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Sarah Rose Edwards Obenauf

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**“SED NEQUE SILENTIO PRETEREUNDUM”: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
MIRACLES OF SAINT WILLIAM OF NORWICH**

By

Sarah Rose Edwards Obenauf

B.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2013

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
History**

The University of New Mexico
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ABSTRACT

William of Norwich was born around 1132, and, according to his biographer Thomas of Monmouth, he was killed by Jews during Easter week of 1144. Consequently, whenever William is mentioned in modern scholarship, it is almost always in relation to Jewish ritual murder and the blood libel legend. To date, no scholarship has systematically categorized or analyzed the miracles and visions contained in *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* nor discussed what these stories suggest about the pilgrims who visited his tomb. Using disability theory, this thesis analyzes eighty medical miracles performed by the boy saint. I begin by categorizing and analyzing the miracles according to the impairments that the pilgrims suffered. Because the cures took place within the social context of a crowd gathered at William’s tomb, I argue that it was society that determined whether or not a cure was efficacious. I then look at the practical considerations of these journeys by examining the pilgrims’ familial support systems, technological aids such as crutches or handbarrows, and modes of transportation. In these ways, I propose that people with impairments and disabilities were far from the outskirts of society, but, rather, that their presence helped to construct and reaffirm the core beliefs upon which medieval society was built.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------------|
| List of Figures..... | ix |
| List of Miracles Analyzed in Thesis | x |
| Timeline | xi |
| Map of Medieval Norwich..... | xii |
| A Note on Translations..... | xiii |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| William of Norwich (ca. 1132-1144)..... | 5 |
| Thomas of Monmouth (d. ca. 1173) | 26 |
| The City of Norwich..... | 28 |
| Medieval Pilgrimage..... | 31 |
| Disability Studies | 34 |
| Combining Medieval Pilgrimage and Disability Studies..... | 43 |
| Chapter 2 Analysis of the Miracles | 44 |
| Overview of the Miracles..... | 45 |
| Unidentified Illness..... | 50 |
| Pilgrims Bent Double..... | 53 |
| Madness and Demonic Possession..... | 62 |
| Blind and Mute Pilgrims..... | 69 |
| Other Common Ailments..... | 77 |
| Less Common Ailments..... | 85 |
| Rare Ailments | 101 |
| Summary..... | 104 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 3 Contexts of Traveling: Familial Support and Modes of Transportation ... | 106 |
| Pilgrims Traveling Alone..... | 108 |
| Pilgrims with Familial Support: Children..... | 115 |
| Pilgrims with Familial Support: Adults | 131 |
| Pilgrims Brought to the Tomb with Technological Aid | 145 |
| Pilgrims and Spiritual Support..... | 154 |
| Summary | 158 |
| Conclusion | 161 |
| References | 168 |
| Primary Sources | 168 |
| Secondary Sources | 168 |
| Appendices..... | 173 |
| Appendix A Pilgrim Origins..... | 174 |
| Appendix B Original Translations from the <i>Life and Miracles of St William of</i> <i>Norwich</i> | 180 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Figure 1.1:</i> A painting at Holy Trinity, Loddon, Norfolk, depicting the torture and murder of St. William | 9 |
| <i>Figure 1.2:</i> Obverse and reverse of coin minted by Eustace the moneyer of Norwich | 28 |
| <i>Figure 3.1:</i> Image of a pilgrim offering a wax leg to the shrine of Saint William Fitzherbert (1324-1472) at York Minster | 110 |

List of Miracles Analyzed in Thesis

(taken from Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. Miri Rubin)

Unless otherwise noted with a (2) or a (4), each miracle concerns only one pilgrim.
Bracketed numbers are in Jessopp and James.

| | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Book III: | IV.xiii | VI.ix |
| III.iv | Book IV total: 12 | VI.x |
| III.v | | VI.xii [VI.xi] |
| III.vii | Book V: | VI.xiii [VI.xii] |
| III.viii | V.iii | VI.xiv [VI.xiii] |
| III.ix | V.iv (2) | VI.xv [VI.xiv] |
| III.xi | V.vi | VI.xvi [VI.xv] |
| III.xiv | V.viii | VI.xvii [VI.xvi] |
| III.xvi | V.ix | Book VI total: 16 |
| III.xvii | V.xii | |
| III.xviii | V.xiii | Book VII: |
| III.xxii | V.xiv | VII.i (2) |
| III.xxiv | V.xv | VII.ii |
| III.xxv | V.xvi | VII.iii |
| III.xxvi | V.xvii | VII.iv |
| III.xxvii | V.xviii | VII.v |
| III.xxviii | V.xix | VII.vi |
| III.xxx | V.xxii | VII.ix |
| III.xxxii | V.xxiii | VII.x |
| Book III total: 18 | Book V total: 16 | VII.xi |
| | | VII.xii |
| Book IV: | Book VI: | VII.xiv |
| IV.ii (2) | VI.ii | VII.xv |
| IV.iii (2) | VI.iii | VII.xvi (4) |
| IV.iv | VI.iv | VII.xix |
| IV.v | VI.v | Book VII total: 18 |
| IV.vi | VI.vi | |
| IV.xi (2) | VI.vii (2) | Grand Total: 80 |
| IV.xii (2) | VI.viii | |

Timeline

(adapted from E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe*, xi–xii; and Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James, lxxxix–xc)

- 1066 Norman Conquest of England
- 1096 Foundation of Norwich Cathedral
- c. 1132 Birth of William of Norwich**
- 1135 Death of Henry I; nephew Stephen of Blois becomes king
- Civil War**
- 1144 (March) Death of William of Norwich**
(April 24) William's body moved from Thorpe Wood to Monks' Cemetery
(First Translation)
- 1146/1147 William Turbe elected bishop of Norwich; Sheriff John de Chesney dies
- 1147–1149 Second Crusade**
- c. 1150 Thomas of Monmouth begins *Life and Passion of William of Norwich*;**
William's body moved from Monks' Cemetery to chapter house **(Second Translation)**
- 1151 William's body moved from chapter house to high altar of cathedral
(Third Translation)
- 1154 (April 5) William's body moved from high altar to Martyrs' Chapel
(Fourth Translation)
(Oct. 25) Death of King Stephen
- c. 1172 Completion of *Life and Passion of William of Norwich***
- c. 1173 Death of Bishop William Turbe

A Note on Translations

Unless otherwise noted, all English translations come from Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, edited and translated by Miri Rubin (London: Penguin Books, 2014).

All original Latin phrases and words come from Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, edited and translated by Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896).

Chapter 1

Introduction

In Book VII.xiv of *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, Thomas of Monmouth records his account of the following miracle:

There was in Norwich an eight-year-old girl named Agnes, whose father was called Bondo Hoc, and her mother Gunnilda. From the time of her birth she suffered badly from the illness of podagra in foot and hand. She could not raise herself by her own strength or even turn from one side to another without the support of a helper. And also the muscles in her neck were weakened, and, to make things worse, her left cheek stuck to the left shoulder so inseparably that you would see them embedded each in the other, and when the shoulder was bent the neck itself could in no way bend in any [other] direction. There was a great deal of discomfort in walking with gouty feet, in touching with twisted hands, and the head attached to the shoulder impeded a normal ability to see, rise, turn and eat. So whenever she needed to eat, the food was crumbled on the ground or on a board, and, lying on the ground, she ate like a beast; and she could only eat what her tongue and teeth managed to reach. And so, weak and helpless in her whole body, she was turned [in bed], raised up and carried around by the hands of others. And so, in the hour of matins on the second Sunday in Lent she was taken in her mother's arms to the tomb of the holy martyr William, and before all the people who had gathered in that church on that feast day she suddenly obtained the remedy of health by the intervening merits of the holy martyr. And, following this, we ought to consider how great and how merciful is the power of saints, that those weak in their whole body on arrival are sent away healthy.¹

This story is emblematic of the eighty miracles of medical healing in the *Life* that I will be examining in my thesis. Here, Thomas walks us through the steps pilgrims took in order to be healed at William's tomb: the decision to undertake the pilgrimage, the pilgrimage itself, and the act of healing at the tomb. As I will argue, all of these phases took place within a social construct. Indeed, Thomas's accounts are rife with people coming to the tomb at the advice of and with their families, as well as with crowds witnessing the healings. Moreover, these stories frequently point to the role of families in deciding to seek out a cure for whatever the pilgrim was suffering from (that is, the disability); the family then came with or brought the

¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. Miri Rubin (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 181–2, Book VII.xiv. Hereafter, Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*.

pilgrim to William's tomb for healing; and, finally, a cure was manifested and the pilgrim was declared healed once society deemed them so. It is these lived experiences of the pilgrims, and their social contexts, that I explore in this thesis.

The Life and Passion of William of Norwich (composed 1150-1172) features the first English example of ritual murder by Jews (found in Books I and II), and this aspect of William's biography has dominated the discourse about the *Life*. Although an emerging body of scholarship has begun to consider the miracles attributed to the boy saint as they were recorded by his sacrist, Thomas of Monmouth, most scholars who consider him at all continue to focus on the blood libel legend associated with him. For that reason, William's miracles have been severely neglected in the scholarship about him. In addition, he is a relatively obscure saint: he was never officially canonized, and his feast on March 26 has been removed from the universal calendar.² His status as a saint has been in question since even before Thomas arrived in Norwich in 1150. Nevertheless, the miracles attributed to William form the core of the *Life* (Books III-VII), and it is this portion of the work which I will be investigating in my research. By looking at the familial support structures and the social constructs of disability and healing I hope to discover what these stories suggest about everyday life in twelfth-century Norwich.

The *Life* tells the story of a twelve-year-old boy who was said to have been ritually murdered by Jews during Easter Week in 1144. In it, Thomas of Monmouth records 110 miracles, eighty of them concerning physical and mental impairment. In this project, I will look only at this subset of miracles for what they suggest not only about impairment and disability in the English Middle Ages, but also about the logistics of pilgrimage and family

² Catholic Online, "St William of Norwich," accessed March 6, 2016, http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=2136.

structures in the twelfth century. In my attempt to categorize and analyze these miracles, I will not endeavor to identify these pilgrims' ailments according to corresponding modern diagnoses. As we will see later in this chapter, concepts of impairment and disability are tied to their social contexts, which is why my analysis depends on taking what Thomas says about these miracles at face value in order to come to an understanding of how medieval people understood impairments and disabilities. For example, in one instance in the *Life*, Thomas writes of a boy who drinks holy water and subsequently vomits up the live vipers thought to have caused his illness. While it is implausible that actual vipers could have survived in his stomach, I will not categorize miracles like this as demonic possession (which was often cured by drinking holy water). Rather, I consider them as viper attacks because that is how Thomas and his contemporaries understood them. In this way, I am able to focus my attention on other relevant elements of the story, such as the boy's familial support system (in this case, a father), the relevance of his father bringing him to the tomb for a cure, and the presence of an audience (and their reaction) at the site of the healing. Each of the miracles in my analysis follows roughly the same trajectory, though few are as vivid or as thorough as this one.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. First is the present introduction, which explores the relevant historiography, historical contexts, and theoretical frameworks which I will subsequently draw on in my analysis. Chapter 2 is a systematic categorization of the miracles and how we might look at them through the lens of disability studies. Chapter 3 considers some of these miracles for what they suggest about familial support and technological aids in the Middle Ages. Chapter 4 is the conclusion, where I will discuss how these journeys were vital to pilgrims' reintegration into society by restoring their health,

which, according to Thomas, was achieved by miraculous healing in such a way that it was as if they had never been impaired in the first place. By taking a bottom-up approach that looks at everyday people in order to analyze the miracles of medical healing from a variety of theoretical standpoints, I hope to show that *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* is undeniably much more than the blood libel and ritual myth that has been associated with it and that has been the primary focus of medieval scholars. Indeed, the *Life* can teach us about how, in later medieval England, ordinary people regarded their afflictions, the process of traveling in search of healing, and the act of healing itself.

There is also a Digital Humanities component to my project, represented here as Appendix A but available in an interactive format on my website, <http://www.sarahobenauf.net/pilgrims.html>. I have taken the data from the *Life* to create six maps detailing the pilgrims who went to William's shrine in Norwich. The first shows all of the pilgrims whose origins could be determined, and they are marked according to the approximate distance of their journey, along with further details giving the viewer their name, the ailment they suffered from, and where their story can be found in the *Life*. The second map portrays child pilgrims, all of whom came with familial support. The third map concerns adult pilgrims who came to the shrine in Norwich with the support of family. The fourth map shows those adult pilgrims who came Norwich not only with familial support but who also used technological aids such as handbarrows or horses. The fifth map is of those pilgrims who came to the tomb by themselves; they all used some kind of technological aid, whether a horse, a staff, hand trestles, or crutches. The final map shows the lone pilgrim who came to the shrine aided by the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund; this tale of a miraculous cure preceded by a miraculous journey is the last story recorded in the *Life*. By

making these maps, I have been able to make calculations about the pilgrims and their journeys. For example, I have found that the average distance a pilgrim traveled was 39.48 miles, yet a full forty percent of the pilgrims only had to travel less than ten miles to get to the tomb. The visual depictions of the pilgrims' origins, moreover, help not only to bring into focus exactly who was coming to William's shrine in Norwich but also to give us a deeper appreciation for the distances they traveled in search of a cure for a wide variety of ailments.

