would also have had a responsibility to aid the king in his military ventures.[69] King Ine of Wessex (died *c.* 726) set penalties for failure to provide military service with fines of one hundred and twenty shillings and land forfeiture for landed noblemen, sixty

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[67] S. Airlie, 'The anxiety of sanctity: St Gerald of Aurilliac and his maker', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992), 372-95 at 376. Airlie bases his list on K. Bosl, *Leitbilder und Wertvorstellungen des Adels von der Merowingerzeit bis zur Höhe der feudalen Gesellschaft* (Munich, 1974), 9-10, 20.

[68] R. Abels, *Alfred the Great. War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon* (London and New York, 1998), especially pp. 258-84.

[69] R. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1988), pp. 11-25 and 116-84.

shillings for noblemen who held no land and thirty shillings for *ceorlas*.[70] As we saw in the previous chapter, labouring was another important physical activity in Anglo-Saxon society and one that would have involved both men and women of free and unfree status. Again, the long-term consequences of a severe injury to the body come into sharp relief. We should not be so arrogant as to assume that those with a severe injury to their body could not labour or fight, but we *can* assume that such injuries would have meant that they would have been obliged to adjust the 'normal' ways of doing things to fit their own particular requirements. Fighting and labouring are the two activities that most readily spring to mind when thinking about the enduring effects of severe mutilations, but such debilitating injuries would also have had an impact on a myriad of other, ostensibly more insignificant daily actions and occupations. The ability of those who were brutally disfigured to feed and support themselves would have been significantly reduced and they were likely to have become dependent on their family, friends or other associates in order to live and survive. As Richards has proposed, degrees of embarrassment and emotional distress must have played their part in the determination of injury tariffs, but more important was the magnitude of the impact on victims' existing lifestyles with the compensation money helping them bear the cost of adapting to their new circumstances.

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70 Ine, 51.

Senses and sin

We have seen above the ways in which law-makers allocated monetary values to the body, thereby revealing the body parts and their connected functions that were valued most highly. Equally important, however, is an exploration of Anglo-Saxon conceptualisations of the senses – particularly sight and hearing – and it is here that we can begin to move away from the law-codes to examine more sophisticated understandings of the body and its workings. However, as the loss of a sense would have presented difficulties just as would the loss of a limb, it is no surprise that the law-codes contain directions for the amounts that perpetrators should pay if they damaged another's sight or hearing and it is these that we shall examine first.[71] Both Æthelberht and Alfred demanded some of their highest compensation amounts for damage to the ears and eyes. The Kentish king ordered a payment of fifty shillings if an eye was knocked out of someone's head (which equated an eye with a foot or hand) and twenty five shillings if the hearing of either ear was destroyed.[72] Alfred also equated eyes with the hands and feet which was, according to Patrick Wormald, 'something of a commonplace in barbarian law'.[73] Together in a single clause the king stated that '[i]f a man's eye is knocked out, or if his hand or foot is struck off, the same compensation shall follow them all – 6 pennies, 66 shillings and the third part of a penny'.[74] Once

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[71] There are also laws which stipulate compensation tariffs if someone cut off another's nose or tongue, although, of course, these had other, (arguably) more important, functions besides sensory. See Æthelberht, 45, 48, 52; Alfred, 48, 52.

[72] Æthelberht, 43 and 39 respectively.

[73] Wormald, *Making of English Law*, I:281 and 46, note 88. For example, Charlemagne equated hands, feet and eyes in a capitulary issued in Italy in 802.

[74] Alfred, 71. The amount stated here is a third of the wergeld of a *ceorl* (two hundred shillings) which was the lowest wergeld stated in Alfred's code. See Attenborough's note to Alfred 47 in his *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings.*

again, however, Alfred gave more subtle instructions for arranging compensation following injuries; elsewhere in his code he included two additional clauses in which he distinguished between damage to the physical ear or eye and the destruction of the senses of hearing and sight connected to these organs.[75]

Alfred's law-code is useful in one final respect as it contains a clause which mentions individuals who were born deaf and dumb - the only reference to congenital impairment within the extant Anglo-Saxon legal material. The full clause reads: 'If anyone is born deaf or dumb, so that he can neither deny nor confess his wrongdoings, his father shall pay compensation for his misdeeds'.[76] There is no known parallel for this in the legislation of any other Anglo-Saxon king nor, indeed, in any continental Germanic legislation and so it is likely that this provision has its origins in a case of a father who refused to take responsibility for his deaf and mute child.[77] This provision will be discussed in more detail below when we examine care of the Anglo-Saxon impaired, but for now it serves to underscore powerfully the importance that was placed upon aural and verbal abilities – giving witness and oath-swearing – within the sphere of Anglo-Saxon justice.[78] Indeed, the very first clause of Alfred's law-code states that the observance of oaths and pledges was 'a matter of supreme importance' and here the king made special arrangements for those who were unable to partake in oath-swearing

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75 Alfred, 46-47.

76 Alfred, 14.

77 Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, I:282.

78 Wihtræd, 16-24 serve to underline the role of performance and audience in oath-swearing. Wihtræd, 18, for example, reads: 'A priest shall clear himself by his own asseveration, [standing] in his holy garments before the altar and declaring as follows "Veritatem dico in Christo, non menitor." A deacon shall clear himself in a similar way'. H. M. Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* (New York, 1963, 2nd edition), pp. 134-152 offers a detailed discussion of the importance of oath-swearing in Anglo-Saxon society. Wormald, *Making of English Law*, I:148, 171-2, 282-4 and 290 examines oath-swearing particularly during the reign of King Alfred.

ceremonies that forced a father to account for the actions of his impaired and disabled child.

The legislation of Æthelberht and particularly that of Alfred demonstrates that the two kings were concerned to protect sight and hearing and stipulated heavy compensation penalties for those who damaged or destroyed these senses in another individual. However, the wider body of literature connected with Alfred indicates that the king was interested in the Five Senses more generally and it is to this that we now turn. David Pratt has surveyed what we could term Alfred's 'philosophical' works and has argued that the king was particularly concerned with the role of Sight in the acquisition of wisdom and the relationship between the physical eyes of the body and the metaphysical 'mind's eye' through which the soul could perceive the divine.[79] In his translation of Augustine's *Soliloquies*, Alfred made numerous additions to a discussion between Augustine and 'Reason' about the saint's mistrust of events experienced through the bodily senses. In one particularly extensive addition, Alfred wrote:

> Each one who wisheth it [wisdom] and who anxiously prayeth for it, he can come to it and abide in its household and live near it; yet some are nearer it, others farther away from it...and yet they all live by the favour of one lord just as all men live under one sun, and by its light see what they see. Some look very carefully and very clearly; some see with great difficulty; others are stark blind, yet use the sun. But just as the visible sun lighteth the eyes of our body, so wisdom lighteth the eyes of our mind, which is our understanding. And just as

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79 D. Pratt, 'Persuasion and invention at the court of King Alfred the Great', in *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages. The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference*, ed. C. Cubitt (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 189-221 at 209-16. Here Pratt also surveys patristic ideas about the Five Senses, particularly the ways in which the senses were held to be a source of temptation if not correctly controlled.

> the eyes of the body are more sound, thus to use more of the sun's light, so it is also with the mind's eyes, that is, the understanding: just by so much as that is sounder, by so much more may it see the eternal sun which is wisdom.[80]

In this passage Alfred aligns the relationship between the sun and the corporal eyes with that between the 'mind's eyes' and wisdom. Elsewhere in his translation of the *Soliloquies*, Alfred twice elucidated what Augustine meant by the 'external senses': 'eyes, ears, smell, taste, and touch'.[81] It is interesting that on both occasions Alfred listed sight first. The king also gave sight a superior position amongst the senses in his translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, but here he explored the practical functions of sight. Once again, Alfred added to the words of the original author in a passage that follows directly from one which discusses the relationship between Wisdom and God:

> Lo now, thou knowest that sight and *hearing* and feeling perceive a man's body and yet do not apprehend it alike. *The ears perceive what they hear*, and yet do not altogether apprehend the body as it really is; touch may *grope and feel that it is a body, but it cannot feel if it be black or white, fair or foul*. But the sight, in the first moment that the eyes look upon it, takes in the whole form of the body.[82]

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[80] *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, ed. T. A. Carnicelli (Cambridge, MA, 1969), lines 15-7 and 19 (p. 77) and lines 1-8 (p. 78); trans. H. L. Hargrove, *King Alfred's Old English Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies Turned into Modern English* (New York, 1904), pp. 27-28. For more about sight in the *Soliloquies*, see D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 308-11 and 317-8.

[81] *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustines's Soliloquies*, ed. Carnicelli, p. 51, lines 11-12 and p. 59, lines 5-6; trans. Hargrove, *King Alfred's Old English Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, pp. 5 and 12 respectively.

[82] *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius* De Consolatione Philosophiae, ch. xli, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), p. 145; trans. W. J. Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Version of the Consolations of Boethius Done into Modern English, with an Introduction* (Oxford, 1900), pp. 170-1. Alfred's additions to the original Latin are in italics.

Some one hundred years later, Ælfric of Eynsham mirrored Alfred's judgements about the senses in his own writings, giving sight primacy over hearing, taste, smell and touch. Drawing on a homily of Gregory the Great (that was also used by Bede), Ælfric claimed that it is through the eyes that we 'discern all things'.[83] Sight also plays the central role on the ninth-century Fuller brooch which, it has been alleged by David Pratt, should be dated to the late-ninth century and thus placed within an Alfredian context.[84] The brooch depicts the Five Senses with Taste, Smell, Touch and Hearing in four lozenges; Sight, however, is given the prominent position in the centre of the silver disc.

Fig 2: The Fuller Brooch
From: *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art*, ed. J. Backhouse, D. H. Turner and L. Webster (London, 1984), no. 11

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83 This homily is based on the parable of the dinner in Luke 14.16-24. One of the invited guests excused himself from the dinner to assess five yoke of oxen he had recently purchased; Gregory, Bede and Ælfric all maintained that these five oxen represented the Five Senses, tempting the man away from the Lord. See Pratt, 'Persuasion and invention at the court of king Alfred', p. 211 and note 86.

84 Pratt, 'Persuasion and invention at the court of King Alfred', 206-9. Rupert Bruce-Mitford dated it to *c.* 825-50: 'Late Saxon disc-brooches', in *Dark Age Britain*, ed. D. B. Harden (London, 1956), pp. 171-201 at pp. 180-3. See also the British Museum catalogue *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art, 966-1066*, ed. J. Backhouse, D. H. Turner, L. Webster (London, 1984), no. 11 where the brooch is dated simply to the ninth century. The brooch contains the earliest iconographic representations of the Senses; the next known examples do not appear for some three hundred years. Pratt, 'Persuasion and invention at the court of King Alfred, pp. 216 and 221 suggests that the figure on the Alfred Jewel is also a personification of Sight, an idea that was put forward in E. Bakka, 'The Alfred Jewel and Sight', *Antiquaries Journal* 46 (1966), 227-82.