William of Norwich (ca. 1132-1144)

During Easter Week 1144, a twelve-year-old skinner's apprentice by the name of William was found dead in Thorpe Wood, Norwich. His body exhibited signs of torture: when he was found on Easter Saturday by the nun Legarda, she noticed that his body was "lying at the root of an oak tree, dressed in a tunic, wearing shoes, [with] his head shaven and pierced with innumerable cuts."³ According to Thomas, William's mother, Elviva, had been approached that Monday (March 20) by a man claiming to be the cook of William, the archdeacon of Norwich. He sought her permission to take William in as an apprentice, which would afford the boy "many profitable opportunities" in the future.⁴ At first she refused to let her son go with this unnamed man (who was really a messenger sent by the Jews to find a suitable Christian boy to torture and kill), but then, in an effort to "undermine [her] maternal sentiment" and take advantage of the "unreliable firmness of feminine fickleness," he offered her three shillings.⁵ Having been persuaded by the glint of the silver, she agreed to let her son go. Thus, "the lamb was handed over to the wolf, and the boy William was handed over to

³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 24, Book I.x.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 14, Book I.iv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15, Book I.iv.

the traitor.”⁶ Thomas goes on to say that the “traitor” took William to the house of a “certain Jew” where he was received kindly at first.⁷ Then, as part of their Passover festivities, the Jews bound him with a knotted rope, tortured him with a teasel, shaved his head, stabbed him multiple times, and finally crucified him “in mockery of the Passion of the Cross.”⁸

When Legarda found William’s body several days later, she observed that it was “unharmful and uncorrupted” and “kept intact from birds and wild beasts,” which Thomas attributes to divine intervention.⁹ Later that day the poor boy’s body was found by a second person, Henry of Sprowston, during his patrol of the wood in his position as forester. Henry

noticed that the [dead] boy was wounded and saw in his mouth a wooden instrument of torture. Seeing also that the boy had been handled with unusual kinds of torment, he began already to suspect from the nature of the wounds that no Christian but only a Jew would have taken it upon himself to kill the innocent in this way with such rash daring.¹⁰

Due to the Easter holiday approaching, Henry delayed burying the body until the following Monday. William’s uncle, the priest Godwin Sturt, came to the wood with his son Alexander and his nephew Robert (William’s brother) to confirm the boy’s identity. At this point William had been dead for several days, but they “smelt no foul smell from him at all” and “what was found to be more worthy of wonder is that although there was no sweet-smelling flower growing there, nor any herbs, the fragrance of spring flowers and of sweet-smelling herbs reached the noses of those who were present.”¹¹ Godwin and the two young men put William back in his grave and left the wood. It was at the Easter Synod where Godwin

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 16, Book I.v.

⁸ Ibid., 17, Book I.v. According to *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “teasel,” a “teasel” is “a plant ... comprising herbs with prickly leaves and flower-heads ... the heads of which have hooked prickles between the flowers, and are used for teasing cloth.”

⁹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 25, Book I.x.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 28, Book I.xiii.

formally accused the Jews of killing his nephew, and Sheriff John de Chesney appeared on their behalf. In the end no one was tried or punished for the boy's murder. William did not receive a proper burial until April 24, a month after he had been killed, when he was moved from Thorpe Wood to the Monks' Cemetery.

This sensational story gripped the imagination of those living in twelfth-century Norwich and it continues to be the most salient detail about him. Indeed, William's historiography has focused primarily on the creation and dissemination of the ritual murder and blood libel myth (of which this has been purported to be the first in England). The second field of scholarship concerning William centers on the social and religious context in which Thomas of Monmouth was living and writing. However, a third potential area of study which has yet to be studied in depth for its own sake, would focus on the miracles attributed to William, and it is this void which my project seeks to fill. To date, no one has systematically categorized the miracles nor examined them for what they can offer in terms of social history.

Despite this oversight, William's murder has received significant consideration throughout the last century. For example, though it was intended for a popular rather than scholarly audience, the first major work of relevance is M. D. (Mary Desiree) Anderson's 1964 book about William's murder. In *A Saint at Stake: The Strange Death of William of Norwich, 1144*, Anderson states that she became interested in this peculiar case when she happened upon a painting of a boy hanging spread-eagled on a wooden frame, surrounded by men who were in the process of murdering and torturing him in the Holy Trinity Church in Loddon, Norfolk (see *Figure 1.1*). It was this painting that inspired her to go back and reread the text of the *Life*—which at that time had only been translated by Augustus Jessopp and M.

R. James in the late nineteenth century—and, much like the character of Alan Grant in Josephine Tey’s 1951 novel *The Daughter of Time*, Anderson took on the role of historical detective.¹² She writes that as she was

analysing this record of evidence, with all its many contradictions and improbabilities, and clarifying the obscurities of some of Thomas of Monmouth’s allusions by reference to other sources, I found that I was gradually forming a much clearer impression than ever before of the ordinary citizen’s life in the reign of King Stephen. Whereas my previous reading had left me with a confused impression of ceaseless battles, sieges, betrayals and intrigues, the medieval chronicler never even mentions that a Civil War was in progress at the time of his story, but constantly alludes to forms of social and religious administration which were, even then, about to become obsolete. Thus a study which began as an attempt to unravel the mystery of a child’s death became in effect a sketch of the life of a cathedral city in one of the less well recorded periods of our history.¹³

This research formed the basis of *A Saint at Stake*, in which Anderson discusses the reign of King Stephen, the role of Norwich Cathedral within the town, Jews, Thomas’s story concerning William’s murder, alternative theories about the murder, the separate trial in 1150 of Simon de Nover, a knight accused of murdering a Jew, in which William’s murder was invoked, and finally the miracles (and controversies) associated with this new cult.¹⁴

¹² In *The Daughter of Time*, Alan Grant is an inspector at Scotland Yard who is laid up in the hospital with a broken leg. After a friend brings him some historical portraits to occupy his time, he becomes obsessed with Richard III, who had traditionally been portrayed as a hunchbacked tyrant who had his two young nephews murdered in the Tower of London so that he might keep the throne of England. As an inspector, Grant prides himself on being able to determine a person’s character by observing his appearance (in this case, Richard’s portrait did not depict him as a monster at all), and this is what leads him on his investigative journey, which he eventually closes by concluding that Richard III was a victim of Tudor propaganda. Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time* (1951; repr., New York: Scribner, 1995).

¹³ M. D. Anderson, *A Saint at Stake: The Strange Death of William of Norwich, 1144* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), 15–16.

¹⁴ Chapter 9 discusses four alternative theories regarding William’s murder. These are: (1) there was no murder at all; (2) Thomas’s story was true for the most part, and the Norwich Jews did in fact plan and carry out a ritual murder; (3) William was killed by accident during a Purim masquerade; and (4) William may have been murdered by a “criminal lunatic, either Jew or Gentile, for no reason but his own sadistic satisfaction.” Anderson, *A Saint at Stake*, ch. 9, esp. pp. 96–100.



Figure 1.1: A painting at Holy Trinity, Loddon, Norfolk, depicting the torture and murder of St. William, which inspired M. D. Anderson to write *A Saint at Stake*. <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/loddon/loddon.htm>.

While Anderson's book is an enjoyable read because she paints such a vivid picture of what life might have been like in twelfth-century Norwich, there is so much speculation in her book that it has been cited sparingly in the scholarly literature. Nevertheless, over the past forty years a distinguished array of scholars including Ronald Finucane, Benedicta Ward, Gavin I. Langmuir, Israel J. Yuval, Joe Hillaby, John M. McCulloh, Jeffrey J. Cohen, Diane Peters Auslander, Simon Yarrow, Hannah R. Johnson, E. M. Rose, and Heather Blurton have written articles or monographs that concern William either explicitly or implicitly.

The first widely-recognized work on medieval miracles and pilgrims was written by Ronald C. Finucane, and his pioneering book has continued to influence the discourse since its publication in 1977. In *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, Finucane states he is interested in studying "events at curative shrines" because "they provide a glimpse of the behaviour of medieval peoples at centres of popular religion and [they give] an indication of what sorts of people were involved."¹⁵ Relying heavily on narrative and quantitative analysis, Finucane analyzes more than three thousand miracle stories associated with popular shrines and saints in England, including William of Norwich. Finucane's quantitative analysis of several medieval English saints proved to be so thorough that practically all subsequent scholars have referenced it in their own research.¹⁶

Five years later, in 1982, Benedicta Ward published a monograph on medieval miracles. In this reworking of the thesis she wrote as a student at Oxford, Ward discusses

¹⁵ Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1977), 14.

¹⁶ In relation to William's miracles, scholars most often reference Finucane's perfunctory quantitative analysis of the miracles themselves and the average distance pilgrims traveled to seek healing at Norwich. Finucane, *Miracles & Pilgrims*, 161–2.

medieval miracles as they were perceived by medieval people. Unlike later scholars, she is not interested in such details as the dating of the *Life*, how or where the ritual murder myth started, or how the myth was disseminated. Although Ward devotes just nine pages to her analysis of William's miracles, she is the first person to categorize them systematically. She divides William's miracles into three categories: vengeful, curative, and visionary. The vengeful miracles are directed towards those people who did not revere William as a saint, and she lists them briefly.¹⁷ After providing a background on Thomas of Monmouth, she discusses the miracles involving cures at the shrine and those where William was seen in visions—the miracles I will be discussing in this project. However, Ward does not further categorize or systematically analyze these curative miracles in any significant or useful detail.

In a seminal article from 1984, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," Gavin I. Langmuir studies manuscripts dating from antiquity onward in order to argue that the accusation of ritual murder against Jews first appeared in Norwich with the arrival of Thomas of Monmouth, in 1149 or 1150, five or six years after William's murder.¹⁸ Langmuir discusses two accusations from antiquity of ritual murder against Jews. The first, recorded by the Greek historian Posidonius, dates from the second century BCE and asserts that after invading and defiling the Temple in 168, Antiochus IV Epiphanes came across a Greek captive who told him that every seven years the Jews captured a Greek in order to kill and eat him.¹⁹ The story eventually made its way into Flavius Josephus's *Against Apion*—a famous treatise defending Judaism—where it was denied outright. Nevertheless, even though

¹⁷ William's acts of vengeance in the form of miracles are beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁸ Gavin I. Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder." *Speculum* 59.4 (Oct. 1984): 820–46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 822–3.

Josephus's reactions to Apion's story demonstrate that he "considered it a historical or literary fable rather than a belief widely current among Greeks in Alexandria that endangered contemporary Jews," his discussion of it in his treatise defending Judaism "ensured its preservation."²⁰ Even though Josephus was well known in the Middle Ages, Langmuir states that little attention was paid to *Against Apion*. He adds that "all extant Greek manuscripts of [the treatise] derive from a single manuscript of the eleventh century that lacks sections 51-113 of book 2; none consequently contain the accusation of ritual murder."²¹ A substantial subset of these sections, 89-96, discusses the accusation of ritual murder. Because that material was not transmitted throughout the Middle Ages, Langmuir supposes that the ritual murder myth was not disseminated throughout Europe.

The second instance Langmuir discusses in which Jews were accused of ritual murder dates from 415 and concerns Syrian (also known as Inmestar) Jews killing a young Christian boy during Purim.²² The only extant source for this accusation is a contemporary Christian historian named Socrates, and Langmuir points out that several scholars doubt its truth.²³ Medieval scholars could read about the Syrian Jews in the *Historia tripartita*, a "translation of the histories of Theodoret, Sozomen, and Socrates commissioned by Cassiodorus."²⁴ Even though there were some 138 of these manuscripts, only two can be found in England, both of which date from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.²⁵ Moreover, those scholars who did borrow from or use the *Historia tripartita* did not reference the incident in Syria because,

²⁰ Ibid., 823.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 825.

²³ Ibid., 825n24, 25, and 26.

²⁴ Ibid., 826.

²⁵ Ibid.

Langmuir supposes, they were concerned with events happening after the early fifth century or were not concerned with Eastern history at all.²⁶ Langmuir writes:

The incident is not mentioned by Prosper of Aquitaine, Isidore of Seville, Gregory of Tours, Bede (in *De temporibus* or *De temporum ratione*), the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or Hugh of Flavigny. [...] And since the first medieval accusation against Jews appeared in England about 1150, it is significant that the incident does not appear in such Anglo-Norman or English chronicles as those of St. Edmunds, Florence of Worcester, Orderic Vitalis, Robert of Torigni, or Roger of Wendover. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, the Inmestar incident is not mentioned in any medieval discussion of ritual murder. Certainly, Thomas of Monmouth does not allude to either the Inmestar incident or Apion's charge in his account of the Norwich accusation.²⁷

Because these two accusations from antiquity were missing from the written record throughout the Middle Ages, Langmuir takes this as proof that the accusation of ritual murder must have been conceived by Thomas of Monmouth.