Sight's primacy amongst the senses meant that it was also deemed to be the sense which could most easily lead an individual into sin. Associations between the senses and temptation had long been made and these ideas continued to hold weight in the Anglo-Saxon period.[85] Augustine of Hippo (354-430), for example, had explored the ways in which the senses could lead a man into temptations and excess in his *Confessions*, but had warned explicitly against 'making experiments with the body's aid, and cloaked under the name of learning and knowledge. Because this is in the appetite to know, and the eyes are the chief of the senses we use for attaining knowledge, it is called in Scripture the lust of the eyes.'[86] In a letter that he wrote to Daniel of Winchester between 742 and 746 Boniface echoed Augustine's sentiments in order to comfort the bishop about his failing eyesight: 'For what are our bodily eyes in these perilous times but, so to speak, windows of sin, through which we look upon sins or sinners or, worse still, bring sins upon our own selves by what we see and lust after?'[87] And, as Odo of Cluny tells us in his early tenth-century *Vita Sancti Geraldi*, Gerald's attraction to a pretty young woman encouraged him to take more care that his eyes should not lead him into sexual temptation lest 'death might find entrance through the windows of the soul'.[88] As Paul Kershaw has asserted, perhaps the association of

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85 Some of these associations are explored in Pratt, 'Persuasion and invention at the court of King Alfred', pp. 210-11.

86 Augustine, *Confessiones*, x.35, ed. M. Skutella, *Aurelii Augustini Opera: Sancti Augustini Confessionum Libri XIII* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 27 (Turnhout, 1981); trans. F. J. Sheed, *Augustine. Confessions* (Indianapolis, Indiana and Cambridge, 1993), p. 200. See also chapters 30-4 of book ten in which Augustine considers the ways in which the other senses can lead the body into temptation and sin.

87 Tangl 63; trans. Emerton, *Letters of Saint Boniface*, pp. 114-17. This extract from Boniface's letter is discussed in P. Kershaw, 'Illness, power and prayer in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*', *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), 201-24 at 214.

88 Odo of Cluny (879-942), *Vita Sancti Geraldi*, i.9, ed. J-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 133 (Paris, 1853. 221 vols. 1844-65), col. 0649B [*Patrologia Latina* hereafter *PL*]; trans. G. Sitwell, *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. T. F. X. Noble and T. Head (Pennsylvania, 1995), pp. 293-362 at 305. For more about Gerald of Aurillac (855-909) and issues connected to this incident, see J. Nelson, 'Monks, secular men and masculinity, *c.* 900', in *Masculinity in*

vision with sin also explains why Asser claimed that Alfred so feared blindness when the king asked God to substitute his piles for 'some less severe illness'.[89] Asser reported that Alfred had contracted this original 'agonising infirmity' in order to curb his sexual desires, but that he pleaded with God that 'the new illness would not be outwardly visible on his body, whereby he would be rendered useless and contemptible. For he feared leprosy or blindness, or some other such disease, which so quickly render men useless and contemptible by their onslaught.'[90] That Alfred should have feared blindness and leprosy in particular is given additional significance if read in the light of Leviticus xxi:16-23 which contains a command from Moses to Aaron that no blemished man should hold ecclesiastical office.[91] Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) discussed this injunction in his *Pastoral Care*, a textbook for holders of ecclesiastical offices, but one which would have been instructive for secular rulers. It is also a text that Alfred himself translated as one of the 'books which are most needful for all men to know'.[92] Alfred's translation of Gregory's interpretation of Leviticus xxi:16-23 runs thus:

> About which the sublime voice commanded Moses to tell Aaron that no man of their kin or household was to offer to his God any bread, nor come to his ministration, if he had any blemish: if he were blind or lame, or had too big or too little a nose, or he were crooked-nosed, or had broken hands or feet, or were

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Medieval Europe, ed. D. M. Nelson (Harlow, Essex, 1999), pp. 121-42 at pp. 123-132 where she also discusses Alfred's illnesses at pp. 135-8.

89 Asser, 74. See Kershaw, 'Illness, prayer and power', 213-15.

90 Asser, 74.

91 The significance of Leviticus to the study of the history of disability is examined in Stiker, *History of Disability*, pp. 24-5. Alfred's interpretation of Leviticus xxi:16-23 is discussed in A. J. Frantzen, *Alfred the Great* (Boston, Massachussets, 1986), pp. 33-4; Kershaw, 'Illness, prayer and power', 216. See also Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 39-41 where she argues that it is impossible to assess the extent to which this prohibition was adhered to throughout the Middle Ages.

92 *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. and trans. H. Sweet, Early English Text Society 45 and 50 (London, 1871-2, 2 parts), preface at p. 6.

> hump-backed or blear-eyed, or afflicted with albugo or continual scabbiness, or eruptions or hydrocele.[93]

Gregory explained that physical defects represent moral defects and, again, we see that blindness symbolised a lack of wisdom with skin diseases, including leprosy, indicating wantonness and a covetous mind: 'The scab of leprosy is a type of fornication. The body is leprous when the inflammation of the body spreads to the skin. Thus temptation is first in the mind and then spreads to the skin until is bursts forth in actions.'[94] Asser tells us that Alfred worried that too severe an illness would cause him to be 'unworthy and useless in worldly affairs', but also that an illness that had visible markers would render him 'useless and contemptible'.[95] The king's concern about bodily infirmities was thus two-pronged: they could present practical difficulties that hindered his ability to perform his duties as a king, but perhaps he also feared that defects – particularly blindness and leprosy – would be 'read' by himself and others as damning external indicators of the state of his internal soul.

Alfred's illness presents us with something of a conundrum – the king clearly worried about the significance and consequences of severe and visible infirmities, so why should his biographer Asser mention his patron's illness at all, let alone discuss it in detail? Indeed, this seeming incongruity played a central role in Alfred P. Smyth's assertion that Asser's *Life of King Alfred* was in fact written at the monastery of Ramsey in *c.* 1000 probably by Byrhtferth who was master of the monastic school there.[96] As

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93 *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, I, ch. 11 at pp. 63-4.

94 *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, I, ch. 11 at pp. 64-73 with quotation at p. 70.

95 Asser, 74.

96 A. P. Smyth, *The Medieval Life of King Alfred the Great. A Translation and Commentary on the Text Attributed to Asser* (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), especially pp. 55-131 and 202-10. See also

Patrick Wormald so wryly stated in his own examination of Smyth's work, '[t]his is hardly the place to resuscitate a decidedly moribund horse simply in order to flog it back to death', but Smyth's thesis does act as a useful springboard when trying to understand modern (mis)conceptions about the significance that early medieval people attached to sickness and impairment.[97] For Smyth, Asser's depiction of Alfred as a 'neurotic saint' was at odds with the image of a 'macho warrior' in sources such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and, furthermore, would have rendered him unable to win the support of his 'battle-hardened warriors'.[98] For all the faults with his wider thesis, Smyth made a valid observation. On first sight it does perhaps seems strange that Asser's *Life* should focus as heavily as it does on the king's bodily weakness and, by association, his moral and spiritual weaknesses. Alfred's attitude toward sickness and impairment (particularly blindness) exposes some delicate issues for it indicates that connections between infirmity and sin existed in the ninth-century mindset. If this notion grates somewhat on our twenty-first century, western sensibilities (we only have to look at the furore surrounding comments about sin and impairment alleged to have been made by the then England football manager Glenn Hoddle in 1999 to observe the violent reaction such claims can provoke), it in no way struck Asser, Alfred and their contemporaries as offensive, merely worrisome.[99] We need to explore this aspect of

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his earlier work in which his first explores the idea that Asser's *Life of King Alfred* is a forgery: *King Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1995), especially pp. 149-367.

[97] P. Wormald, 'Living with Alfred', *Haskins Society Journal* 15 (2006), 1-21 at 4. There are numerous (highly critical) assessments of Smyth's thesis, but see especially D. Howlett, 'Review article: *King Alfred the Great* by Alfred P. Smyth', *English Historical Review* 112 (1997), 942-4; S. Keynes, 'On the authenticity of Asser's *Life of King Alfred*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1997), 529-51; M. Lapidge, 'A king of monkish fable?', *Times Higher Education Supplement* (8 March 1996), p. 20; J. Nelson, 'Review article: waiting for Alfred', *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998), 115-24.

[98] Smyth, *King Alfred the Great*, pp. 203-4.

[99] In an interview with Matt Dickinson, 'Hoddle puts his faith in God and England', *The Times* (30 January 1999), Hoddle was reported to have said: 'You [Dickinson] and I have been physically given two hands and two legs and half-decent brains. Some people have not been born like that for a reason. The

Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards infirmity not only so that we may understand why Asser should highlight his benefactor's shortcomings, but also to appreciate more fully the complex relationship between the (impaired) Anglo-Saxon body and the soul.

Body and soul

Christian doctrine demanded careful regulation of the body in order that the eternal soul should not suffer on account of the sins of the body committed during its comparatively fleeting time on earth. A brief survey of the extant Anglo-Saxon penitential literature is the most effective means of demonstrating the practicalities of the relationship between body and soul, but other sources (particularly Anglo-Saxon poetry) can help illuminate the intricacies of this issue. The penitentials reveal the sins that could be committed by the body and so draw attention to the sorts of corporeal actions that would imperil the fate of the soul at Judgement Day unless proper atonement had been performed in advance. Apart from their predictable preoccupation with the application of penance for sexual transgressions, the penitentials are noticeably concerned with bodily excesses, especially drunkenness and gluttony.[100] For example, the *Penitential of Ecgberht* remarks:

> Those who are drunk against the command of the Lord, if they hold the vow of holiness, this is drunkenness: when the state of mind is altered and the tongue

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karma is working from another lifetime. I have nothing to hide about that. It is not only people with disabilities. What you sow, you have to reap'. The ferocity of the arguments surrounding Hoddle's remarks even provoked the then Prime Minister Tony Blair to comment on the situation: 'Hoddle's position "untenable"', *bbc.co.uk* [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/269929.stm, published 2 February 1999, accessed 28/8/07].