After tracing the history of the ritual murder accusation, Langmuir examines the text of the *Life*. He does not dispute the facts as Thomas of Monmouth lays them out in the *Life*. William, a boy of twelve, was brutally killed during Easter Week 1144; his body was left in Thorpe Wood, exposed to the elements of nature and animals; William's family did not like the Jews to begin with: his uncle, Godwin Sturt, who was married to his mother's sister Leviva, was a well-known priest who accused the Jews of killing his nephew at a synod gathering a few weeks later.²⁸ Like other scholars who have studied William, Langmuir rejects the view that William was crucified by the Jews. Using internal evidence from Thomas's *Life*, Langmuir argues that this accusation did not come about until after Thomas arrived in Norwich.²⁹ To be sure, William's family was more than willing to pin the boy's murder on the Jews (it happened, after all, during Easter week, and Thomas does mention in

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 826–7.

²⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 13–14, Book I.iii and 31–3, Book I.xvi.

²⁹ Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth," 842.

Book I.iii that his uncle and another man warned William to stay away from the Jews), but the actual accusation of crucifixion is absent from Godwin's synod speech found in the *Life*.³⁰ Langmuir asserts that Thomas of Monmouth created the ritual murder accusation to bolster William's reputation (and thus that of the cathedral) in and around Norwich. Even though "Thomas only used the material provided [for the *Life*] by the animosity of others ... to ensure himself a local supernatural protector and to gain prestige on earth by his successful labors to ensure recognition of William's sanctity," Langmuir concludes that Thomas made "his own fundamental contribution to the creation of what he believed to be the patron saint assigned by God to Norwich" by taking the Easter week murder of a relatively unknown poor skinner's apprentice (perhaps killed by Jews—perhaps not) and claiming that he was crucified by Jews for "no other reason than that he was a Christian."³¹ Whether or not one accepts Langmuir's claims about the independent creation of the ritual murder myth by Thomas, there is no doubt that the sacrist viewed William as an embodiment of Christ, if only because of when he was murdered and how old he was.³²

Nearly a decade passed before Langmuir's argument would be questioned. In 1993, Israel J. Yuval responded directly to Langmuir with his Hebrew-language article in the scholarly journal *Zion*, the publication of the Historical Society of Israel.³³ Whereas

³⁰ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 31, Book I.xvi: "a certain very little boy, altogether innocent, has been found in the wood, handled in pitiable ways during the week of the Lord's passion, and that he is still buried there without Christian interment." ("puerum quendam admodum paruulum et utique innocentem dominice passionis ebdomada miserabilibus attractatum modis silua repertum fuisse, atque ibidem tumultum christiana adhuc caruisse sepultura"), Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 43–4. Hereafter Jessopp and James, *Life*.

³¹ Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth," 845.

³² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 16–18, Book I.v.

³³ Israel J. Yuval, "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations," *Zion* 58.1 (1993): 33–90. Because Yuval's article is in Hebrew and has not been translated into English, I will be relying on the English summary, pp. vi–viii.

Langmuir had argued that the blood libel myth originated in England and worked its way eastward into other parts of Europe, Yuval argued the exact opposite. Yuval dates the ritual murder myth more than fifty years earlier, in 1096, when Ashkenazi Jews were slaughtered by Christians in the Rhineland during the First Crusade. These particular Jews were famous throughout the Middle Ages because they killed their children and then themselves in order to avoid forcibly being converted to Christianity.³⁴ It would not take much for medieval Christians to believe that if Jews were willing to slaughter their own children, then they would have no problem whatsoever slaughtering Christian ones:

It was precisely when stories of the bravery of the martyrs of 1096 began making the rounds among Jews in the twelfth century, that Christians also began to circulate their own versions. The blood libel thus emerges as the twisted Christian interpretation of those Jewish tales of martyrdom that grew out of the chronicles of 1096. The links between the crusades and martyrology on the one hand and blood libels on the other hand can be proven in the light of the first blood libel known to us. This in fact was not the blood libel of Norwich, as is commonly assumed, but rather that of Würzburg in Germany, which took place during the Second Crusade in 1147. The blood libel of Norwich took place only in 1148/9, apparently a result of the rumors and stories that had previously circulated on the continent regarding the homicidal acts of the Jews. Thus the blood libel made its way from Germany to England rather than the opposite direction.³⁵

Even though Yuval dates the conception of the ritual murder myth to 1096, he argues that it was not until the Second Crusade in 1147 when Christians began to accuse Jews of crucifying and ritually murdering young Christian boys. With these two dates, Yuval rejects Langmuir's argument and uses the accusation of ritual murder in 1147 as evidence that it did not in fact originate with Thomas of Monmouth in 1149 or 1150.

³⁴ Israel J. Yuval, "Vengeance and Damnation," vii. David Nirenberg discusses the events of 1096 in great detail in "The Rhineland Massacres of Jews in the First Crusade: Memories Medieval and Modern," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2002), 279–309.

³⁵ Israel J. Yuval, "Vengeance and Damnation," viii.

Writing in 1996, Joe Hillaby explored other evidence concerning the accusation of ritual murder against Jews, and specifically the ritual murder accusation associated with Harold of Gloucester in 1168, almost a quarter century after William's death. Hillaby observed that the events in Gloucester had received markedly less interest than those in Norwich.³⁶ Unlike Langmuir or subsequent scholars, Hillaby only uses William's case as a kind of "prototype," working on the premise that Norwich was where "the ground rules of the ritual-child-murder accusation were established."³⁷ He suggests that it was not until after 1168 that other accusations of ritual murder began to pop up. Hillaby's aim is to show that it was Harold of Gloucester's murder, and not William of Norwich's, that sparked the charges of ritual murder against Jews throughout England, France, and the rest of the Continent.

In 1997, John M. McCulloh responded directly to both Langmuir and Yuval (and indirectly to Hillaby, since Hillaby's argument depends on Langmuir's assertion that it was Thomas of Monmouth who created and disseminated the ritual murder myth) in his discussion of the origins and dissemination of the ritual murder myth. McCulloh writes:

Langmuir sees mid-twelfth-century Norwich as the font of [the ritual murder] fantasy, and he identifies Thomas of Monmouth as its creator. Yuval explains the ritual murder myth as an outgrowth of events that occurred a half century before William's murder, and he sees Thomas as having elaborated the local incident on the basis of ideas derived from the Continent. These contrasting interpretations provide both context and incentive for a reexamination of the sources that attest to awareness of William of Norwich as a reputed victim of ritual murder.³⁸

³⁶ Joe Hillaby, "The Ritual-Child-Murder Accusation: Its Dissemination and Harold of Gloucester," *Jewish Historical Studies* 34 (1994-96): 69. Even though Hillaby's article was published twenty years ago, it seems that this observation still holds true. A brief search of the International Medieval Bibliography (IMB) for "Harold of Gloucester" only results in one article—the one listed in this footnote.

³⁷ Hillaby, "The Ritual-Child-Murder Accusation," 69.

³⁸ John M. McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72.3 (July 1997): 700. McCulloh makes no reference to Hillaby's article, possibly because they were writing at the same time (1996-97), and it is likely that Hillaby's work was published too late for McCulloh to respond in his own.

Within this framework, McCulloh revisits the dates of the *Life* proposed by Langmuir, arguing that it was created later; he examines other well-known manuscripts that make reference to William's murder (such as the Peterborough copy of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*); and he "consider[s] Continental evidence, some of which has escaped the attention of earlier investigators," such as the chronicle of Robert of Torigny, abbot of the Norman monastery of Mont-Saint-Michel.³⁹ McCulloh responds to Yuval's research by countering that the textual evidence from the Continent supports the idea that news of William's "supposed martyrdom" predates not only Thomas's *Life* but also the events of the Second Crusade in Würzburg in 1147.⁴⁰ McCulloh's main goal is to refute Langmuir's arguments; in his lengthy article he proposes that Thomas of Monmouth's *Life* is "better seen as a manifestation of the ritual murder libel than as the source of the tradition" and that William's case is merely representative of the anti-Jewish sentiment of his time.⁴¹ In McCulloh's estimation, while Thomas certainly made the tale known within Norwich, he had no influence outside of the city and its immediate surrounding areas.

In his 2004 article "The Flow of Blood in Norwich," Jeffrey J. Cohen analyzes the history of Norwich through a post-colonial lens to conclude that the conquest of 1066 not only upended the city culturally, economically, politically, and linguistically, but the country as well.⁴² Cohen divides these effects into two categories, the national and the local. He claims that "the swift accomplishment of the conquest could ... be described as a national trauma, triggering a prolonged struggle to discover how a fractured, multiethnic population

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 701.

⁴¹ Ibid., 740.

⁴² Jeffrey J. Cohen, "The Flow of Blood in Norwich," *Speculum* 79.1 (Jan. 2004): 39.

might once again imagine itself a community.”⁴³ Within this scholarly debate, Cohen attempts to make an opening for his work on the medieval Other by asserting that while medieval historians and literary scholars have discussed the national effects of the conquest at length, they have neglected the local ones. Cohen thus sets out to discuss the effects the conquest had on one particular area—Norwich—rather than England as a whole.⁴⁴ After commenting on what he terms “national mythologies” by discussing Geoffrey of Monmouth’s erasure of the island nation’s history prior to the conquest in his *Historia regum Britanniae*, Cohen turns his attention to analyzing post-colonial Norwich. This analysis sets up his main objective, which is to tease out “some of the tenacious effects of postcoloniality visible in the city [of Norwich] at the time of [William’s] death” and to “suggest that the martyr becomes in Thomas’s narrative integral to the imagining of a new civic community,” one where Jews were considered monsters who were capable of murdering an innocent child.⁴⁵

Like Cohen, Diane Peters Auslander takes a highly theoretical approach in writing about William of Norwich within the context of medieval childhood as well as medieval anti-Jewish sentiment in an article in a 2005 collection on childhood in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. By focusing on the “social and political context in England [in the mid-twelfth century],” she attempts to “recover something of the emotional atmosphere surrounding William’s death.”⁴⁶ Drawing on the works of other scholars who have written about childhood in the medieval period, Auslander argues that “young people were still considered

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 28–9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Diane Peters Auslander, “Victims or Martyrs: Children, Anti-Judaism, and the Stress of Change in Medieval England,” in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 106.

children at the age of twelve if not beyond, a conclusion that the story of William of Norwich supports,” despite the claim by Philippe Ariès in *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* that childhood in the Middle Ages ended quite early in life.⁴⁷ Indeed, William is often portrayed as a young, vulnerable innocent in Thomas’s *Life*.⁴⁸ By using text from the *Life* as well as secondary scholarship that discusses childhood in the Middle Ages, unnatural deaths (such as accidents or murder), and the strained relationship between Christians and Jews in Norwich, Auslander demonstrates that the murder of William of Norwich, though tragic and unfortunate, in its resemblance to the crucifixion of Christ and the mourning of his mother, brought the community together.⁴⁹ Like Cohen, Auslander accepts Thomas’s stated agenda in the *Life* without question.

In his 2006 monograph on twelfth-century miracles, Simon Yarrow explores cults of English saints including Edmund of Bury, Ithamar of Rochester, Frideswide of Oxford, and William of Norwich. He devotes one chapter to each saint. While Yarrow’s main objective of analyzing the miracles as narratives remains the same throughout the book, each chapter takes a different angle. For example, St. Edmund’s miracle collection was written in an attempt by a monk of Bury named Hermann not only to solidify Edmund’s cult, but also to ensure that the abbey retained its property and influence in the political sphere after the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 107; Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 33. For a detailed consideration of childhood in the Middle Ages that also refutes Ariès, see Mary Martin McLaughlin, “Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries,” in *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), 101–82.

⁴⁸ For example, Thomas writes in his description of William that the Jews “chose him above all other skimmers for the repair of mantles, furs and other things of this kind [...], for indeed they considered him highly suitable, either because they saw him as simple and skilful or because—led by miserliness—they reckoned they could pay him a lower wage” and that when searching for a boy to ritually murder, they chose William because of his age and innocence (Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 13, Book I.iii).

⁴⁹ See Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 30, Book I.xv, for a description of William’s mother, Elviva, mourning the death of her son.

conquest, and this is Yarrow's primary focus in the chapter.⁵⁰ In contrast, the *Miracula Sancti Ithamari*, Yarrow argues, was primarily written in order to "open up and extend networks of patronage between the cathedral community" and the people it served.⁵¹ Finally, Yarrow argues that William of Norwich's cult was created as a way to create a cohesive Christian identity among the population.⁵²

In his chapter on William of Norwich, Yarrow begins by addressing both Langmuir and McCulloh, the two scholars who have had the most influence in the debate over when and how the ritual murder myth was created and disseminated as well as the dating of the *Life*. Yarrow avoids taking sides in this debate, stating instead that both arguments have their strengths and weaknesses and that "it is likely that Langmuir and McCulloh's explanations are both correct in certain of their aspects," though he does not go into detail about what those aspects might be.⁵³ He concludes by saying that "there remain, however, too few independent sources with which to prove their claims beyond doubt."⁵⁴ I agree with this observation: there is only one extant copy of the *Life*, and there are simply not enough other contemporary sources to help settle the debate. Rather than dealing with what he calls the "issue of originality," Yarrow more usefully focuses on the audience Thomas was writing for

⁵⁰ Simon Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 24–62.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 121. This was especially important in West Kent in the twelfth century because it did not have a full-time bishop, and their archdeacon—who was usually elsewhere—"possessed estates the cathedral priory considered its own." See Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, 121n92.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 167. In addition, Yarrow also puts forward the notion that it was Bishop William Turbe—not Thomas of Monmouth—who was the real driving force behind William's cult and Thomas was more or less working at his behest (a sentiment echoed by Miri Rubin in her 2014 translation of the *Life*, see xvii). Furthermore, Yarrow argues that Bishop William took an active role in preserving the legacy of his mentor, Bishop Herbert de Losinga, who had founded Norwich cathedral in 1096 and was its first bishop.