[100] For more on penance for sexual transgressions, see in particular P. J. Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials. The Development of a Sexual Code 550-1150* (Toronto and London, 1984).

babbles and the eyes are confused and dizziness exists and distortion of the stomach and pain follows. If a cleric seven days [of penance]; a monk fourteen days [of penance]; a deacon three weeks [of penance]; a presbyter four weeks [of penance]; a bishop five weeks [of penance]; laymen, three days [of penance] without wine and flesh.[101]

Other penitentials too note penance for drunkenness or gluttony, particularly if these induced vomiting. However, Ecgberht's penitential as well as the *Penitential of Theodore* and that ascribed to Bede contain an interesting caveat – that penance should be waived or 'much reduced' if the penitent had been long abstinent or was unaccustomed to eating or drinking and, in the case of those in holy orders, had consumed no more than his seniors.[102] From these additional regulations we can observe a clear distinction between accidental overindulgence and intentional excess undertaken in fulfilment of bodily desires: the glutton's sin rested in his decision to consume more than that which was necessary to satisfy his body's needs. Through confession and

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101 *Penitential of Ecgberht*, xi.10 (my translation). *Qui vero inebriantur contra preceptum Domini, si votum sanctitatis habent, hæc est ebriositas, quando statum mentes mutantur et lingua balbuttit et oculi turbentur et vestigo* [*vertigo*] *erit et ventris distentio ac dolor sequitur, si clericus*, VII *diebus, monachus* XIV *dies, diaconus* III *ebdomadas, presbyter* IV *ebdomadas, Episcopus* V *ebdomadas, laici tres dies sine vino et carne.* The *Penitential of Ecgberht* is ed. Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, pp. 231-47 and A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Britain and Ireland*, ed. (Oxford, 1869-78, 3 vols.), III:413-31. The earliest extant manuscript of this penitential is Vatican, MS Palatinus Latinus 554, ff. 5-13 s. viii/ix which was produced either in England and taken to Lorsch or written at Lorsch, an important continental centre influenced by Anglo-Saxon scriptorial practices. R. McKitterick, 'The diffusion of insular culture in Neustria between 650 and 850: the implications of the manuscript evidence', in *La Neustrie. Les Pays au Nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. H. Atsma (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 395-432 at p. 403; reprinted in her *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms 6th to 9th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), no. III.

102 *Penitential of Ecgberht*, xi.6; *Penitential of Theodore*, I.i.4; *Penitential of Bede*, vi.5. The *Penitential of Bede* is ed. Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, pp. 220-30; partially trans. McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, pp. 233-7. The earliest manuscript of the penitential that bears Bede's name is: Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS 2223, ff. 17-22 s. viii/ix. Whether or not Bede composed a penitential has been debated for decades and the issue has yet to be satisfactorily resolved. See A. J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1983), pp. 69-73 and his 'The penitentials attributed to Bede', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 573-597.

penance, however, a sinner could hope to assuage the danger that his sins posed to his soul.[103] Penitentials served as priests' handbooks and provided them with guidelines for counselling penitents as well as tariffs of penance that they were to apply using their own discretion on an individual, case-by-case basis.[104] The description of drunkenness in the *Penitential of Ecgberht* provided the priest with the means to draw up a comprehensive list of questions in order that he might properly assess the level of a penitent's inebriation and consequently the seriousness of his sin and so apply the appropriate penance. A penitent would thus be obliged to converse candidly with his priest about his behaviour, exposing how he (mis)used his body not just through the consumption of excessive alcohol and food, but also, most notably, through his participation in illicit sexual activity. Full and frank confession of the sins committed through the body – in all their lurid detail – was required as this extract from the 'Old English Handbook for a Confessor' demonstrates:

> I confess all that I ever saw with my eyes in avarice or calumny, or heard with my ears in vanity, or spoke with my mouth in idleness. I confess to you all the sins of my body, for skin and flesh, and for bone and sinew, and for vein and gristle, and for tongue and cheeks, and for gums and teeth, and for hair and marrow, and for anything soft or hard, wet or dry.[105]

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[103] For the practice of penance in the early middle ages, see A. J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1983); S. Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance 900-1050* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2001), esp. pp. 1-13 which addresses the intricacies of the historiographical debates about the transformation from a system of public penance to a private one; C. Vogel, *Le pécheur et la pénitence dans l'église ancienne* (Paris, 1966) and *Le pécheur et la pénitence au moyen âge* (Paris, 1969).

[104] Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, p. 7-8.

[105] The text of this handbook is contained within R. Fowler, 'A late Old English handbook for the use of a confessor', *Anglia* 83 (1965), 1-34, with the text at 16-34 (this extract is at 17-18); trans. O'Keeffe, 'Body and law in late Anglo-Saxon England', note 7. The principal manuscript is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 265. Similar directions for confession can be found in the text known as 'Canons of Edgar' which should be associated with Archbishop Wulfstan of York (1002-1016): 'Canons

This confessor's handbook dates to the early-eleventh century and so was composed at a time when there are indications that penitential practices in England were changing, but for our purposes here it serves to consolidate the image of confession and penance suggested by earlier penitentials – that the body was an instrument of sin.[106]

The penitentials' message is mirrored elsewhere. 'Body and soul' motifs are relatively common in Anglo-Saxon literary material and the theme was often powerfully employed by the writers of such works. For example, 'Riddle 43' from the mid-to-late-tenth-century *Exeter Book* which ostensibly depicts the rapport between a host and his guest has 'body and soul' as its answer. The riddle maintains that so long as the host 'ministers honourably' to his 'excellent guest' throughout their journey together then both 'will assuredly find, safe at their destination, sustenance and merriment and a countless host of their kin...'.[107] 'Homily IV' from the *Vercelli Book* (of a similar date to the *Exeter Book*) also takes the soul and body as its subject by means of a soul's address to its body on Judgement Day. Because of differences of genre and anticipated audience, the homily self-evidently includes much more in the way of 'fire and brimstone' than the riddle, admonishing its audience that 'those who excite their bodies

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of Edgar. On Confession', ch. 9, ed. and trans. B. Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (London, 1840, 2 vols.), II:395-415 at 404. For the association of this text with Wulfstan, see D. Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, homilist and statesman', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 24 (1942), 25-45 at 29-30; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, I:204-5, 208, 340.

[106] The composer of the 'Handbook' stated that, at the time of his writing, public penance had only recently been introduced to England, but that it was known to 'Christian people across the sea'. Ælfric's *Homilies* seem to confirm that England inherited the dual system of public-private penance that had been revived under the Carolingians. See Frantzen, *Literature of Penance*, pp. 139-142. But cf. Hamilton, *Practice of Penance*, p. 12-16 and B. Bedingfield, 'Public penance in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002), 223-255 (esp. 229-30) who both advise caution when using the penitentials in attempts to decipher changes in how penance worked in practice.

[107] 'Riddle 43', ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, III (New York, 1936), 204; trans. S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 378. There is a facsimile of the *Exeter Book* in *The Exeter Book of OE Poetry*, ed. R. W. Chambers, M. Förster and R. Flower (Bradford, 1933). *The Exeter Book* is: Exeter, Cathedral Library, Codex 3501, fols. 8-130 (with 'Riddle 43' at fol. 112a-112b).

with the greatest evil...will be most strongly bound in the darkness of that gloom',[108] but it still underscores the riddle's essential point that careful regulation of the body during life would benefit both the soul and body in the afterlife. It is in the poem known as *Soul and Body*, however, that the relationship between body and soul is most fully explored. In the poem, which dates to the second half of the tenth century, the soul makes two addresses to the body and appears first as 'the damned soul' and then as 'the blessed soul'.[109] In contrast, the body is passive and mute (the soul itself describes the body as 'dumb and deaf')[110] and appears as a temporary, earthly vessel for the soul, but, importantly, in both of its addresses the soul looks forward toward Judgement Day when body and soul would be permanently reunited. Throughout the poem, however, the soul makes it clear that it is the actions of the body during life that will determine the eternal fate of body and soul when resurrected together. We meet the damned soul first which, the author informs us, must travel from hell to its former body every seventh night for three hundred years or until Judgement Day.[111] The damned soul

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108 'Homily IV', lines 34-7, ed. D. G. Scragg, *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, Early English Text Society 300 (Oxford, 1992), pp. 90-104 at pp. 91-2; trans. F. M. Clough, *The Vercelli Book Homilies. Translations from the Anglo-Saxon*, ed. L. E. Nicholson (Lanham, Maryland, New York and London, 1991), pp. 37-46 at p. 38.

109 The poem *Soul and Body* survives in two principal manuscripts. *Soul and Body I* ('V') is found in *The Vercelli Book* (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CXVIII, fols. 101b-103b) and contains both the addresses of the soul. There is a facsimile in C. Sisam, *The Vercelli Book (Vercelli Biblioteca Capitolare cxviii)* Early English Manuscripts in Facsimilie 19 (Copenhagen, 1976). *Soul and Body II* ('E') survives in *The Exeter Book* (Exeter, Cathedral Library, Codex 3501, fols. 98a-100a) and contains the address by the damned soul only. There is a facsimile in *The Exeter Book of OE Poetry*, ed. R. W. Chambers, M. Förster and R. Flower (Bradford, 1933). Both 'V' and 'E' are edited and translated in *The Old English* Soul and Body, ed. and trans. D. Moffat (Wolfeboro, New Hampshire and Woodbridge, 1990).

110 *Soul and Body* ('E' and 'V'), line 64.

111 *Soul and Body* ('E' and 'V'), lines 9-14. Lines 69-70 and 102-4 indicate that the damned soul is already in hell which suggests that the poet followed the idea of 'double-judgement' (judgement at death and then again at Judgement Day) which was also explored by Caesarius of Arles and Gregory the Great. 'Double-judgement' and the problems that this presented to Christian theology are examined in T. A. Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge and Totowa, New Jersey, *c.* 1976), pp. 30-1. For Bede, however, the it was the second judgement at Judgement Day that was of vital importance: Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, i.6.11, trans. E. Marshall, *The Explanation of the Apocalypse by Venerable Beda* (Oxford, 1878) and his *De temporum ratione*, ch. 40; trans. F. Wallis, *Bede. The Reckoning of Time*, Translated Texts for Historians 29 (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 243-6, with her commentary

berates its body for sins committed during life, crying that 'you were proud of eating and sated with wine; (you) boasted majestically and I craved the body of God and the drink of the spirit' before criticising the body for hoarding wealth rather than donating it to the Lord.[112] In direct contrast, the 'blessed soul' travels 'cheerfully' to its former 'clay vessel' and lavishes praise on its body, remarking that 'you fasted on earth and filled me up with the body of God, the drink of the spirit. You were in poverty and gave me an abundance of pleasures.'[113] *Soul and Body* thus reinforces the message of the penitential literature – that the ways in which the body is used (and abused) in life will have direct consequences when 'the sinful and truthful are divided' on Judgement Day.[114]

We are now left to examine the rather thorny issue of the relationship between physical infirmity and sin. We have just seen that the body was deemed a vehicle for sin and that the actions of the body in life could determine the fate of soul and body after death. But what about those who experienced physical afflictions while still living – were they regarded as already suffering for their sins? King Alfred worried about the ways in which his body could be 'read' by others and feared especially that blindness and leprosy would render him 'useless and contemptible'.[115] And why, we may ask, did Gerald of Aurillac's friends attempt to conceal his temporary blindness 'from the peering eyes of strangers with the greatest care'?[116] The relationship between physical impairment, suffering and sin is complex and it is difficult to formulate a

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on this chapter at pp. 370-3. See the website of Dr. Carolin Esser which explores apocalyptic ideas in Old English literature: http://www.apocalyptic-theories.com/ [accessed 11/6/07].