⁵³ Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, 127.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

and the historical context in which he was writing.⁵⁵ In short, Yarrow proposes that the cult of St. William of Norwich was a machination on the part of the Norwich cathedral priory in an attempt to instill a unified identity among the Christian population at the expense of the local Jews and thereby extend the cathedral priory's influence throughout Norwich.

Langmuir, McCulloh, and Yarrow all assume that there was a deep ongoing conflict between the Jews and the Christians in medieval Norwich. It was this dichotomy which, according to Langmuir, led to the creation of the ritual murder myth. According to McCulloh, this purported conflict was responsible for the dissemination of the ritual murder myth, but not its actual creation. And finally, according to Yarrow, the local church took advantage of the strained relationship between Christians and Jews in an attempt to unify the Christian population against a common enemy. In short, without the threat of the Jews there would be no boy saint, no purpose for Thomas for Monmouth, and, ultimately, no *Life*.

Hannah R. Johnson takes a similar approach as Yarrow in her 2007 article discussing the rhetoric used by Thomas in composing the life and miracles of St. William. Johnson argues that even as he was writing the *Life*, Thomas wanted to push his rhetoric aside and not acknowledge how his desire to portray William as a deserving saint or his wish to paint the detractors and skeptics as blasphemers shaped the narrative as a whole.⁵⁶ Using the first two books of the *Life* as her main source of information, Johnson focuses on passages where Thomas addresses the boy saint's detractors. For example, he implores them—among other things—to hear the “truth of the matter” and look at the proposition of William's sainthood

⁵⁵ Ibid., 128. Yarrow makes use of David Nirenberg's thesis that analysis of violence against a minority group needs to take local societal structures (such as the relationship between Christians and Jews in twelfth-century Norwich) into account in order for it to make sense. See David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 11–12.

⁵⁶ Hannah R. Johnson, “Rhetoric's Work: Thomas of Monmouth and the History of Forgetting,” *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007): 67.

“with the eye of innocence.”⁵⁷ However, Thomas goes on to say that he knows for a fact that William is a saint, which, of course, is why he is venerating him. In short, by examining what Thomas says in Books I and II, Johnson explores what his detractors may have believed, and therefore what the counter-narrative might have looked like.

In her recent 2015 monograph, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe*, E. M. Rose (like Langmuir and McCulloh before her) investigates the origins of ritual murder accusation in Europe by using Thomas’s *Life*. While both Langmuir and McCulloh each cast a wide net in their analysis of the origin of the ritual murder accusation by looking at contemporary sources outside of England (and even some from antiquity), Rose is more narrow in her focus, relying primarily on the *Life* itself as well as other local sources such as church records, letters, chronicles, and charters. Following in the footsteps of David Nirenberg, Rose takes the localized (rather than collective) approach in analyzing the creation and subsequent promulgation of the ritual murder accusation.⁵⁸ Rose also takes an in-depth look at another key event in the *Life* that previous scholars have only mentioned in passing, if at all. This second event—another murder—occurred sometime after William’s. A Jewish banker of Norwich by the name of Eleazar had lent money to a knight by the name of Simon de Novers (“Nodariis” in Rose’s book). “And when the term of payment had passed,” writes Thomas, “he frequently pressed the knight for repayment.”⁵⁹ Learning that their lord was in dire straits, the knight’s squires concocted a ruse to lure the Jew to them under the pretense that he would be paid. While one of them went to fetch

⁵⁷ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 41, Book II.i.

⁵⁸ In *Communities of Violence*, Nirenberg responds directly to R. I. Moore’s *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), in which Moore’s argument that around the year 1000 Europe became a persecuting society (and to this day has remained one) casts the entirety of medieval Europe in the same light, not taking local societies and practices into account.

⁵⁹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 64, Book II.xiii.

Eleazar, the others “hid themselves in the wood through which his route passed” and when he arrived, “led by the squire, immediately he was seized by the others, dragged away and killed.”⁶⁰

The knight’s bishop, William Turbe (to whom the *Life* was dedicated), spoke in defense of the knight and stated before the royal court in London that the knight should not be put on trial for murder until the Jews had been made to answer for the murder of William several years prior.⁶¹ Even though Thomas readily admits that his account of the knight’s trial (and, by extension, William Turbe’s speech) was imagined, it was this second murder and its trial, Rose argues, that was the catalyst for the writing of the *Life* by Thomas of Monmouth.⁶² By analyzing these two events in tandem, Rose explores what kind of effect the ritual murder accusation against Jews had on the people who were the most heavily involved. “This book,” Rose writes, “is about people at the heart of medieval urban life, rather than great men or powerful people,” who

were sufficiently important to have had their names recorded, to have held land, made donations, joined battles, taken public vows, administered property, witnessed

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “But, meanwhile, by your most serene wisdom, most just king, we wish to make clear to you that we think that we Christians should not have to answer in this manner to the accusation of the Jews, unless they are first cleared of the death of our Christian boy, of which they themselves are known to have been previously accused and have not been purged. And so we explain the whole matter—which pertains to all Christians—to your most Christian mercy, clearly and summarily: that Jew—with whose death the knight is charged, though innocent—together with some other Jews who lived in Norwich at the time, as rumour has it, subjected a Christian boy to tortures of a terrible kind, killed and hid him in the wood. In the days of our predecessor Bishop Everard the Jews were accused of this crime by a priest before the whole synod, but since the sheriff John [de Chesney] was obstructive and supported them, the Christians were unable thereafter to have any justice of the Jews. What is more, we have at hand the very priest [Godwin Sturt, William’s uncle], who, when and however the court desires, would prove them guilty of the aforementioned crime. Wherefore, if it would not displease the royal majesty, it seems sensible and just to us that just as the death of our Christian, carried out to insult and deride the Passion of the Christ, took place before the death of the Jew, so indisputably the purgation of the knight should follow the proof of the accusing priest. And the rigour of justice should not be delayed too long, because we complain that so great a crime is unpunished to this very day, and beg that it be deferred no longer. So let everything be done in such a manner that Christ be to the fore in all things and that due reverence be displayed towards Christian law, as is appropriate” (Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 69–70, Book II.xiv).

⁶² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 65, Book II.xiv; Thomas’s use of the Latin *coniecturalis* to describe the trial tells his audience that it is imaginary. See Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 226n62 for an explanation.

documents, appeared in court, paid for medical care, read books, traveled abroad, educated and provided for their children, and to have been remembered by their families, friends, and colleagues. They seem to have been fairly typical members of the communities in which they lived.⁶³

She adds that although none “of these men and women appear to have been uncommonly foolish, easily duped, or especially sinister,”

the trial of the knight, the event that drew them together, produced one of the most malevolent tales of medieval and early modern history. The claim that Jews killed children and obtained their blood was to have a pernicious and long-lasting history, and left its mark in the realms of both popular imagination and elite opinion.⁶⁴

After dedicating a chapter each to William’s murder, the Second Crusade, the trial of Simon de Nover, and the work put forth by Thomas of Monmouth and Bishop William Turbe in making William a saint, Rose devotes the second part of her book to exploring other accusations of ritual murder, in Gloucester (Harold of Gloucester), Blois (unnamed child), Bury St. Edmunds (Robert of Bury), and Paris (Richard of Pontoise). Each of these accusations arose after Thomas of Monmouth wrote the *Life* (in 1168, 1170, 1171, and 1181, respectively), and Rose examines the effects they had within their corresponding locales.⁶⁵

In her recent article in the October 2015 issue of *Speculum*, Heather Blurton takes the text of the *Life* itself as her subject. Responding directly to the analyses of Langmuir, Yuval, McCulloh, and Cohen, Blurton argues that the “articulation of the ritual murder accusation as it appears in the *Life and Miracles of William of Norwich* needs to be understood just as much as a response to liturgical expression in the long twelfth century as to socioeconomic or

⁶³ E. M. Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 127–232.

political friction between Christian and Jewish neighbors.”⁶⁶ To that end, her argument focuses on those parts of the *Life* where Thomas compares William’s life to that of Christ.

Blurton’s focus, thus, is seeking out the parallels between the life of Christ and that of William. She observes that

given its monastic provenance and audience, it is no great surprise that key moments in William’s life, like any twelfth-century saint’s life, are modeled on key moments in the life of Christ. This, of course, is a move common to hagiography, where the saint is always, in some sense, a figure for Christ, and the *Life and Miracles of William of Norwich* begins to weave these connections by providing William with a life story reminiscent of that of Christ.⁶⁷

She explains, for example, that William’s mother Elviva conceived him “by divine goodness” just as Mary had conceived Jesus, which had the effect of turning Elviva into the typological fulfillment of Mary, just as Mary had been, in turn, to Abraham’s wife Sarah.⁶⁸

Elviva is told about her pregnancy in a dream in which she picks up a fish with twelve fins. The fish turns into a bird and flies away. According to Blurton, the fish turning into a bird is a “common trope of twelfth-century hagiography, reminiscent of the dove that nests in the sleeve of the mother of William’s contemporary (almost) saint, Christina of Markyate.”⁶⁹

Blurton’s other arguments regarding typological prefiguration and the reading of the Masses also rely heavily on secondary sources rather than purely internal evidence in the *Life*. In this way, even the most recent scholarship on William of Norwich centers on his relationship with the blood libel legend rather than the miracles he was said to have performed, which comprise the bulk of the *Life*.

⁶⁶ Heather Blurton, “The Language of the Liturgy in the *Life and Miracles of William of Norwich*,” *Speculum* 90.4 (Oct. 2015): 1054.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1056.

⁶⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 10, Book I.i; Blurton, “Language of the Liturgy,” 1056.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1057.

Thomas of Monmouth (d. ca. 1173)

Beyond what Thomas writes in the *Life*, we know very little about William. The same can be said about Thomas himself, which is why the historiography of Thomas of Monmouth is inextricably linked to that of William of Norwich. Both M. R. James, in his essay on Thomas, and Miri Rubin, in her introduction to the 2014 translation of the *Life*, observe that besides telling us his name (Thomas Monemutensis) and divulging in Book V.xi that he lost (and later, with William's help, recovered) a book of psalms, Thomas says nothing else about his background.⁷⁰ Both James and Rubin discuss the possibility that Thomas may have been influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth prior to his arrival in Norwich in 1150. Rubin writes that

The name Thomas of Monmouth (*Thomas Monemutensis*) suggests that he came from Monmouth in South Wales, perhaps becoming a member of the local Benedictine monastery. Although they were obliged to remain permanently in one location (*stabilitas loci* was an aspect of their monastic discipline), it was not unknown for Benedictine monks to travel for the purpose of study or on missions on behalf of their house, the king or the Pope. If Thomas was indeed born and educated in South Wales, he may have been familiar with the traditions of creative forgery and fiction which several Welsh writers developed so effectively in the twelfth century, in particular Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1155).

Geoffrey was the foremost British historian of the twelfth century in terms of popularity and fame, though he was not without detractors. He is associated with the schools at Oxford, where he studied as a secular clerk. Geoffrey's colleague Caradoc of Llancarfan specialized in writing fictitious hagiography, as did the anonymous author of the Book of Llandaff. In fact, the monks of South Wales in the decades just before and during Thomas's life were accomplished at the art of forgery and invention. South Wales was also home to a number of dependencies of Gloucester, another important centre for forgery, not least from 1139 under Abbot Gilbert Foliot. Thomas may also have spent time in Oxford on a journey east, which ultimately brought him to Norwich.⁷¹

⁷⁰ M. R. James, "Thomas of Monmouth," in *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), ix; Miri Rubin, ed. and trans., "Introduction," in *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), xii.

⁷¹ Rubin, "Introduction," xi-xii.

Even though she does not directly state that what Thomas produced in the name of hagiography was tantamount to forgery or inspired creative fiction, many modern scholars agree that the element of the ritual murder in the *Life* may well have been a fabrication wherein Thomas lays the blame for William's death on the Jews. But although some scholars have questioned the veracity of the blood libel claims, all agree that Thomas was forthright in his duty as William's sacrist. The status of the miracles attributed to him that took place at his shrine has never been called into question. While my analysis does not question the authenticity of these miracles, I allow that even if Thomas may have embellished the totality of the cures, the other details relevant to my research appear to be representative of the actual people and conditions of his society and their understanding of impairment and disability. Furthermore, some of the details in the *Life* are corroborated with other historical evidence, such as the coin minted by Eustace the moneyer, whose wife and daughter were healed by William (see *Figure 1.2*).

Although Thomas does not give his readers any kind of information regarding his educational background, James and Rubin both observe that his writing style offers "some clues about the life he may have led before becoming the author of the *Life and Passion*."⁷² Rubin adds that he was obviously familiar with scripture and classical texts.⁷³ Rubin also writes that "Thomas's range of biblical and classical references, and his care with grammar syntax, as well as the occasional use of quite sophisticated vocabulary, suggest that he had a good Latin education, which was available in monastic and secular settings."⁷⁴ For this

⁷² Ibid., xii.

⁷³ In her end notes to the *Life*, Rubin identifies fifty-four instances where Thomas refers to or echoes biblical scripture, and six instances where he refers to or echoes classical authors such as Augustine, Virgil, and Horace.

⁷⁴ Rubin, "Introduction," xiii.

reason, she surmises that when he was a young child he may have been offered to a monastery as an oblate. Other than that, we know very little about the man.



Figure 1.2: Obverse and reverse of coin minted by Eustace the moneyer of Norwich, whose wife and daughter were both cured by St. William. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

The City of Norwich

For a detailed history of Norwich, one of the best resources remains the entry for Norwich in the 1975 *Atlas of Historic Towns II*.⁷⁵ Several pieces of scholarship have been produced discussing the social history of the city's Jewish population and the tumult of King Stephen's reign (r. 1135-54).⁷⁶ Scholars agree that the Jews arrived in England after the

⁷⁵ James Campbell, "Norwich," in *Atlas of Historic Towns II*, ed. M. D. Lobel (London: Solar, 1975), 1–25; esp. pp. 8–10 for Norman and Early Angevin Norwich.

⁷⁶ For an in-depth discussion of the Jews in Norwich, see V. D. Lipman, *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1967); Joseph Hillaby, "Jewish Colonisation in the Twelfth Century," in *Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Skinner (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2003), 15–40; Elizabeth Rutledge, "The Medieval Jews of Norwich and Their Legacy," in *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia from Prehistory to the Present*, ed. T. A. Heslop, Elizabeth Mellings, and Margit Thøfner (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2012), 117–29. For England as a whole, see Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942); for King Stephen, see Edmund King, *King Stephen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

Norman Conquest of 1066, presumably “under safe conduct from William I, who saw them as a source of coin and a bulwark against the hostility of the London merchants.”⁷⁷

Therefore, as V. D. Lipman points out, “the span of medieval Anglo-Jewish history to the expulsion [of the Jews] in 1290 is one of little more than two centuries.”⁷⁸ Norwich was a rapidly growing urban center which had a mint and a royal castle that served as the base of operations for the sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk. As such, Jews were attracted to the town and migrated there from London.⁷⁹ The first mention of a Jewish community in Norwich is recorded in connection with the murder of William, though Lipman suggests that they could very well have been there since the beginning of King Stephen’s reign in 1135.⁸⁰ Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews were considered to be the property of the king, and were therefore protected by the crown.⁸¹ Even though Thomas of Monmouth writes in the *Life* that the Jews of Norwich were originally accused of killing William in a ritual murder by his family (specifically, his uncle Godwin Sturt), there is no record of them being put on trial or punished.⁸²

The events that led to King Stephen’s reign date back to 1120, when the heir of Henry I, William, died in the sinking of the White Ship. Henry had no other legitimate children to inherit his crown, save his daughter Matilda, who was married to Emperor Henry V and

⁷⁷ Rutledge, “Medieval Jews of Norwich,” 117. According to Jessopp and James, this information comes to us directly from William of Malmesbury; Jessopp and James, *Life*, xlin2.

⁷⁸ Lipman, *Jews of Medieval Norwich*, 4.

⁷⁹ John de Chesney was the sheriff at the time of William’s murder in 1144, and Thomas mentions him frequently in relation to the Jewish population he was sworn to protect in the name of the Crown. Per Jessopp and James, the de Chesneys were also the Lords of Mileham; Jessopp and James, *Life*, 112n1.

⁸⁰ Lipman, *Jews of Medieval Norwich*, 4.

⁸¹ This is clear in the *Life*, when Thomas of Monmouth states that the Jews were under the protection of the sheriff, pp. 31–4, Book I.xvi. For further discussion of Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages, see Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), esp. chapters 3 and 4.

⁸² For a description of Godwin’s accusation, see Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 31–4, Book I.xvi.

living in Germany. In 1125 her husband died, and, childless, Matilda returned to Normandy where her father had arranged for her to marry Geoffrey of Anjou. Henry I died in 1135, and Matilda's cousin Stephen of Blois was able to swoop in and take the crown. He reigned until his death in 1154, when he was succeeded by Matilda and Geoffrey's son Henry, who would become King Henry II of England and Duke of Normandy. Stephen's reign, however, was not without its troubles. In 1141 Stephen was captured by Matilda's forces at the Battle of Lincoln and was deposed for a short time. Afterwards, "England was divided into spheres of influence" and within this "regional kingship" East Anglia was largely within Stephen's sphere."⁸³ As Rubin summarizes,

this meant that men loyal to him held important offices, but the state of political fragility obliged Stephen to bargain and often comply with requests for favours. Nevertheless, although his income from some counties fell, Stephen maintained his solvency, not least thanks to income exacted from Jews. He visited East Anglia and in 1146 founded the Benedictine nunnery of Carrow on the outskirts of [Norwich].⁸⁴

Even though Stephen managed to maintain control in East Anglia and remain financially secure, that did not necessarily translate into support from everyone in his realm. Indeed, a careful reading of the *Life* shows that Thomas was no supporter of Stephen: in order to give the audience a rough timeline of the events in Book VI.xiv, Thomas states that the woman who had been poisoned in an attempt to kill her guard had been taken hostage by robbers ("pr[a]edonibus") "during the reign of King Stephen, when the times [had been] bad" ("temporibus quando dies mali fuerant").⁸⁵ Stephen died on October 25, 1154, so more than

⁸³ Rubin, "Introduction," xxvi.

⁸⁴ Ibid., xxvi.

⁸⁵ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 163, Book VI.xiv.

half of the *Life* was written during his reign. Only Book VII and the prologue were written after, during the reign of Henry II.⁸⁶

Medieval Pilgrimage

The study of medieval pilgrimage has become the focus of renewed scholarly interest in recent years. Like their subject, many works that analyze medieval pilgrimage are narrative in approach, but scholars have also examined pilgrimage through the lenses of feminist theory, disability studies, literary theory, and anthropology, among other disciplines. The field has witnessed a clear trajectory throughout the years in that it began in a traditional “important men” top-down approach and is now in a state of using a bottom-up method, focusing not only on ordinary people but on women, children, and other minorities, such as those suffering from physical and mental impairments. My research attempts to fill this gap in the scholarship by analyzing eighty miracles from the *Life* that concern “everyday people” who were afflicted with physical and mental impairments as well as how they were supported by their families and society in their journeys.

The study of medieval pilgrimage grew out of the study of medieval travel as a whole. At least as far back as 1930 there were collections of essays discussing travel in the Middle Ages. For example, *Travels and Travellers of the Middle Ages* provides a useful (if antiquated) survey of the sort of traditional, “important men” top-down (and positivist) approach that would dominate historical scholarship for much of the twentieth century. In these essays, the authors recount the way travel was viewed in the Middle Ages through primary classical sources such as Ptolemy and Pliny. While both authors lived several centuries before the Middle Ages, their writings were an integral part of the medieval

⁸⁶ Rubin, “Introduction,” xviii–xix.

mindset when it came to how people viewed the world around them. The contributors to this volume do not analyze any of these sources other than to demonstrate how these men of the Latin West “modified their conceptions of the physical world in which they lived” over time.⁸⁷ No interdisciplinary methods are used, nor do the contributors approach the subject from the bottom up or address minorities in any way. For these reasons, this collection of essays serves as an example of where scholarship has been and how much it has changed in less than a century.

Modern scholarship on medieval pilgrimage can be traced back to two historians, Jonathan Sumption and Ronald C. Finucane. Sumption’s seminal 1970s study, *Pilgrimage* (later retitled *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* in its 2003 reprint), provides a narrative of medieval pilgrimage with a focus on France and its immediate surrounding countries. *Pilgrimage* is significant not only because it looks at every stratum of society—from kings and popes to everyday people—but also at the different variations one might find among pilgrims. Matching Sumption as one of the most influential scholars of medieval pilgrimage in the twentieth century is Finucane, whose 1977 book *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* studies “events at curative shrines” because “they provide a glimpse of the behaviour of medieval peoples at centres of popular religion and [they give] an indication of what sorts of people were involved.”⁸⁸ Instead of looking at one saint and his shrine, however, Finucane examines records from shrines all over England from the eleventh through fourteenth centuries. Finucane’s primary focus is to determine what medieval people believed and how those beliefs influenced their actions (that is, coming

⁸⁷ Arthur Percival Newton, preface to *Medieval Travel and Travellers*, ed. Arthur Percival Newton (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 1.

⁸⁸ Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, 14.

to a shrine in search of healing). My analysis takes his one step further by arguing that these beliefs were influenced by and were an integral part of the social construct.

All subsequent scholarship on medieval pilgrimage owes a debt to Sumption and Finucane.⁸⁹ One scholar whose work has been especially useful to the way I think about pilgrimage is Diana Webb, who argues in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* that pilgrimage was an integral part of medieval society and that pilgrims were accepted as a special class. Indeed, Webb asserts that pilgrimage was so common that popes, secular rulers, and governments provided and enforced rights for pilgrims—similar to those afforded merchants.⁹⁰ In a later book, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, Webb builds upon this thesis by writing that pilgrims may be classified according to

where they went, and by their reasons for going. Another important distinction can be made between pilgrims who made their journeys voluntarily and those who went involuntarily as penance for their sins or even as punishment for secular offences. Pilgrims may also be viewed as belonging to an age band, an occupation of religious grouping, a social class and (not least) a gender. Different groups disposed of different resources and also different degrees of freedom, both of which affected the capacity to make long journeys. Female participation in pilgrimage was, of course, conditioned by all these variables.⁹¹

Within this socially recognized group of pilgrims, there were subgroups that divided pilgrims based on destination, motivation, whether the journey was voluntary or involuntary, religious beliefs, social standing, and gender. Such diversity is an earmark of the bottom-up approach. I am indebted to her approach in my analysis in Chapters 2 and 3, where I categorize the

⁸⁹ For further reading on medieval pilgrimage, see Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998); Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); and Jean Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages*, trans. George Holoch (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

⁹⁰ Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 1.

⁹¹ Diana Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), xiii.

pilgrims in a variety of ways: the types of ailments they suffered from, their gender, their degree of familial support, their mode of transport, and so forth.

Over the course of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the study of medieval pilgrimage has witnessed significant changes. It has shifted from the traditional top-down approach to the use of methods outside of history such as literary theory, economics, and anthropology to better and further inform research of the bottom-up technique. While the field has undergone considerable changes and is now firmly rooted in the bottom-up approach, there is still much to be studied. For example, there are still a number of collections of miracle stories that have yet to be analyzed for what they can tell us about the lives and relationships of everyday people, such as those who visited William's shrine. To this end, my thesis does not simply consider the medical miracles performed by William for what they suggest about the spiritual or medical beliefs of the people Thomas wrote about. In my analysis, I take a bottom-up approach to examine the miracles of medical healing performed by one saint at one shrine in twelfth-century England to understand the social constructs undergirding the journeys these people took in search of miraculous cures for their ailments.

Disability Studies

Like medieval pilgrimage, medieval disability is a subset of cultural and social history which also deserves to be considered on its own terms. Medieval scholars who study disability borrow relevant aspects of disability theory and apply it to their research. By using varied approaches such as anthropology, ethnography, literary theory, and statistics, scholars can dig deeper into the primary sources for what they can reveal about how people in the Middle Ages might have viewed and dealt with disability.

In the Middle Ages, people frequently turned to the power of miraculous healing for help with their deformities or disabilities. In her pioneering work on disability in medieval Europe, Irina Metzler addresses miracles, but they are not her primary concern. Rather, she asks the question, “what constitutes a disability, or an ability for that matter, in a given culture?”⁹² Because the definition of disability has changed over the centuries—indeed, the term “disability” did not enter the lexicon until the late sixteenth century⁹³—Metzler’s “aim is to ... try and explain their [the disabilities’] meanings within a specific cultural context.”⁹⁴ Miracle stories help her in doing this. For example, St. Elisabeth and her shrine in Hungary were famous for curing previously “incurable” conditions:

A man who had been lame for over a year “found no cure with others” and so went to the shrine of St. Elisabeth. [...] St. Elisabeth cured a woman of dropsy whose physicians declared her incurable, and another woman with the same disorder whom an “experienced physician” had declared incurable; furthermore a woman with a cancerous growth who could not be cured “by any art” was healed.⁹⁵

By using medieval, theological, and philosophical fields of inquiry, Metzler is able to illuminate the realities of living with impairment during the Middle Ages. She is particularly interested in pilgrimage because shrines were the sites of healing. Metzler is clearly using a bottom-up approach in her work, focusing on everyday people who went to shrines in hopes of a cure.

Compared to medieval pilgrimage, the study of medieval disability is a new and emerging field, one that has seen a surge in scholarship over the past decade. The larger field of disability studies, however, began to blossom in the 1990s and continues to flower. It has

⁹² Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking About Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), 9.