112 *Soul and Body* ('E' and 'V'), lines 39-41, 57-9 and 75-7.

113 *Soul and Body* ('V'), lines 142-4

114 *Soul and Body* ('V'), line 146.

115 Asser, 74.

116 Odo of Cluny, *Vita Geraldi*, i.10 (*PL* 133 col. 0649B).

straightforward answer to the questions just posed. Until this point we have (almost) entirely restricted our discussion to what we would term today as physical impairments. In the discussion of compensation tariffs above we were able to envisage the impaired body in its most basic and uncompromising form; in contrast, here it is difficult to detach attitudes towards physical impairment and sin from more general conceptualisations of the relationship between sickness and sin. Indeed, there is often only a fine line to be drawn between illness and impairment, particularly chronic illnesses which, like impairments, present the sufferer with long-term difficulties.[117] We must now, then, examine the relationship between sin and the more general concept of 'physical infirmity' which should be understood as a catchall phrase that signifies any bodily disfigurement or ailment.

Biblical precedents established the idea of physical suffering as a medium of divine wrath within Christian thinking. In the Old Testament, bodily suffering often occurs as punishment for disobedience and misdeeds with the most notable incident being the pain of childbirth inflicted on Eve following the Fall: 'To the woman also He said: I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee'.[118] Pope Gregory the Great meditated on the significance of pain during childbirth in his letter to Saint Augustine included in Bede's *Historica Ecclesiastica* and stated

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117 I. Metzler, Personal Communication, 20/6/07. Metzler points out that sickness and impairment can be distinguished from one another by the fact that the former is detrimental to the whole organism whereas the latter may be a permanent condition but with more localised effects.

118 Genesis 3:16. Judith Byrne outlines the evidence for sickness as punishment for sin in Judeo-Christian thought in her 'Sickness as a medium of wrath in scripture and its reflection in the medieval and modern world', in *The Medieval World and the Modern Mind*, ed. M. Brown and S. H. Harrison (Dublin, 2000), pp. 57-73 at 59-63. See also Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, pp. 38-41, with a list of some impairments mentioned in the Old Testament at pp. 38-9.

that women suffer for their indulgence in pleasure 'in the intercourse of the flesh' and, later, '...that all that we suffer in this mortal flesh through the infirmity of nature is ordained by the just judgement of God as a result of sin'.[119] Elsewhere in his letter, Gregory drew a distinction between displays of piety in the Old Testament and those in the New that harmonises well with the different ways in which bodily impairment is treated in the two testaments. According to Gregory, in the former punishments were meted out for incorrect 'outward deeds' whereas in the latter God allocated punishment in accordance with 'what is thought inwardly'.[120] This increased concern for the 'inward disposition' in the New Testament is reflected in the fact that the infirm body appears most regularly in miracles performed by Jesus or one of the apostles during which they forgave sins as an accompaniment to their cures of the body.[121] Of course, this means that the links between bodily ailments and sin remain, but they are less rigid and sickness and impairment are bound more tightly to divine forgiveness and grace. Moreover, there are also examples of miraculous cures in which the link between illness or impairment and sin is not made or is even denied. In one such example, involving a man born blind, Jesus claimed that the man's blindness stemmed not from his parents' or his own sin, but existed so 'that the works of God should be made manifest in him'.[122]

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119 Bede, *HE*, i.27, pp. 90-1 and 92-3. Alfred, in his translations of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, also encountered such ideas. He added to Boethius' text of bk 3, ch. 31 that: 'Even so a woman in travail bringeth forth a child and suffereth great pains, according as she hath formerly enjoyed great delight'; trans. W. J. Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Version of the Consolations of Boethius Done into Modern English, with an Introduction* (Oxford, 1900), p. 76.

120 Bede, *HE*, i.27, pp. 94-5.

121 Biblical references to healing are listed in an appendix in Metzler, 'Disability in medieval Europe', pp. 261-309 and discussed in her *Disability in Medieval Europe*, pp. 41-3 and in C. M. Cusack, '*Graciosi*: medieval Christian attitudes to disability', *Disability and Rehabilitation* 19:10 (1997), 414-419 at 414.

122 John 9:2-3.

Biblical representations of sickness and other infirmities present them as having a dual purpose. They struck as punishment for sinful behaviour, but also worked to reaffirm faith and reliance on an omnipotent God. Augustine of Hippo made just such an assertion in his letter to Proba of 412.[123] Here the bishop explored reasons for prayer, but paid special attention to an individual's desire for the bodily health of themselves, their children and 'those whom they love'. To wish for this was understandable and, Augustine continued, it was also acceptable to want honour and power so long as they were used for purposes of good: 'men do nothing wrong in desiring for themselves and for their kindred the competent portion of necessary things...'. However, should a faithful individual experience any tribulation, including physical pain, then this would serve to reduce pride, encourage patience and punish and eradicate sin. Augustine's letter makes it clear that worldly suffering was both inevitable and necessary, but also fleeting in comparison to the eternal joys which awaited the faithful in heaven. Elsewhere in his writings, the bishop explored the state of the body following resurrection after the Last Judgement; bodies would be perfect, no physical or mental weaknesses would remain and all defects would be removed:

> Shall He not be able to remove and abolish all deformities of the human body, whether common ones or rare and monstrous, which, though in keeping with this miserable life, are yet not to be thought of in connection with that future blessedness; and shall He not be able so to remove them that, while the natural

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123 Augustine, 'Letter to Proba', ed. P. Schaff and trans. J. G. Cunningham, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. 1. The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustin, with a Sketch of his Life and Work* (Buffalo, New York, 1886), no. 130.

but unseemly blemishes are put an end to, the natural substance shall suffer no diminution?[124]

Significantly, however, the bodies of the martyrs would retain their scars and deformities as signs of their honour.[125] For Augustine, a perfect body was a blessing and desirable, but he did not advocate the reverse. An imperfect body was not necessarily a sign that the sufferer was any more sinful than someone who enjoyed good health as even those with 'rare and monstrous deformities' could hope to enjoy 'that future blessedness'. It could, however, be used to encourage the sufferer to meditate on his or her sins and encourage greater religious devotion.

The Anglo-Saxon approach to infirmity and sin bears close resemblance to that of Augustine. Sin could indeed cause illnesses and impairments, but illnesses and impairments did not automatically identify an individual as wholly sinful, nor did it demarcate him or her as spiritually irredeemable. An infirmity could be prompted by a specific sinful act. In Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, for example, Eadbald of Kent (d. 640), son of the first Anglo-Saxon Christian king, Æthelberht (d. 616) was divinely punished with 'frequent fits of madness and possessed by an unclean spirit' on account of his refusal to accept Christianity and his unholy marriage to his father's widow; and Abbess Æthelthryth of Ely (d. 679) claimed she was afflicted with a neck tumour because of 'the guilt of my needless vanity' (a reference to her love of necklaces as a girl).[126] Asser reported that Alfred the Great contracted his original infirmity of piles

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[124] Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. P. Schaff and trans. M. Dods, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Vol. II. St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine* (Buffalo, New York, 1887), XXII.19.

[125] *Ibid.* See Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 56.

[126] Bede, *HE*, ii.5, pp. 150-1 and iv.19, pp. 396-7 respectively. For Bede's understanding of the causes of sickness and, particularly, miraculous cures, see G. I. Berlin, 'Bede's miracle stories: notions of evidence and authority in Old English history', *Neophilologus* 74 (1990), 434-443; B. Colgrave, 'Bede's

(*ficus*) in his youth because he asked God to send an illness that would check his carnal desires and Odo of Cluny wrote that Gerald of Aurillac lost his sight for a year as divine punishment after he attempted to seduce a local girl.[127] All of these sufferers apart from Eadbald (who did, however, subsequently convert to Christianity) cannot be considered exceptionally sinful individuals – quite the contrary, in fact – yet the infirmities of each were recorded in some detail. If we look more closely at the descriptions of their various bodily ailments we find that, whilst sin acted as the initial triggers for their infirmities, it was how the victims responded to their tribulations that was important. Illness and impairments had nobler purposes than simply punishing and identifying the sinful; time and again we are told that the accompanying pain and discomfort helped to distract the mind from earthly temptations and focus it on more spiritual matters. Æthelthryth claimed that the pain of her neck tumour absolved her from the guilt of vanity and Gerald of Aurillac refused to assist his friends in their concealment of his blindness, but waited patiently 'humiliating himself under the chastising hand of the Lord...for the time and the manner in which his Lord might see fit to remove the scourge'.[128]

Gerald's 'chastising hand' is an illusion to the proverb which states that God corrects those whom He loves in the same way that a parent might a child.[129] Boniface quoted this along with other pertinent biblical passages in his letter to Daniel of

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miracle stories', in *Bede. His Life, Times and Writings*, ed. A. H. Hamilton (Oxford, 1935), pp. 201-229; W. T. Foley, 'Suffering and sanctity in Bede's prose life of St Cuthbert', *Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1999), 102-116; C. G. Loomis, 'The miracle traditions of the Venerable Bede', *Speculum* 21 (1946), 404-418; W. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto, 1994); J. Rosenthal, 'Bede's use of miracles in the *Ecclesiastical History*', *Traditio* 31 (1975), 328-335; B. Ward, 'Miracles and history: a reconsideration of the miracle stories used by Bede', in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), pp. 70-76.

[127] Asser, 74 and Odo of Cluny, *Vita Geraldi*, i.9-10 (*PL*, cols. 0647D-0649C). See Nelson, 'Monks, secular men and masculinity', p. 132.

[128] Odo of Cluny, *Vita Geraldi*, i.10 (*PL*, col. 0649C).

[129] Prov. 3:12.

Winchester comforting the bishop as he lost his eyesight and Alfred must have contemplated such ideas since they are explored in detail in Gregory's *Pastoral Care* which we know that the king himself translated.[130] Lantfred also used the proverb to particularly good effect in his *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* (971 x 981).[131] In a lengthy chapter which relates the tale of a citizen of Winchester paralysed after an encounter with one of the three Furies, Lantfred inserted a digression in which he paralleled bodily ailments with disease of the soul:

> He [the paralysed man] is struck down with bodily anguish so that he might acquire strength of mind, since 'God chastizeth and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth'. He is warned that he would require medicine, so that he might first admit and realise that he was diseased through sin; and thus at length he could obtain the health of his soul, since the omnipotent creator of angels and men does not desire the death of sinners but anticipates the conversion of wicked hearts for the better, so that He will not be compelled to exercise that severe judgement which confers eternal punishment on the wicked. If someone shall thus desire to purify his soul from sin, just as that sick man was cured in his

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[130] Tangl 63; trans. Emerton, *Letters of Saint Boniface*, pp. 114-17. The additional biblical passages are: 2 Cor. 12:9-10 and Ps. 33:20. *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, I, ch. 36, pp. 246-61. For more on Alfred and suffering, see A. Scharer, 'The writing of history at King Alfred's court', *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1996), 177-206 at 187-9.

[131] Lantfred's work survives in six manuscripts, the earliest of which date to *c.* 1000. The principal manuscripts are Rouen, BM, U. 107 (1385) (Winchester, s. x/xi), fols. 29r-80v; London, British Library, Royal, MS 15. C. VII (Wincester, s. x/xi), fols. 2r-49v. It also survives in London, British Library, Cotton Nero, E. I, pt I (Worcester, s. xi^{2}), fols. 35r-52v; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius, A. xv, fols. 1-173 (? Canterbury, s. xi^{1}), fols. 144v-145r [*Epistola* only]; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 566 (Fleury, s. xi^{1}), fols. 39r-42v; London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian, A. xiv, fols. 114-79 (York, s. xi^{1}), fol. 158r-v [*Epistola* only]. There is an edition and modern English translation with extensive notes and analysis in *The Cult of St Swithun*, ed. M. Lapidge, Winchester Studies 4.ii The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester (Oxford, 2003), pp. 252-333.

> body, he will without doubt deserve to inherit the blessedness of the heavenly kingdom.[132]

Far from being the punitive actions of a vengeful God, infirmities were understood as a gesture of divine love, a rebuke in order that His children might strive to overcome their inadequacies. For those who humbly endured their suffering, they were the earthly equivalents of the 'badges of honour' that Augustine claimed the martyrs would display in heaven. The penitentials and 'body and soul' literature discussed above warn of the dangers of indulging in worldly excess and bodily pleasures and vividly depicts the torments that awaited both body and soul after their death and resurrection. Thus, we could be forgiven for expecting to find similar attitudes towards those who suffered in their body before death – that their infirm or deformed bodies revealed a corrupt soul that severed them from the Christian faithful on earth. What we find instead, however, are tales of redemption. Sin played its part in these tales as the root cause of infirmities and so, seen in this light, King Alfred's fears about his own physical ailments are understandable. But, Asser was keen to tell us, they were the king's fears alone: '...his fear and horror of that accursed pain would never desert him, but rendered him virtually useless – *as it seemed to him* – for heavenly and worldly affairs'.[133] Set within Asser's *Life* entire, Alfred's suffering adds an additional dimension to the character of the king who bore his physical pain, overcame any potential disadvantages and got on with the practical business of being a leader of men – fighting, governing, hunting, advising and

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[132] Lantred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 3, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 282-5.

[133] Asser, 74. See Kershaw, 'Illness, power and prayer', 221.

educating.[134] It is, in the end, not difficult to envisage Smyth's 'neurotic saint' and 'macho warrior' as one and the same man.

Caring and curing: *medici*, miracles and family

King Alfred's illnesses, although constantly troublesome and periodically 'savage',[135] did not prohibit him from fulfilling his duties as a king. But, we may ask, what about others who suffered in their bodies, those who, for example, had lost a limb, their sight or who endured long-term illness? How did they cope with the difficulties presented by their infirm bodies? In our discussion of the injury tariffs in the laws of Æthelberht and Alfred we saw how financial compensation could go some way in helping to alleviate the difficulties that resulted from debilitating wounds. We need now to examine the broader aspects of practical care available within Anglo-Saxon society in order to understand the types of treatment and support that impaired and infirm individuals could hope to expect. In his late-tenth century 'Life of St Swithun', Ælfric of Eynsham remarked that the cathedral precinct at the Old Minster was 'filled with infirm persons [*alefedum mannum*],[136] such that one could not easily get into the minster' and, later, that the church itself was 'completely hung round, from one end to the other and on either wall, with crutches and with the stools of cripples who had been healed there: and

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134 See in particular, Asser, 76 and 91.

135 Asser, 91.

136 I have here amended Lapidge's translation of *alefedum mannum* from 'disabled persons' to 'infirm persons' to bring it into line with the careful distinctions drawn between 'impairment' and 'disability' in the field of disability studies that are discussed above. *Alefan* in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Based on the Manuscript Collection of the Late Joseph Bosworth, D.D., F.R.S.*, ed. and enlarged T. N. Toller (Oxford, 1898) is translated as 'to become weak, feeble'.

nevertheless they couldn't hang half of them up!'[137] Ælfric's comments, although clouded by his desire to promote the cult of the subject of his work, demonstrate vividly the visibility of impaired people within Anglo-Saxon society. Such individuals were part of the Anglo-Saxon social landscape and, indeed, must have moved through the physical landscape in order to access the sites of caring and curing at which they gathered. To do this, however, many of them would have required assistance not only on their journeys but also at various points throughout their lives; others would have needed long-term care. Whilst care does not, of course, imply caring – the two are different, discrete concepts – there *were* structures in place within Anglo-Saxon society that could fulfil some of the specific requirements of the sick and infirm. As we shall see below, this care could be provided at an institutional level in hospitals attached to monastic foundations, through the personal, familial networks of the infirm themselves or by hired help.

The church played a central role in the care of the sick and impaired not only through its provision of practical healthcare at monastic hospitals but also through the miraculous cures enacted at saints' shrines.[138] In such settings the sick could receive the care that was necessary to improve the health of both the body and the soul; as we have

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[137] Ælfric, 'Life of St Swithun', ch. 10 and 27, ed. M. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies 4.ii The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester (Oxford, 2003), pp. 583-609 at pp. 596-7 and 605-7 respectively. Ælfric's 'Life of St Swithun' survives in three manuscripts: Gloucester, Cathedral Library, MS 35 (s. xi^{1}), fols. 1-3 [fragmentary]; London, British Library, Cotton Otho, B. x (s. xi^{1}), fols. 37r-42v [fragmentary]; London, British Library, Cotton Julius, E. vii (s. xi^{in}), fols. 96v-103r [complete]. St Swithun's remains were moved into the Old Minster on 15 July 971. Ælfric's (and Lantfred's) descriptions of the number of cures at St Swithun's shrine must be approached with caution. Lantfred in particular was keen to stress Winchester's superiority as a town for healing. See G. Rosser, 'The cure of souls in English towns before 1000', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp. 267-284 at p. 276.

[138] For a wide-ranging examination of the development of the hospital, particularly the ways in which its history is intimately connected with that of poor relief, see P. Horden, 'The earliest hospitals in Byzantium, Western Europe, and Islam', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (2005), 361-89.

just seen above the conditions of the two entities were considered to be closely entwined. Bede wrote of a building that was close to the foundation at Whitby 'to which they used to take those who were infirm or who seemed to be at the point of death'.[139] It was here, Bede recorded, that the monk and poet Cædmon died. Before his death, his young attendant prepared a place in this building for him to rest and was also able to provide him with the Eucharist when the dying man requested it.[140] Some hundred years after Bede was writing, Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury (805-32) left land to Christ Church to be used as an infirmary[141] and the New Minster at Winchester possessed an infirmary by about 966.[142] Monastic infirmaries could thus provide on-site care for sick monks and nuns and played an important role in the daily life of religious communities. The *Regularis Concordia*, a 'monastic agreement' drawn up by Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester after a council in King Edgar's presence in the 970s, states that a sick monk should declare his condition to the community before retiring to the *domus infirmorum* in order to receive medical attention from fellow brothers or lay servants.[143]

Receiving treatment for bodily ailments was not the preserve of the religious, however; laymen and women could also seek the aid of a *medicus*. We know that medical knowledge existed in Anglo-Saxon England from the medical texts that survive, but we are restricted in our ability to assess the practical application of this

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139 Bede, *HE*, iv.24, pp. 418-9.

140 *Ibid.*

141 S 1268 (825 x 832). The text is printed in K where it is number 225. See Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 61.

142 Meaney, 'Practice of medicine in England', 226 and note 31. Excavations at Winchester by Martin Biddle in the 1970s uncovered a building that may have been the infirmary. See M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester, 1970: ninth interim report', *Antiquaries Journal* 52 (1972), 93-131 at 118-23.

143 *Regularis Concordia* XIV:98, ed. K. Hallinger, *Consuetudinum saeculi X/XI/XII monumenta non-Cluniacensia*, Corpus consuetudinum monasticarum 7:3 (Siegburg, 1984), 69-147 at 141; trans. T. Symons, *Regularis Concordia Angliae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque. The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (London, 1953), pp. 1-69 at 64.

knowledge given the contexts in which contact between physicians and the sick occurred.[144] Often in our sources the efforts of *medici* feature as unsuccessful preludes to divine cures, but these examples at least demonstrate that knowledge was put into practice and can go some way in indicating the types of medicinal cures that were used.[145] At the monastery of Dacre in the early eighth century, for example, it seems that there was a lively corpus of medical practitioners. Bede recounted the tale of 'a certain young man whose eyelid was disfigured by an unsightly tumour'; doctors applied 'fomentations and ointments' before arguing over the benefits of cutting away the tumour itself. However, the young man was finally cured by hairs from St Cuthbert's head and 'the eyelid was a sound as if there had never been any deformity or

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144 Bald's *Leechbook* is the most notable of the surviving medical texts. It survives in British Library, Royal 12, D. xvii, fol. 1-127v (Winchester, s.x^{med}), a mid-tenth-century copy of an exemplar from *c.* 900 which shows signs of association with King Alfred's circle. It is composed of three books, all of which were copied by the same scribe. The first two books are traditionally described as Bald's *Leechbook*, with the third, anonymous, part of the *Leechbook* known as *Leechbook III*. Bald's *Leechbook* is so named from the colophon at the end of the second book: 'Bald is the owner of this book, which he ordered Cild to write down' (*Bald habet hunc librum Cild quem conscribere iussit*). The standard edition and modern English translation of the *Leechbook* is in *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, ed. and trans. O. Cockayne (London, 1864, 3 vols), II:1-360. For a more detailed discussion about the provenance and production of Bald's *Leechbook*, see W. Bonser, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1963), pp. 24-25; M. L. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 7 (Cambridge, 1993), 74-99; B. Brennessel, M. D. C. Drout and R. Gravel, 'A reassessment of the efficacy of Anglo-Saxon medicine', *Anglo-Saxon England* 34 (2005), 183-95 at 184-5; M. L. Cameron, 'Bald's *Leechbook*: its sources and their use in its compilation', *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983), 153-82; M. L. Cameron, 'Bald's *Leechbook* and cultural interactions in Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990), 5-12; C. H. Talbot, 'Some notes on Anglo-Saxon medicine', *Medical History* 9 (1965), 156-69. Two other texts are worthy of note: the late-tenth-century *Herbarium*, an Old English translation of the late antique herbal falsely attributed to Apuleius with additions from the herbal ascribed to Dioscorides, and the *Lacnunga* ('remedies', so named by Cockayne), an Old English text from the late-tenth or early-eleventh century. The *Herbarium* survives in four manuscripts: an illustrated version in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius, C. iii from *c.* 1000 which has suffered fire damage; London, British Library, MS Harley 585, fols. 1-129v from the late tenth or early eleventh century; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 76, fols. 68-130 from the mid-eleventh century; London, British Library, MS Harley 6258b, fols. 1-51 from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. There is an edition and translation in Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, I:1-325. The *Lacnunga* is in London, British Library, MS Harley 585, fols. 130-151v and 157-193. There is an edition and translation in Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, III:1-80 and J. H. G. Grattan and C. Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine* (London, 1952), pp. 96-205.