⁹³ *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “disability.”

⁹⁴ Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

continued to witness growth as it has found acceptance as a legitimate field of inquiry across many disciplines: the first edition of *The Disabilities Studies Reader (DSR)* was published in 1997, with subsequent editions in 2006, 2010, and 2013. The editor notes that “this text is becoming less of an anthology and more of a yearbook.”⁹⁶ In the preface to the fourth edition, Lennard J. Davis explains that

in each of the previous three editions I began the preface by taking the pulse of the field of disability studies at the current moment. In the first edition I lamented the lack of traction disability studies was having in getting attention. In the second I saw disability studies on the rise. In the third edition I wrote “disability studies is definitely part of the academic world and civil society,” noting that Barack Obama had included people with disabilities in his acceptance speech. [...] Disability is not only accepted but also has become very much a critical term in discussions of being, post-humanism, political theory, transgender theory, philosophy, and the like.⁹⁷

This surge in disability studies stems from the politically-based disability movements in the 1970s and '80s in Europe and the United States. Simply put, the disability movement is firmly associated with “everyday people”—those at the bottom—not with the elites and upper classes at the top. Disability studies, therefore, is inherently bottom-up in its fundamental approach.

The current edition of *DSR* is by no means comprehensive; rather, its purpose is to introduce the novice scholar of disability studies to the current academic climate.

Unfortunately, this climate does not usually include disability studies as it applies to the Middle Ages. No article discussing the Middle Ages specifically appears in this or the first two editions. The third edition, however, featured Edward Wheatley’s article “Medieval Constructions of Blindness in Medieval England and France,” which also appeared as a chapter in his 2010 book *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a*

⁹⁶ Lennard J. Davis, “Preface to the Fourth Edition,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th edition, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 14.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Disability. Wheatley's article, however, is not found in the fourth edition, and Davis does not give a satisfactory explanation behind his reason for cutting the only article on the Middle Ages and disability (indeed, he does not even address any specific article in that respect), simply stating that the publisher's marketing department was able to help him in his decision by tabulating what articles were taught and used the most.⁹⁸

Scholars are unanimous in the observation that the leader of medieval disability studies is Irina Metzler, an independent scholar who has researched and written about medieval disability since the late 1990s. Her publications include articles on healing and two monographs on social perceptions of and responses to disability in the Middle Ages.⁹⁹ In 2006 Metzler published "the first book that comprehensively describes disability and physical impairment in the Middle Ages."¹⁰⁰ In it, she provides an exhaustive historiography of the study of disability—mainly undertaken by medical historians in the first half of the twentieth century—and laments the disparaging remarks made by those scholars in reference to the "Dark Ages."¹⁰¹ The aim of this book is to set the theoretical framework for studying disability in the Middle Ages by drawing on methods of inquiry such as sociology, anthropology, the study of material culture, ethnography, and statistics.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Her most recent work, "Have Crutch, Will Travel: Disabled People on the Move in Medieval Europe," in *Travels and Mobilities in the Middle Ages from the Atlantic to the Black Sea*, ed. Marianne O'Doherty et al. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2015), 91–117, has been quite useful in my own research.

¹⁰⁰ Irina Metzler, "Abstract," in *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c.100–1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), i.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 12–13.

¹⁰² In her summary of Chapter 2, Metzler points out that she found anthropological and ethnological methods of inquiry the most helpful for studying the Middle Ages because, like historians, anthropologists and ethnologists are "used to discarding their own cultural assumptions when examining cultures other than their own" (37).

In solidarity with other disability scholars, Metzler makes the distinction between disability and impairment; disability is the social construct and can therefore change over time and place while impairment is the physical condition which does not change regardless of time and place. In other words, the social construct of disability in the Middle Ages was not necessarily the same as today. For example, medieval society might not have viewed a crippled or deaf person as disabled, whereas twenty-first-century society certainly would. However, the physical condition of being crippled or deaf is the same regardless of the time period. “Such a distinction,” Metzler writes, “allows [for] a culturally independent analysis of impairment which does not automatically assume that impairment inevitably leads to disability in all societies at all times.”¹⁰³ The medieval sources that Metzler uses were “the product of an intellectual and cultural elite ... emanating from the environment of monasteries, cathedral schools and universities and from writers trained at such institutions” which were “influenced by and derived from the culture of Scholasticism.”¹⁰⁴ While Metzler’s sources originated in the upper and elite classes—a nod to the top tiers of society—her exploration of disabled persons is squarely situated within the bottom-up framework.

In her most recent monograph, published in 2013, Metzler takes this theoretical framework of differentiating between disability and impairment and, using anthropological and ethnological techniques, examines the “lived experience” of disabled persons in the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁵ In doing so she applies the framework to areas of life such as the law, work, aging, and charity and the liminality experienced by medieval disabled persons in each of

¹⁰³ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1–2.

¹⁰⁵ Irina Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages: Cultural Considerations of Physical Impairment* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1.

these categories.¹⁰⁶ She primarily relies on law codes, literature, church writings, and guild statutes to come to her conclusions. According to Metzler,

normative texts, such as the natural-philosophical, medical, theological and hagiographical material, may provide the intellectual theory and tell us how non-disabled people thought about the disabled, but the economic, social and even the legal texts collected, analysed and discussed here go some way further in presenting a picture of what challenges a medieval disabled person may have encountered.¹⁰⁷

As in her first book, Metzler is taking sources produced by learned medieval men to learn more about the social constructs of disability. In addition, she is also using sources that are more identifiable with the “everyday” person in order to hypothesize what kinds of difficulties a medieval disabled person might have encountered.

While there is no doubt that Metzler is a giant in the field of medieval disability studies, she is not the only scholar working in the field. Others, such as Wheatley and Wendy J. Turner, have written on medieval disability. In *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, Wheatley examines the different social attitudes to blindness in England and France. He addresses the current models of disability theory: social and medical. In the social model, disabled persons are integrated into society; according to Wheatley the social model was most prevalent in “precapitalist Europe.”¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the medical model views disability as something that needs to be corrected or fixed. Of course, the medical model does not really apply to the Middle Ages, because, as Wheatley puts it,

medicine had hardly begun to develop into the institution that it is now. Medical knowledge based in universities, monasteries, or folk practices was too decentralized to wield the institutional and discursive power that it has today. Hospices and

¹⁰⁶ Even though *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages* was not published until 2013, Metzler had written an article in *History Compass* in 2011 that (surprise!) called for further research in the areas discussed in her book. See Irina Metzler, “Disability in the Middle Ages: Impairment at the Intersection of Historical Inquiry and Disability Studies,” *History Compass* 9.1 (Jan. 2011): 45–60.

¹⁰⁷ Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), x.

hospitals were not the sites of medical treatment, so they occupied a very different place in the social structure than they do currently. Above all, the medical model seems inapplicable to [medieval disability studies] because medical options [...] were very limited.¹⁰⁹

Wheatley argues for a third model of disability for discussing the Middle Ages, which he terms the “religious model.”¹¹⁰

Wheatley’s religious model of disability attempts to remove medicine from the medical model and replace it instead with religion and the church as healing agents. Modern-day medicine and medieval religion have the same goal: to cure or fix whatever is “wrong” with a person. For example, just as medicine today views “disability as an absence of full health that requires a cure,” Wheatley shows that medieval Christianity “often constructed disability as a spiritually pathological site of absence of the divine where ‘the works of God [could] be made manifest.’”¹¹¹ Relying primarily on medieval English and French literature, he concludes that blindness—the impairment that his book examines exclusively—was more “socially marked” in France than in England.¹¹² Based on the evidence, he argues that medieval French society made a more concerted effort than English society to integrate blind people into the fold. The founding of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, a famous hospice for the blind, by Louis IX in the middle of the thirteenth century supports this observation. Nothing comparable can be found in England during that time period. Wheatley ultimately suggests that “the relative lack of attention to blind people as a marked group in England might have represented disinterest or neutrality.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 11.

¹¹² Ibid., 220.

¹¹³ Ibid., 221.

Wendy J. Turner has also written several articles, edited several volumes, and written a monograph on medieval disability. She edited a volume with Tory Vandeventer Pearman, published in 2010, which examines disabled persons in various social contexts. The goal of the volume is “to attempt to decipher what a medieval person would have considered a debilitating physical or mental affliction to the point that it interfered with an individual’s daily existence.”¹¹⁴ Turner’s monograph, *Care and Custody of the Mentally Ill, Incompetent, and Disabled in Medieval England* (2013), explores the cases of people in late medieval England who became disabled because of some kind of “mental incapacity.”¹¹⁵ Because most of the work produced in the past decade has centered on physical disability, Turner’s approach in examining mental disabilities is innovative. Like so many other cases of disabilities, Turner observes that the mentally ill were taken care of on a case-by-case basis: “the mentally incapacitated were not lumped into one category, and they were not ignored or sent away.”¹¹⁶ Like Wheatley, Turner argues that the social model of disability was prevalent in medieval society.

This is in direct opposition to social scientists who have touted a “begged view of history.”¹¹⁷ For example, less than twenty years ago M. A. Winzer wrote in *The Disability Studies Reader* that

In the thousands of years of human existence before 1800, life for most exceptional people seems to have been a series of unmitigated hardships. The great majority of disabled persons had no occupation, no source of income, limited social interaction, and little religious comfort. [...] Their lives were severely limited by widely held

¹¹⁴ Wendy J. Turner, “Preface: Abilities and Disabilities,” in *The Treatment of Disabled Persons in Medieval Europe: Examining Disability in the Historical, Legal, Literary, Medical, and Religious Discourses of the Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy J. Turner and Tory Vandeventer Pearman (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), xiii.

¹¹⁵ Wendy J. Turner, *Care and Custody of the Mentally Ill, Incompetent, and Disabled in Medieval England* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013), 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁷ Brendan Gleeson, *Geographies of Disability* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 62–6.

beliefs and superstitions that justified the pervasive prejudice and callous treatment. Individuals seen as different were destroyed, exorcised, ignored, exiled, exploited—or set apart because some were even considered divine.¹¹⁸

The pioneering work of medieval scholars such as Peregrine Horden, Carole Rawcliffe, and, of course, Irina Metzler, in analyzing the social significance of hospitals in the Middle Ages has done much in these past twenty years to disprove Winzer's assumptions that in pre-industrialized societies disabled people were on the outskirts of society, both figuratively and literally.¹¹⁹

My thesis proposes that disabled people were not on the outskirts of society. To the contrary, they were loved and cared for by their families, friends, and neighbors. These rich networks of support carried people with disabilities, sometimes considerable distances, in search of a cure. These cures, I will argue, took place within the public sphere; the healing, not the affliction, was the center of attention. Moreover, it was by the consensus of those present at the tomb (rather than by statements made by the supplicant or a physician) which determined whether the cure was efficacious. In these ways, I hope to show, people with impairments and disabilities were far from the outskirts of society, but, rather, that their presence helped to construct and reaffirm the core beliefs upon which medieval society was built.

¹¹⁸ M. A. Winzer, "Disability and Society before the Eighteenth Century," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by L. J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997), cited in Gleeson, *Geographies of Disability*, 63–4. The most recent edition of *The Disability Studies Reader*, published in 2013, explores more nuanced perceptions of physical and mental disability; Winzer's article—to say the least—is not included in the most recent edition.

¹¹⁹ For further reading on medieval hospitals, see Peregrine Horden, *Hospitals and Healing from Antiquity to the Later Middle Ages*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 881 (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Variorum, 2008); for an analysis of disabled people and medieval hospitals, see Carole Rawcliffe, "Curing Bodies and Healing Souls: Pilgrimage and the Sick in medieval East Anglia," in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, edited by Colin Morris et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108–40; Irina Metzler, "Liminality and Disability: Spatial and Conceptual Aspects of Physical Impairment in Medieval Europe," in *Medicine and Space: Body, Surroundings and Borders in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Patricia Anne Baker et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 273–96.

Combining Medieval Pilgrimage and Disability Studies

Considering that nearly three quarters of the pilgrims in the *Life* appealed to William for divine intervention in relation to physical and mental impairments, disability studies offers the most natural framework for discussing this saint's miracles. While both medieval pilgrimage and disability studies are active fields of study for historians, so far as I know, very little scholarship has been produced that explicitly combines these two in a coherent fashion. Physical impairments are an important aspect of the scholarship on medieval pilgrimage; they tend to be in the background as just one of many reasons why people in the Middle Ages might have sought aid from a saint's shrines or relics. In addition, medieval miracle stories are, for the most part, silent when it comes to explaining how pilgrims—both physically and mentally impaired—came to a particular tomb.

By analyzing one set of miracle stories for what it can tell us about the everyday pilgrims who visited William in hopes of a cure, I attempt to fill a gap in the scholarship in two main ways. In Chapter 2, I will give a systematic analysis of the miracles, dividing them into various categories according to each supplicant's ailment and analyzing them through the lens of disability studies. Through my quantitative analysis, I hope to show that although he was martyred as a boy, pilgrims of all ages sought his intervention not just in alleviating, but in fact in curing, their ailments. Then, in Chapter 3, I will again use the lens of disability studies to consider the varieties of familial and technological support that aided impaired pilgrims to make the journey to the shrine in Norwich, sometimes from considerable distances. I will conclude by commenting on how these journeys, as well as the cures that occurred at William's tomb, helped pilgrims regain not only their physical and mental autonomy, but indeed their status as full members of their communities.

Chapter 2

Analysis of the Miracles

For my analysis in Chapters 2 and 3 I will discuss a total of eighty miracles drawn from seventy chapters spanning five books of the *Life*. In selecting these miracles of medical healing, I have excluded those dealing with missing textiles or jewelry, those lost at sea, and a handful of others in which non-believers were given their comeuppance courtesy of the saint. The medical miracles I will discuss range from the simple to the truly astonishing—from the healing of children bent double¹ to a miracle where the spirits of Thomas of Canterbury and King Edmund themselves escort a pilgrim to Norwich.²

I found over twenty-five distinct conditions, which I examine in order from most common to least common, beginning with unidentified illness and pilgrims who were bent double. The next most common ailment is madness and demonic possession; I then look at pilgrims who were blind or mute. I then discuss other common ailments, by which I mean that they appeared in at least three instances in the *Life*. These conditions include deafness, fevers, kidney pain, and toothache. Less common ailments, each of which occur only once or twice in the *Life*, include dropsy, flux, podagra (a kind of rheumatoid arthritis, and often referred to by Thomas as gout), iron shackles, pain in limbs, weakness in limbs, swelling in the breast, and viper attacks. The last category, rare conditions, are those ailments which affect only one pilgrim each. These include dysentery, a goiter, palsy, paralysis, weakness of constitution, and a tumor. According to Thomas, all of these conditions could be cured by William's intervention. The sheer number of pilgrims who are purported to have visited William's shrine with the expectation of receiving a miraculous cure suggests that medieval

¹ See below, page 53, for a discussion of this term.

² Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life*, especially Books VI.xvi and VI.xix.

people believed that saints could cure these conditions. Additionally, Thomas's meticulous record-keeping points to the variety of medical conditions as medieval people understood them. In Chapters 2 and 3, I aim to show that these miracles illuminate the social contexts in which both impairment and healing existed in the Middle Ages.

Overview of the Miracles

The *Life* is divided into a prologue and seven books. Books I and II have received perhaps a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention because they contain the material relevant to discussion of the blood libel myth associated with William. Book I describes the life and death of William, the discovery of his body in Thorpe Wood, the sheriff's protection of the Jews, and the first translation of William's body to the monks' cemetery. Book II opens with a scathing commentary on those who would belittle and denigrate the boy saint. Thomas states that before he will get to the miracles in Book III, he wishes to "confront some of those whom I know not what malice or jealousy leads to verbose chatter" because "I cannot bear the shamelessness of their insolence and the insolence of their shamelessness, [and so] I attempt to pierce it through with the spear of satire, and curb it with the reins of reason."³ He refers to himself as a "second David," whose duty it is to defeat (or at least confound) the "reproachful Philistines."⁴ He does not explicitly state to whom he is referring, though he seems to be targeting those monks who did not believe in William's sanctity, such as Prior Elias, mentioned several times throughout the *Life*. As Hannah R. Johnson puts it, Books I and II are "the toll, the tax [Thomas] had to pay to his critics in order to move on to [the] miraculous accounts" in Books III-VII.⁵

³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 40, Book II.i.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Johnson, "Rhetoric's Work," 91.

The miracles of medical healing comprise the bulk of the *Life* and fill Books III, IV, V, VI, and VII. Book III has eighteen medical miracles spanning eighteen chapters; Book IV has twelve medical miracles in eight chapters; Book V has sixteen medical miracles in thirteen chapters; Book VI has sixteen medical miracles in fifteen chapters; and Book VII has eighteen medical miracles over fourteen chapters. Since I will explore these miracles and their implications here and again in Chapter 3, in some cases discussing the same pilgrims but from different perspectives in both chapters, I will briefly describe the contents of Books III-VII.

Book III opens with the translation of William's body from the cemetery to the chapter house. The miracles begin with toothaches, then move to knee and kidney pain, painful fluxes, sick infants, mute children, children with dysentery, and pilgrims with podagra, fever, dropsy, paralysis, tumors, and unidentified but otherwise serious illnesses. One miracle of particular interest in Book III concerns Lady Mabel of Bec and her sons. Although neither Mabel nor her sons were ill, and no miracles were performed at the tomb, Mabel had taken the preemptive measures of visiting the tomb, praying fervently, and taking a small piece of it home with her. She "took great care to guard it with the greatest diligence ... Since, indeed, she hoped faithfully, her hope did not deserve to be dashed. And so, whenever she or her sons incurred the trouble of any ill health ... they scraped the stone and dissolved it in holy water, then drank it, and soon they experienced relief and the speedy power of divine grace."⁶ As Jonathan Sumption points out, this practice of mixing scrapings from a tomb or relic with holy water was a common practice in the high Middle Ages.⁷ Except for this incident, all of the pilgrims who came to William's tomb and drank holy

⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 88, Book III.xi.

⁷ Sumption, *Age of Pilgrimage*, 112–13.

water mixed with tomb scrapings were given the mixture for immediate consumption. Not surprisingly, “shrine-keepers were more likely to indulge the rich and powerful.”⁸ Because Norwich Cathedral and the cult of St. William enjoyed Lady Mabel’s patronage, she was allowed—apparently unlike other pilgrims—to take a piece of the tomb for use at a later time.⁹ This is the only miracle of its kind in the collection, and it demonstrates not only that people in the Middle Ages were acutely aware of the healing power of the saints, but also that those in power could potentially safeguard their health and the health of their families through such preventive measures as procuring a small piece of a tomb for future use.

Book IV begins with a man, Gurwan, a tanner in Norwich, who is lamenting the death of his five sons. His sixth son, who is unnamed, had been ill for more than four months and was on the brink of death. One day a woman from London appeared in Norwich to tell Gurwan that she had been sent by William, who had visited her in three separate visions. As William’s messenger, she told Gurwan that in order to ensure the health and safety of his son he would need to bring a candle to the tomb and then every year afterwards pay a tribute to William on the day of the Nativity of the Virgin (September 8).¹⁰ The Book continues with a workman being seized by the devil, a woman who suffered with flux for five years, a pilgrim with kidney and foot pain, and others suffering from unidentified but grave illnesses.

The miracles in Book V begin fantastically. Immediately following the two chapters where Thomas describes William’s translation from the chapter house to the church and the sounds coming from there the following night, he tells a story of a youth who miraculously vomited up a viper and its two young, and whose father put them in a cleft stick as a

⁸ Rawcliffe, “Curing Bodies and Healing Souls,” 121.

⁹ For more information on Lady Mabel and her family, see Paul A. Fox, “A Study of Kinship and Patronage: The Rise of the House of Bek,” *Medieval Prosopography* 24 (2003): 171–93.

¹⁰ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 109, Book IV.ii.

souvenir.¹¹ Book V continues with accounts of pilgrims suffering from fevers, dropsy, general weakness of limbs, madness and unidentified illnesses, and children who were blind, deaf, dumb, and bent double.

The miracles in Book VI begin with the story of a little girl who was the favorite of her parents and who was at death's door. Other miracles include several instances of madness or vexation by an evil spirit, epilepsy, blindness, foot pain, and the fantastical stories of men bound in iron shackles as punishment for murder and a woman who, trying to poison her guard, ended up being poisoned herself. Another unnamed man is attacked by a viper whose poison almost kills him, and Book VI ends with the healing of Matilda from Swafeld, who had pain and swelling in her right breast.

Book VII's miracles are the last in the *Life*, and the majority of the miracles are more mundane (unidentified illnesses, palsy, pain in limbs or throughout the entire body). The last miracle, however, is probably the most impressive of the entire collection. In 1172, a man named Geoffrey from Canterbury suffered from a severe toothache (just like the clerk, Geoffrey, in Book III.iv, the first miracle recorded by Thomas). He was urged, in a vision of Thomas Becket, to seek aid from William, and on the way he acquired two traveling companions who turned out to be Becket and St. Edmund. Despite the great diversity of ailments described in the *Life*, these eighty miracles of medical healing are linked in that they do not simply occur within social contexts, for, in fact, they help to form a variety of social constructs.

¹¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 124–5, Book V.iii. For more information on depictions of vipers in the Middle Ages, see “On the Viper” in *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore*, trans. Michael J. Curley (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), 15–16.

Of the eighty miracles I examined from Books III-VII, forty-four percent are female and fifty-six percent are male; only one miracle (or one percent) does not specifically mention the sex of the afflicted, though the Latin “rusticum quendam” confirms that this pilgrim was male.¹² Thirty percent of the miracles involve children, seventeen boys and seven girls. An overwhelming majority of these eighty pilgrims (ninety percent) sought William’s aid in relation to physical ailments, while the remaining ten percent were afflicted by evil spirits and demons. Eleven percent had visited doctors to no avail before coming to the tomb, and Thomas mentions the duration of the illnesses in thirty percent of the miracles. Surprisingly, only twenty percent of the eighty pilgrims are mentioned as physically touching William’s tomb in some way, while twenty-three percent of the miracles did not even take place at the tomb. This leaves the remaining fifty-seven percent of pilgrims who came to the tomb but whom Thomas does not mention having touched it.¹³ Thirty-five percent of the pilgrims came to the tomb in Norwich on their own, with or without the aid of trestles or crutches; slightly more (forty-three percent) came to the tomb with the aid of kin—carried either in their arms, on a horse, or in a wheeled vehicle such as a wheelbarrow or litter—and of the eighteen miracles which did not take place at the tomb (twenty-three percent), seven of them (thirty-nine percent) witnessed someone other than the afflicted person going to the tomb (such as, for example, a father going to the tomb with a candle to pray for the recovery of his infant son).¹⁴ In terms of offerings, thirty-one percent gave votive offerings, mostly of wax (in one miracle, the pilgrim left his crutches¹⁵), three percent gave a monetary offering,

¹² Jessopp and James, *Life*, 203, Book V.xii.

¹³ I only count in these calculations those pilgrims Thomas specifically states touched the tomb.

¹⁴ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 87, Book III.ix.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 179–80, Book VII.xi.

and four percent gave an offering which is not specified by Thomas, leaving sixty-two percent of the pilgrims who did not leave any kind of offering whatsoever.

Unidentified Illness

The eighty medical miracles in the *Life* fall into several categories. The most common ailments are unidentified/unspecified physical illness, pilgrims who are bent double, and pilgrims who are mad or possessed by a devil or evil spirit. The most abundant category of ailments, with seventeen instances, is best described as “unidentified illness.” Thomas uses this phrase himself, sometimes remarking that even though the illness was unknown, it was nonetheless serious or grave. For example, in Book III.xiv, Thomas states that Alditha suffered from a “certain serious and long standing disease” (“Tempore illo quedam Alditha Norwici manens Toke cerarii uxor graui quidem et diuturna detinebatur ualitudine”).¹⁶ Such cases are found in each of the Books (twenty-four percent in Book III; twenty-nine percent in Book IV; seventeen percent in Book V; six percent in Book VI; and twenty-four percent in Book VII). While these miracles are spread throughout the Books, the largest number appears in Book IV, with five. Books III and VII contain four stories each of unidentified illness. Book V has three such stories and there is only one relevant story found in Book VI. The sex of the pilgrims suffering from unidentified illness is thirty-five percent female and sixty-five percent male; fifty-eight percent have names, and we know the origins of seventy-six percent of them.

The miracle narratives in Book III are fairly scant in their descriptions; Thomas does little more than acknowledge that the pilgrims in question indeed had an affliction which was healed by the boy saint. The majority of the miracles in Book IV follow the same pattern.

¹⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 96, Book III.xiv; Jessopp and James, *Life*, 147, Book III.xiv.

The two miracles in Book V do not take place at the tomb, but rather at home where the supplicant lay ill. Both sought aid from doctors to no avail, and they each offered a candle that measured their respective heights.¹⁷ Book VI only has one miracle where the ailment is an unidentified illness, and this one concerns the little girl of Reginald de Warenne, an Anglo-Norman noble who served under Kings Stephen and Henry II. Thomas writes that the unnamed little girl's parents "were deeply saddened by the grave danger to their daughter, whom they had always loved above all others," and she was brought to the tomb in Norwich.¹⁸ The girl touched the tomb, made an unspecified offering, and was healed.

Finally, Book VII has four miracles concerning unidentified illness, but these stories bear no connection to one another. In Book VII.i, for example, both Reimbert, a knight from Hastings, and his miller, were healed by William simply by praying to him, and neither went to the tomb for healing, much like the two pilgrims in Book V afflicted by unidentified illness. Thomas states that he learned of these two miracles directly from Reimbert at a later date when he was in Norwich "to visit the blessed martyr and pray before him" where he "offered double thanks—for himself and for his miller."¹⁹ Likewise, the last two instances (Book VII.iv and VII.v) are some of the shortest narratives in the *Life*, with only three lines of text each. Despite their brevity, however, these accounts provide clues about these pilgrims sometimes missing in longer and more captivating miracle stories in the *Life*. For instance the woman in Book VII.iv was named Leva and her brother was Roger de Scales, while the last pilgrim was a little unnamed boy whose father, William, was from Thornage. Even though Thomas does not say specifically that Leva was from Thornage, he says that

¹⁷ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 138–9, Book V.xviii and Book V.xix.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 147, Book VI.ii.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 175, Book VII.i.