145 See V. Flint, 'The early medieval "*medicus*", the saint – and the enchanter', *Social History of Medicine* 2 (1989), 127-45 where she explores the relationship between these three types of healers and argues that in the work of Gregory of Tours the curative powers of the saints were most highly prized, the work of the *medici* second with enchanters trailing in third.

tumour on it'.[146] In another of his works, Bede gave an account of an ailment of St Cuthbert himself. When a young man, Cuthbert suffered from a painful swelling of the knee that rendered him lame and unable to walk. One day when the saint had been taken outside by his attendants he was approached by man on horseback who was clothed in white garments and, when Cuthbert failed to welcome him, he gave the young saint a light-hearted rebuke. Cuthbert replied:

> 'Most readily would I rise and offer you devoted service, if I were not restrained by the fetter of this weakness, the penalty for my sins. I have long been afflicted by this trouble of a swelling in the knee and no doctor with all his care can heal me.' The stranger jumped from his horse and examined the afflicted knee very carefully. Then he said: 'Boil some wheaten flour in milk, spread this poultice while hot upon the swelling, and you will be healed'. With these words he mounted his horse and departed. Cuthbert followed his commands and in a few days was healed. He recognised that he who had given him this advice was an angel, sent by the One who once deigned to send the archangel Raphael to cure the eyes of Tobias.[147]

This extract is particularly informative. It demonstrates once again the connections that could be made between sickness and sin, but it also tells us about medical practice. If we overlook, for a moment, the fact that Cuthbert's cure was worked through an angel, we are left with what appears to be a sensible and suitable cure. Indeed, both Bertram Colgrave and William McCready have remarked on the appropriateness of the

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146 Bede, *HE*, iv.32, pp. 446-9. See Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 309.
147 *VCP*, ch. 2, pp. 160-1.

prescribed remedy.[148] Ultimately, however, Cuthbert attributed his cure to the angel in white and it was this encounter that encouraged him to become more devoted to God, often praying when trouble befell himself and others.[149]

We know more about this type of healing than any others. There are plentiful references to miraculous cures worked at the shrines of the saints and so it is within the context of saints' lives that much of our understanding of caring and curing in Anglo-Saxon England is found. Cuthbert's cure is typical. His bodily cure also gave him a renewed spiritual energy and so the renewed health of his body served as an outward sign of the health of his soul. The relationship between God – the divine physician – and the sick was one of reciprocity. Cuthbert became a more devoted Christian after he received his cure but other tales of miraculous healings indicate that worthiness had to be demonstrated *before* an individual could hope to be granted any alleviation of their infirmities. Asser recorded the great endeavours of King Alfred who went 'to a particular church in which St *Gueriir* lies in peace' and 'lay prostrate in silent prayer a long while in order to beseech the Lord's mercy'. It was through these devout efforts that Alfred as a 'holy suppliant' at last achieved some improvement in his condition.[150] Another example can be found in Lantfred's discussion of the cure of the paralysed man whom we met above. The man was visited by St Swithun who appeared as a being surrounded by golden sunlight and ordered the paralysed man to keep a three-day vigil

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148 B. Colgrave, 'Bede's miracle stories', in *Bede. His Life, Times and Writings*, ed. A. H. Hamilton (Oxford, 1935), pp. 201-229 at p. 227 and his *Two Lives of St Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 312 and 355; McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede*, pp. 32-3.

149 *VCP*, ch. 3, pp. 160-5.

150 Asser, 74. See Kershaw, 'Illness, power and prayer', 206-7, 219-20. St *Guerirr* cannot be identified nor can the church in Cornwall where Asser states that his remains lay. See S. Keynes and M. Lapidge (eds.) *Alfred the Great. Asser's* Life of King Alfred *and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 254, note 141.

at a stone cross in front of the Old Minster, 'behind the tomb of a certain bishop'.[151] Lantfred's conclusions leave no room for doubt about the reason why the man finally received his cure:

> ...the sick man himself had deserved to obtain his health because he did not waver in his faith but persevered in his prayers. If when the first night had passed, he had left the tomb of the glorious bishop and not kept vigil during the second or third nights, he would not have obtained the health he longed for. But because he persevered in his faithful hope, he achieved through pure faith and received through bounteous love that which he wished for with all his heart.[152]

We saw in chapter one that desire for a cure was one of the main reasons why individuals undertook journeys of pilgrimage to sites such as St Swithun's tomb. Saints' shines provided the sick with places in which to congregate in search of a cure for their ailments but it was also a spiritually cathartic exercise. As David Rollason has argued, places that held relics of saints (particularly cathedral churches) were places of worldly power like residences of kings and bishops, *witan* meeting-places, mints, fortifications and ports and their prestige could be increased through careful management and promotion.[153] But more relevant here surely is the other-worldly power invested in such places, for it was here, as Peter Brown has shown, that the saints could intercede with

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151 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 3, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 280-1.

152 *Ibid*, pp. 282-3. For further discussion of this particular cure, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Body and law in late Anglo-Saxon England', 219-20.

153 D. Rollason, 'The shrines of saints in later Anglo-Saxon England: distribution and significance', *Council for British Archaeology. Research Reports* 60 (1986), 32-43 at 32. Patrick Geary has also commented on the desire of churches to possess powerful and prestigious relics but in the context of them as objects of theft. P. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1978).

God for those still earth-bound.[154] Thus, when searching for a cure (or at least some alleviation of their symptoms), the sick were reliant on the skills of *medici* or the power of the saints. If earthly medicine was ineffective, they could seek a cure from the divine physician and could help themselves by ensuring that they were worthy to receive such favour. Essentially, however, whether or not they recovered from an illness or infirmity was beyond their immediate control.

Many of the sicknesses and impairments of individuals described in the sources were acute and so in order to access necessary medical attention, the infirm could rely on assistance from friends and family and, it seems, they could also employ the services of hired help. The friends and neighbours of Lantfred's 'paralysed man', for example, gathered 'around him, lamenting and bewailing and also wondering greatly how so sudden a form of death could have befallen their kinsman'.[155] Furthermore, they carried him in a litter to his own house and watched over him for nine days while trying to locate a physician who could provide a remedy for his sudden illness. Parents played a particularly important role in the care of the sick; there are numerous examples of parents escorting their children to seek the assistance of *medici* or the intercession of the saints.[156] It seems that this sort of care and attention by the friends and family of the

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154 P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, IL, 1981), especially pp. 50-68.

155 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 3, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 278-9.

156 Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, ch. 41, ed. and trans B. Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge, 1956), contains a particularly poignant tale of a young noble boy called Hwætred who was struck down by a great madness 'while he was still at all times dutifully subject to his parents'. After four years, 'his sorrowing parents were wishing that their son might die rather than live', but they carried him to Guthlac at Crowland 'with his limbs bound' and found a cure. In another example, Hygeburg, *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis*, ch. 1, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH Scriptores (in folio)* 15:1 (Hanover, 1887), pp. 86-106 at 88; trans. C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London and New York, 1954), pp. 153-77 at 154-5 reports that the young saint was cured of a life-threatening illness when taken by his parents to a standing cross (which, of course, also marked out Willibald as particularly beloved of God from his infancy). See Foot, *Monastic Life*, p. 311.

sick or impaired was not only provided but was to be anticipated; the monk who described the miraculous healing of Genovefa – who had been born deaf and mute in *c.* 850 – at the shrine of St Martin at Chablis, berated her parents, the Count and Countess of Langres, for rejecting their daughter and treating her 'like a monster, a brutish animal, more wretched than the slave of one of their domestic serving girls'.[157] As we have seen above, in England provisions for the deaf and dumb were enshrined in law. Clause fourteen of King Alfred's law-code regarding individuals born deaf and dumb demonstrates the importance of kinship relationships for those who could not participate in legal proceedings in the usual manner.[158] But, if we accept Wormald's argument that an actual case of a father who refused to take responsibility for his child prompted this law, we can also observe that Alfred felt it necessary to force fathers to support their impaired children.[159] In general, individuals did not become legally culpable for their actions until around the age of twelve, so in the sphere of justice at least, the dependency of the deaf and dumb on their fathers can in some ways be likened to that of a minor.[160] Indeed, in the laws of Kings Æthelred and Cnut produced under the

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157 M. Coens, 'Un miracle posthume de S. Martin', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 50 (1932), 284-94, quotation at 291; trans. J. M. H. Smith, *Europe After Rome. A New Cultural History, 500-1000* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 15-6 with discussion of Genovefa at pp. 15-17 and 73-4. The focus of the cult of St Martin was his tomb just outside Tours even after his relics had been removed to Chablis for safekeeping at some point 872-85 due to the threat posed by viking raiders.

158 Alfred, 14: 'If anyone is born dumb and deaf, so that he can neither deny nor confess his wrongdoings, his father shall pay compensation for his misdeeds'. This clause was discussed briefly by Sally Crawford in her 'Perceptions of the disabled body in the Anglo-Saxon burial ritual', paper presented at 'Historicising Disability: the Middle Ages and After', York, 2 December 2006.

159 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, I:282.

160 Hlothere and Eadric, 6 asserts that the land of a man who died leaving a young son should be managed by a male relative until the boy reached the age of ten. Ine of Wessex set the age of majority at ten; Ine, 7:2 states that 'a ten year old child can be [regarded as] an accessory to theft'. By the early-tenth century this had been raised to twelve (see VI Æthelstan, 1:1) and Æthelstan considered raising this further to fifteen (VI Æthelstan, 12:1), but II Cnut, 20 and 21 again declare the legal age of majority to be twelve. See S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1999), pp. 47-56 where she discusses 'age thresholds'; M. S. Kuefler, '"A wryed existence": attitudes towards children in Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of Social History* 24 (1991), 823-34. Thomas Charles-Edwards has demonstrated that for medieval Welsh children their childhood ended at age fourteen for a boy and twelve for a girl: *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 175-6.

influence of Archbishop Wulfstan directions for how to punish misdeeds committed by the sick also deal with punishments for the young and the poor; when passing judgements 'careful discrimination must be made between age and youth, wealth and poverty, health and sickness' because 'the strong and the weak are not alike nor can they bear a like burden, any more than the sick can be treated like the sound'.[161] There are additional hints of the importance of kin in the care of the impaired in the Will of Wulfric Spott (1002 x 1004) who left an estate at Elford, Staffordshire to his 'helpless, pitiful daughter' (*ear[m]an dehter*).[162] Wulfric was insistent that she should not forfeit the bequest and appointed as his daughter's guardian a certain Ælfhelm (who was probably her uncle) who was to protect her and her land 'as long as she is capable of holding it'.[163] Quite why Wulfric should make such arrangements for his daughter is unclear; protection for minors who were major legatees is understandable but Wulfric's daughter seems to have been an adult who was left only a modest bequest.[164] Christine Fell has therefore suggested that Wulfric's 'poor daughter' was impaired in some way and that her father wanted to secure her future by placing her into the care of her uncle.[165]

Family and friends were, then, key providers of care for the sick and impaired but additional assistance could also be given by what could be termed 'hired help'.

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[161] VI Æthelred, 52. The sub-clause to this law proceeds to make an additional distinction between misdeeds committed voluntarily and those committed unintentionally with the former, of course, requiring harsher penalties. See also II Cnut, 68:1*b*.

[162] S 1536. *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. and trans. D. Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930), no. 17, pp. 46-51 at p. 46, line 27.

[163] *Ibid.*, line 1, p. 48.

[164] C. Fell *et al.*, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1984), p. 76 gives the example of Æthelgifu who appointed in her will (980 x 990) a female protector for her main male heir, Leofsige, which suggests that he was probably a minor when her will was drawn up. S 1497. An edition and translation of the will can be found in *The Will of Æthelgifu. A Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript*, ed. and trans. D. Whitelock (Oxford, 1968).

[165] Fell *et al.*, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 75-6.

Evidence for this is not abundant and so there are restrictions on the extent to which we can explore this aspect of the support available for those who were infirm. The two accounts of the miracles of St Swithun by Lantfred and Ælfric are particularly useful in this respect and indeed these texts provide us with almost all of our examples of this type of aid. Guides for the blind make notably frequent appearances as many of the cures by St Swithun were of the blind along with the deaf, dumb and 'even the paralysed' through which Lantfred and Ælfric could invoke biblical parallels with the healings performed by Christ.[166] Of one particular man from *Hunum*,[167] Lantfred noted that he 'had a guide to lead him about (*as people who are deprived of eyesight are accustomed to have*) who would take him either to church or to wherever he needed to go, and then would take him back home whenever he wished'.[168] Although there is no mention of any money changing hands in this relationship, it is clear from the way in which Lantfred discussed the guide that he was contracted to the blind man by some form of employment and was not tied by any familial obligations. We are told that the guide became 'exceedingly angry and abandoned the blind man far from his lodgings'.[169] Fortunately, however, the blind man was cured by St Swithun and he was able to make his way home safely much to the astonishment of his neighbours and

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166 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 22, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 306-7. Healings by Christ focused particularly on the blind, deaf, dumb and lame. Biblical references to healing are listed in an appendix in Metzler, 'Disability in medieval Europe', pp. 261-309, but see in particular Mt. 11:5, 12:22, 15:30-1, 20:30-4; 21:14; Mk. 2:3-12, 7:32-7, 8:22-5, 10:46-52; Lk. 4:18, 7:21-2, 11:14, 13:11-13, 14:13, 14:21, 18:35-43; Jn. 5:2-9, 9:1-7, 10:21, 11:37; Ac. 3:2-11, 8:7-8, 14:8-10. These allude to Isaiah 35:5-6 which prophesises that in Christ's kingdom 'the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free...'.

167 *Hunum* cannot be identified. Lapidge has suggested that Lantfred is referring to Huntingdonshire: *The Cult of St Swithun*, ed. M. Lapidge, p. 300, note 201.

168 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 18, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 300-1.

169 *Ibid.*

kinsmen.[170] In another example, contained within both Lantfred and Ælfric's texts, three blind women from the Isle of Wight are guided by a mute youth to St Swithun's shrine where all four were cured of their impairments.[171] Here we can see that the sensory deficiency of the blind women is compensated to some extent by their association with the young boy – and, indeed, vice versa – and so together they were able to achieve their common goal of visiting St Swithun's shrine. Lantfred makes just such a statement in another similar example in which a blind woman decided to unite with a mute woman for the duration of her journey to Winchester: 'the mute woman guided the blind for the whole journey; the blind one asked directions of passers-by for her guide'.[172] Tales of cures of blindness by St Swithun thus demonstrate the ways in which the visually impaired and mute could attempt to cope with their disadvantages. Of course, given the literary context in which they appear, these individuals were ultimately released from their misfortunes, but before this they were able to seek extra-familial assistance which allowed them to contend with the specific problems that they faced.

Conclusion

We have ended far from where we began this chapter with our examination of Marc Quinn's sculpture 'Alison Lapper Pregnant' and so now we must draw together the

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170 *Ibid.* In his discussion of the blind man's cure, Lantfred quotes directly from Matthew 9:30 and Luke 24:31. See *The Cult of St Swithun*, ed. M. Lapidge, p. 301, note 206.

171 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 5, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 288-9 and Ælfric, 'Life of St Swithun', ch. 11, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 596-7.

172 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, ch. 21, ed. and trans. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 304-5.

many strands of our discussion in order to formulate answers to the central questions that have been driving this examination of Anglo-Saxon attitudes to the body. We have used a modern understanding of distinctions between 'impairment' and 'disability' for two purposes. Firstly, as a means of assessing whether there existed in Anglo-Saxon England an appreciation of the disadvantages that could be caused by physical dysfunctionalities from which we may explore whether those who were impaired were regarded as a distinct social group. Secondly, if we were to show that such a group did indeed exist, whether or not its members experienced any form of prejudice or stigmatisation.

The first of these is perhaps the easier to answer. We have made an argument above that the injury tariffs contained within in the laws of Æthelberht and Alfred were devised on the basis of the severity of injuries afflicted, demonstrating that these two kings at least had an appreciation of the different degrees of distress and problems that could be caused by various injuries. Accordingly, they allocated higher levels of compensation for wounds that would have hindered a victim's ability to lead an active life and reserved their greatest payments for wounds to the extremities and, in Alfred's case, for serious neck injuries. We also observed, however, the importance that was placed on both men's and women's capability to reproduce which highlights the value that was placed on fertility and procreation in Anglo-Saxon England. Alfred's law-code also gave us our first indication of the types of extra-ordinary assistance that was available for the impaired in Anglo-Saxon England. His code includes the only reference to congenital impairment in the extant Anglo-Saxon legal material; his arrangements for fathers to take responsibility for the actions of their deaf and dumb

children indicates that the king wanted to ensure that such individuals had access to the law and, of course, that they could also be held accountable for any wrongdoings. Wider networks of support for impaired individuals also placed emphasis on the importance of kinship relations. Kin could help transport infirm relatives to sites where they could receive attention for their frailties, perhaps to a *medicus* or a shrine where they could hope to receive a divine cure. Such aid could also be provided by hired help; our examples of this are restricted to the tenth-century accounts by Lantfred and Ælfric of the miracles performed by St Swithun, but it would not be too presumptuous to assume that such assistance would have been available before this time since, particularly in reference to guides for the blind, Lanfred noted that this was customary practice. However, whilst there are clear signs that there was an appreciation of the disadvantages impaired Anglo-Saxons could experience, there is no indication that such individuals formed a distinct social category within Anglo-Saxon England. Our evidence indicates that impairments formed part of an individual's identity – he or she could be deaf, dumb, blind or crippled, but there was no sense that he or she belonged to a greater collective of 'the disabled'.

The second of our questions is more difficult to answer. Our examination of the connections between physical impairment and sin has allowed us to explore whether or not the Anglo-Saxon impaired were regarded as particularly more sinful than those who enjoyed better health. We discussed in detail the links that were made between the body and sin (particularly eyesight) and observed that the body was regarded as a vehicle for sin. Bodily excesses required correction through penance in order to assuage the damage done to the health of the soul; the poem *Body and Soul* indicates the risks that

individuals took if they did not atone for their gluttonous behaviour. It is clear, then, that Anglo-Saxons believed that abuses of the body in life had a detrimental effect on the fate of both body and soul after death, but it is more difficult to ascertain whether or not earthly impairments were perceived as a manifestation of an innately sinful individual. Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, suggests that the king feared his infirmities would be read as a sign of the condition of his internal soul and there is additional evidence contained within Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Odo of Cluny's *Vita Geraldi* and Lanfred's *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* which supports the idea that impairment was indeed linked to sin. However, through our careful analysis of the sources we have observed that Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards sickness and other infirmities were firmly embedded within the rhetoric of salvation; sin may have served as a trigger for bodily impairments, but working within this was the love of God who chastised His children so that they might increase their devotion to Him and secure Christ's favour on the Day of Judgement.

Conclusion

> Thus with artistry has the Saviour of the multitudes throughout the world shaped and appointed and guided the destiny of every one of humankind on earth. Therefore let everyone now utter thanks to him for all that he for his mercies' sake ordains for men.[1]

This thesis has served to demonstrate the important role that social exclusion played in the maintenance of social identity in Anglo-Saxon Wessex. It has shown that it is not possible to formulate a comprehensive understanding of social cohesion and coherence without examining the types of people who were excluded and the reasons for their exclusion. Other historians might have chosen to structure this thesis in a rather different manner from this; they would perhaps have located the concept of exclusion within a chronological framework in order to demonstrate more overtly change over time or explored in more depth one of the mechanisms through which Anglo-Saxon individuals were excluded. However, my decision to divide my chapters by categories of the excluded was consciously-made and through the imposition of this typology I have been able to highlight the different ways in which the idea of social exclusion can

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1 *The Fortunes of Men*, lines 93-8, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Record, III (New York, 1936), pp. 154-6 at 156; trans. S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), pp. 341-3 at 343. *The Fortunes of Men* survives in the mid-to-late-tenth-century *The Exeter Book* which is: Exeter, Cathedral Library, Codex 3501, fols. 8-130, with *The Fortunes of Men* at fols. 87^{a}-88^{b}.

be usefully interpreted and applied. Furthermore, by approaching the topic in this way, I have been able to explore the different experiences of the Anglo-Saxon excluded, shining at least a small amount of light on the lives of various peoples, some of whom who have, until now, received limited academic attention.

In chapter one we explored the idea of social exclusion as a type of self-imposed exile. In the case of Anglo-Saxon missionaries of the late seventh and eighth centuries their exclusion took the form of physical separation from their homeland. They left behind the security and comfort provided by their existing lifestyles and social networks, severing themselves from familiar environments in order to devote their lives to preaching the word of God to heathen peoples on the continent. Most importantly, however, we identified that their physical distance from Anglo-Saxon England did not mean that missionaries were isolated from all that they had known before. Quite the contrary, in fact. Many missionaries left Anglo-Saxon England to join kin already working on the continent and familial relations played a key role in fostering a sense of community for those who were working in the mission-fields. However, the systems of support that missionaries were able to exploit extended far beyond their immediate circle. Through our exploration of the correspondence of Boniface and Lull we established that missionaries remained fully entrenched within formal and informal ecclesiastical networks. They wrote to and received letters from a wide variety of people, including associates from England and exchanged words of advice and comfort as well as small tokens of affection that helped to reinforce the bonds of friendship. In the second section of this chapter we examined Anglo-Saxon pilgrimages which we understood to be any journey of religious devotion to a sacred site. We employed a

looser interpretation of exile here and made use of Victor Turner's model of pilgrimage which argues that all pilgrims, whether they travel abroad or to a shrine in their native land experience a sense of dislocation and alienation. Once again, we noted that pilgrims were inspired to undertake their journeys through their devotion to God, many hoping that their willingness to travel what in some cases were long distances to sacred sites would encourage God to grant them a divine cure for a bodily ailment. More significantly, however, we observed that pilgrims too were able to exploit systems of support while they were away from home. Hostels provided vital services, particularly to those who made lengthy journeys. It was at such places that pilgrims could rest and recuperate from the physical strains of their journeys and perhaps meet other likeminded Anglo-Saxons with whom they could share their experiences and who could accompany them on subsequent stages of their pilgrimages.

In chapter two we sustained the idea of understanding the concept of social exclusion as exile and, again, this served to highlight how important it was for all Anglo-Saxons to be included within kinship groups and wider networks of support. Through our examination of outlawry and excommunication we were able to observe the devastating impact that these forms of exclusion could have on the lives of those who were subjected to such punishments. Sentences of outlawry and excommunication were passed on those who persistently refused to adhere to Anglo-Saxon systems of control that sought to maintain internal social stability and harmony. Repeated disregard for the laws of the land and the tenets of the Christian Church resulted in the forcible ejection of such individuals from membership of Anglo-Saxon society and the community of the faithful. For outlaws, the most serious consequence of their exclusion

was that they lost the right to associate with their kin, meaning that they were removed from the protective environment provided by family networks; legally they became 'non-persons' and could be killed with impunity by anyone who encountered them. In order to ensure the successful implementation of outlawry, law-makers also demanded that outlaws forfeited any land that they possessed, making it more difficult for any such individuals to remain within the territory from which they had been banished. Many of the features that defined Anglo-Saxon secular exile through outlawry were paralleled in its religious equivalent, excommunication. Whilst it did not always involve complete severance of ties from kin or physical ostracism, it did limit an individual's entitlement to participate in religious worship and to receive the spiritual benefits offered by the Eucharist. However, in the late Anglo-Saxon period, promulgations about excommunication became more severe. Tenth-century kings placed tighter restrictions on the extent to which an excommunicate could associate with other Anglo-Saxons – including themselves – in order that he could not 'infect others with his wickedness'.[2] The most significant commonality between Anglo-Saxon outlawry and excommunication, however, is the fact that both could be revoked; so long as outlaws and excommunicates made amends for their previous actions and consented to live within the boundaries of acceptable social behaviour, they could hope to re-integrate into Anglo-Saxon society.

Chapter three explored in more depth the methods that Anglo-Saxon law-makers used to draw these lines between acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour. In a comprehensive investigation into the working of the Anglo-Saxon justice system, we

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2 *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church. The First Part Containing the* Sermones Catholici *or Homilies of Ælfric*, ed. and trans. B. Thorpe (London, 1844, 2 vols.), II:124-6.

were able to determine the types of behaviours that kings and other figures of authority identified as incompatible with their vision for an ordered and stable society. Theft sat at the heart of Anglo-Saxon conceptualisations of deviancy; the social disruption caused by this offence troubled Anglo-Saxon law-makers from the seventh century, but their legislation against it intensified from the late-ninth century, reaching a peak during the reign of King Æthelstan (924-39) who, we argued, associated theft with the serious offence of disloyalty to the king. More importantly, this chapter examined the range of Anglo-Saxon punishments that were used to penalise wrongdoers for their actions. In the early Anglo-Saxon period, efforts to restore social harmony after an offence had been committed relied most heavily on the systems of *bót*, *wíte* and wergeld. Together these forced lawbreakers to recognise the damage caused by their actions and offered a means of compensating victims for any distress or loss they had suffered as well as the king for the disruption to the peace of his realm. However, in the tenth century, law-makers began to re-evaluate the ways in which they dealt with offenders. Anglo-Saxon systems of justice became more sophisticated (although not necessarily more intricate) as kings delegated more power into the hands of their reeves and men of the Hundred. At the same time, they began to turn more often to physical chastisement as a method of punishment and, more significantly, stipulated that those who committed the most serious of offences – particularly theft – should be executed. This latter development indicates that law-makers of the tenth century became ever more intolerant of those who deviated from the codes of conduct to which all of their subjects were expected to adhere and, accordingly, they forfeited their right to life.

In chapters four and five we understood the concept of social exclusion as 'social disadvantage' and used them to explore whether or not the legal status of slaves and the physical dysfunctionalities of the impaired affected their ability to belong. In chapter four, we searched for a new definition of Anglo-Saxon slavery and found that more traditional models – particularly legalistic understandings of slavery – can continue to be useful not only in efforts to determine what made an Anglo-Saxon slave a 'slave', but also in explorations of the slave experience. The new concept of 'unfreedom' has encouraged medievalists to think more deeply about a range of connected issues such as allegiance and servitude, but appreciation for this 'unfreedom' spectrum has led to the obscuration of just where and how slaves – the traditional 'unfree' – fitted within the 'infinite gradations' of society. Through our examination of the law-codes, we were able to observe that slaves lacked an independent 'legal personality' and were treated solely as the property of their masters. Consequently, this meant that they were excluded from the wergeld system that sought to protect the lives of all freemen. Compensation *was* required, however, if anyone injured a slave, but it was the slave's master who was able to make a claim to this as reimbursement for the damage done to what was essentially his property. We also examined the wider consequences of the legal status of the Anglo-Saxon slave in order to establish more fully what it meant not to be free. The legal restrictions that were placed on his right to own goods and property meant that he could not participate in the usual channels of justice through which freemen were allocated punishments appropriate to their crimes – *bót*, *wíte* and wergeld. Instead, law-makers turned to physical chastisement as a means of correction, although, as we saw, the matter is complicated by the fact that they

sometimes promulgated additional arrangements that allowed slave masters or even slaves themselves to extricate a slave from the threat of physical punishment. It is perhaps the last section of this chapter, however, that offers most in the way of a novel understanding of Anglo-Saxon slavery by emphasising the importance of the moment of manumission. It was during such events that the nature of the Anglo-Saxon slave came most sharply into focus; these solemn and sacred ceremonies transformed him from a legally-owned slave into a freedman and thus altered his position on the divinely ordered social ladder. With his new status came new freedoms. He gained the right to move more freely and to seek a lord – not a master – to whom he could pledge his allegiance.

In the fifth and final chapter of this thesis, we used what is known in current discourses about disability as the 'social model of disability' as a way of exploring Anglo-Saxon attitudes to the physically impaired. By making a distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability' we were able to appreciate more fully the disadvantages that could be caused by bodily ailments and to establish whether or not the impaired suffered any marginalisation and discrimination on account of their bodily infirmities. Again, the corpus of Anglo-Saxon legal material was important for this chapter; we observed the ways in which bodies could be damaged and the impact that injuries could have on an individual's existing lifestyle patterns. Æthelberht (d. 616) and Alfred (871-899) understood that impairments could vary in the levels of difficulties that they caused and arranged the injury tariffs contained within their laws accordingly. Serious wounds, particularly those that resulted in the loss of an arm or leg, incurred the highest payments in order to help victims adjust to their new circumstances and compensate for

any reduction in their ability to support themselves and their families financially. We also examined more widely attitudes to the impaired and attempted to ascertain the strength and significance of the connections between sin and physical impairment. Whilst there are clear signs that sin was regarded as a cause of impairments and other bodily infirmities, we found, somewhat unexpectedly, that this did not lead to any form of marginalisation or exclusion. In fact, Anglo-Saxons were surprisingly charitable to those who were not physically whole and the impaired could depend on family, friends and hired help for assistance in overcoming their difficulties.

The late Anglo-Saxon poem known as *The Fortunes of Men*, from where the passage quoted above is taken, captures the essence of this thesis. It is a poignant poem of human experience and lists a number of different fates that awaited men as they made their way through the many trials and tribulations of earthly life. Many of the characters in the poem we have encountered in this thesis. We meet the voyager who was swept away by 'wild weather' and the 'friendless man' who must live an outlaw's life in the remote and 'dangerous territory of alien peoples'. Later, a malefactor, swinging high on the gallows; another who has to 'endure a life deprived of his eyes' light and to grope about with his hands' and still another 'who lame in foot, infirm from lesions of the sinew, will have to bewail his painful affliction and, oppressed in mind, mourn his destiny'. The concept of social exclusion as an academic tool for understanding social identity and cohesion may be a modern-day phenomenon, but it seems that in Anglo-Saxon England over a thousand years ago one poet at least appreciated what it could mean not to belong.

Suggestions for future research

This thesis was originally inspired by the contemporary discourse about social exclusion in modern British society, but it has demonstrated that the concept has potential as a new area of historical study. Above all, I hope that it will encourage others to apply the concept to other past societies in order to appreciate more fully how these groups maintained their senses of identity and coherence. More specifically, there is scope to extend and explore in more depth some of the issues touched upon in chapter five. In this chapter, we observed the ways in which Anglo-Saxons attempted to help the physically impaired overcome the difficulties caused by their bodily infirmities. Future research could examine more fully the ideas of charity and compassion and investigate the systems of support that were available to other groups that Anglo-Saxons indentified as especially needy, vulnerable or dependent such as the poor, widows and orphans.

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