William and his son were “also of Thornage, a vill of the Bishop’s,” (“Quidam quoque Willelmus de Tornedis uilla episcopali”) and that the woman in the following miracle (Book VII.vi) lived “in the same vill of the Bishop’s.”²⁰ Thornage is not mentioned at all before the miracle of William’s son in Book VII.v, and it is not mentioned subsequently. Therefore, it is probable that Leva was also from Thornage. In addition, Leva came to the tomb in Norwich for healing, while Thomas does not specify whether William came to the tomb as well. He simply states that William “made a vow to the holy martyr William [for his son’s recovery], and by his intercession obtained the remedy of healing for his son.”²¹ The woman in Book VII.vi was believed to have cancer and I will discuss her case at the end of this chapter.²²

Thomas does not record many details about these pilgrims’ medical ailments, but these records are nevertheless useful because they contain other incidental information relevant to my study. The abundance of unidentified illnesses may point to the lack of what we would refer to today as advanced medical knowledge in twelfth-century East Anglia. At the same time, these stories may well signal that William could cure any affliction and that he was not a specialist saint. (For example, if an infant died before it was baptized, the mother could pray to St. Birgitta to bring the child back to life just long enough to perform the ceremony—this would ensure that the infant would not spend eternity in Limbo but rather go straight to Paradise.²³) These accounts of unidentified illness, moreover, point to Thomas’s proclivities as William’s sacrist: he is more concerned with the cures and miracles than he is with the supplicants’ medical conditions upon arrival at the tomb. What the

²⁰ Ibid., 266, Book VII.v & vi; Jessopp and James, *Life*, 266, Book VII.v & vi.

²¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 266, Book VII.v.

²² See below, pages 96–7.

²³ Leigh Ann Craig, *Wandering Women and Holy Matrons: Women as Pilgrims in the Later Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 102.

modern historian is looking for in these stories is not always the same as what Thomas thought worth recording. Nevertheless, these stories remain useful because they point to the existence of an array of social support structures in twelfth-century England.

Pilgrims Bent Double

The most frequent condition when the ailment is specified is that of being “bent double,” and there are ten such cases in the *Life*. I believe this is a kind of catch-all for various ailments but distinct from other unknown or unspecified conditions. In most of the stories where the pilgrims are described as being bent double, a participle form of the verb “*contraho*” is used (e.g. *contracta*, *contractis*, *contractam*), which can mean “to draw together by way of shortening or narrowing ... to shorten, reduce, draw in.”²⁴ These pilgrims (found only in Books V-VII), suffered from limb or joint pain in their legs, hands, and/or feet, and in some cases needed crutches or trestles to get around. However, I believe this is different from having a hunched back, scoliosis, or other similar conditions, as only one pilgrim in the entire *Life* is specifically described as having a curved spine (“*ut curuata dorsi spina, et ipsa fieret curua*”).²⁵

Though some cases appear to have been more debilitating than others, Thomas appears to have distinguished pilgrims who were bent double from those who had other kinds of unspecified conditions. Limitations on mobility are a key component of this ailment, but that is not the only factor. Moreover, some of the cures seem to have been audibly painful, but this is not necessarily a distinguishing trait. As we will see, most of the pilgrims who were bent double either decided with family or friends to go to the tomb; in the case of

²⁴ *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, comp. D. P. Simpson (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, 1968), s.v. *contraho*.

²⁵ Jessopp and James, *Life*, 242, Book VI.xi; *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *curvus*.

children, the parents made the decision to make the pilgrimage to William's tomb. But, as I will argue, perhaps the most striking element common to the cases of pilgrims who were bent double is that their cures took place in front of a substantial crowd gathered at the tomb, rather than merely witnessed by monks or related to Thomas by others whom he trusted.

Despite the frequency of this condition in the *Life*, Thomas does not record any instances of pilgrims who are bent double until Book V, where there are three in a row, and then nothing again until Book VI, where the two instances appear side by side. Book VII contains the final five instances. Sixty percent of the pilgrims who were bent double were female, while forty percent were male. Thomas provides names of fifty percent of these pilgrims, and he states the origins of all but one of them; the textual evidence suggests that the one outlier was also a Norwich native.²⁶

The first two miracles concerning pilgrims who are bent double in Book V take place on "Pentecost week, on [the] Saturday before the feast of the Holy Trinity,"²⁷ while the third miracle actually took place earlier in the year, on Maundy Thursday.²⁸ All the pilgrims who were bent double in Book V are female. At least one of them was married and old enough to bear children,²⁹ while another pilgrim was a seven-year-old girl, "bent and mute," whose mother "set her down next to the tomb in the view of many people."³⁰ The first pilgrim was a woman who had lived in Bury St. Edmunds her entire life and came to the tomb in Norwich

²⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 136–7, Book V.xvi. This miracle was witnessed by Godiva, who was married to Sebald. Per Rubin, there is a record of Sebald "as a donor of land in Norwich to the Abbey of Saint Benet at Holme, when his nephew joined the community as a monk; see *The Register of the Abbey of St Benet of Holme*, ed. J. R. West, Norfolk Record Society (1932), no. 177, p. 99" (238n23); Simon Yarrow notes that Sebald's contribution was meant to be for heating the monks' infirmary, "ad ignem infirmorum monachorum" (*Saints and Their Communities*, 154n98).

²⁷ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 135, Book V.xiv.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 136, Book V.xvi.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 206, Book V.xv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 136, Book V.xvi.

on her own with only trestles for assistance. It appears that Thomas placed this miracle first before all the others, even though it actually took place last chronologically, to help bolster his priory in the rivalry between Norwich and Bury St. Edmunds.³¹

In Book VI, a woman and a boy are healed at the tomb, both of them bent double. Thomas does not explicitly state where the woman, named Matilda, originally came from, but for some time she had been living with Peter, a priest in Langham.³² Matilda's case is one of only two cases of medical miracles in the *Life* where the pilgrim had sought healing at other shrines before coming to Norwich:

And whenever she desired to visit holy places in order to recover her health, he had her carried on a horse—crosswise—like a full sack. And when no fruit resulted from the effort, she was carried back in the same state as before.

As the news of the frequent acts of power of Saint William spread widely, she conceived a hope that her health might be restored thanks to him. Full of enthusiasm and confidence, she took up her stick and set out on the road to Norwich.³³

Thomas signals that the woman's act of taking herself to William's tomb at Norwich was the key component to her healing, and with her faith "she enhanced her mobility more from the fervency of her heart than from the physical support of her feet" and "trusting little in her own powers, she put more faith in the support of her stick."³⁴ Perhaps as a way of practicing penitence, Matilda did not ride a horse the twenty-eight miles from Langham to Norwich, but instead walked, where "each step was hardly the size of a finger, and between one step and

³¹ For a discussion of the relationship between Bury St. Edmunds and Norwich, see Rose, *The Murder of William of Norwich*, 31, 104, and 190.

³² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 160, Book VI.xii.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

another there was a long delay, and if you had seen her walking, you would not have thought a tortoise any slower.”³⁵

In fact, Matilda’s pace was so slow that even though she began her journey twelve days before Lent, she did not reach Norwich until the fourth week after Easter, a span of three months. According to Thomas, she began to feel the healing effects of William’s pity as soon as she entered the cathedral, where she writhed about on the floor in deep pain. She was also acutely aware that her miraculous healing might have been seen by others as a result of secular medicine, so “she took an oath not to leave Norwich as long as it took, until her master would come, the aforesaid Peter of Langham, who, by being witness to its truth, would demolish the gossips’ charge that it was false.”³⁶ Word was sent for Peter, and when he came, he “gave witness to the truth,” thus assuring the reader that the miracle did indeed take place.³⁷ As we will see in Chapter 3, Matilda’s involvement in her own treatment is significant for other reasons as well.

Having traveled some twenty-eight miles from Langham to Norwich, Matilda was unknown to the crowd at the tomb. Her story contains a number of elements found in other miraculous cures of pilgrims who were bent double, including the sounds of her limbs cracking, her cries of pain, her tearful prayers, and her proximity to the tomb. These traits are not unique to pilgrims who were bent double, nor are they suggestive of the lived experience of those who were bent double in contrast to those with other ailments. Nevertheless, while this condition remains elusive to my modern mind, clearly it was a recognizable affliction in twelfth-century Norwich. But the most salient feature of Matilda’s story is that the crowd,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 161, Book VI.xii.

³⁷ Ibid.

though present, did not believe that she had been cured. I wish to argue that the public, therefore, rather than the supplicant, determined whether or not the cure was efficacious. Matilda herself would seem to confirm such a reading in her insistence that she wait at the tomb until Peter, the priest from Langham, could arrive and confirm that she had always been bent double and thus confirm that she had, in fact, been healed. Though other stories in the *Life* do not always call such attention to this social dimension of the cures, I believe it may be beneath the surface of many more of them.

For example, immediately following the tale of Matilda is that of a 10-year-old boy from Wortham. While the boy remains nameless, Thomas records that his father's name was Godric and that his mother (also nameless) was a "niece of a certain Robert of Wales."³⁸ The boy suffered from a bent spine and a hump on his back. Even though he was able to stand up somewhat straight, the boy's stomach was pressed against his knees and, when he wanted to walk, he had to "put his palms on his knees or on the ground" so he had "one or the other for support," which would have made his overall mobility quite limited.³⁹ His parents sought help from physicians to no avail, and eventually his father brought him to the tomb in Norwich in a handbarrow, as I will explore more fully in my discussion of family and technology in Chapter 3.

Almost immediately upon arrival the boy was healed—though not without great anguish—and he and his father left joyfully, spent the next three days in Norwich, and then returned home to Wortham. Unfortunately, this miraculous cure was not permanent and, urged by family and friends, the father brought his son back a second time. This time, however, the boy and his father stayed longer than before, so that the boy could be a "servant

³⁸ Ibid., 161, Book VI.xiii.

³⁹ Ibid., 162, Book VI.xiii.

to the boy martyr with his youthful services.”⁴⁰ The father had “deduced from what had happened earlier that the holy martyr wanted the continuing presence of the boy to be proof of his great power.”⁴¹ The father obviously wanted this second miracle to stick, so he made sure that he and his son stayed longer than on their first visit in order to give the proper thanks to William. Based on my discussion of Matilda, I believe that Godric’s son may well have remained at the tomb after (or perhaps as part of) his second healing so that the public would be able to confirm that this cure had taken place. Again, Thomas does not always call attention to this aspect of miraculous healing, but it often seems to be just beneath the surface in these stories.

The final instances of pilgrims who were bent double are found in Book VII. The first concerns a local beggar boy from Norwich named Robert. Thomas states that he was known throughout the village as someone who had lived there for many years and “begged from many people throughout the town” by “supporting himself by his knees and moving with crutches held in his hands.”⁴² This particular miracle took place during Pentecost in 1156, during the vigil of the Holy Trinity.⁴³ Thomas simply states that the boy suddenly appeared upright to the monks keeping the nightly vigil and concludes by saying that “on him, as we have said before, the pious virtue of the martyr conferred the remedy of health.”⁴⁴ He does not mention any offerings Robert might have brought, how long he had been at the tomb prior to the miracle, or what he did afterwards. Nor does Thomas specify whether or not he personally witnessed the boy walking straight, though he implies nonetheless that it is

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 162–3, Book VI.xiii.

⁴² Ibid., 179, Book VII.x.

⁴³ Thomas gives the year and holiday in Book VII.ix, and he states that Robert’s miracle took place the same week.

⁴⁴ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 179, Book VII.x.

credible because his fellow monks witnessed it. It is striking that he is not negatively stereotyped either for his status as a beggar or as a cripple. In a touching way, this story points to the role that the people of Norwich played not only in taking care of the indigent but also in healing them.

Thomas of York was healed at the same time as Robert. He was “feeble and disabled in his whole body” and “guided his progress with two staffs, known commonly as crutches, sustaining his weak body.”⁴⁵ Like Matilda, Thomas took it upon himself to come to Norwich for healing, and “set off from York as best he could to go to the holy martyr William to receive the grace of health, and, making little progress, his lengthy journey took up many days, [with] faith support[ing] the weak traveller and hope [drawing in] the disabled one.”⁴⁶ In turn, Thomas was healed, and he left his crutches at the tomb as a token of his gratitude. This is the only account in my analysis where Thomas specifically states that an offering other than a votive of wax or money was left at the tomb. Thomas’s offering serves at least three purposes. The first is the practical reason that he had been healed and therefore no longer needed the crutches to make his journey home. The second reason is more symbolic in that it would attest to William’s healing powers to others who visited the tomb in search of a cure. Finally, I believe the crutches may well have played a role in the public’s confirmation of the healing, for Thomas of Monmouth writes that after receiving his cure, “as a sign he left his crutches there” (“et optate salutis remedium optinuit, ibique in signum sua podia dimisit”).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 180, Book VII.xi; Jessopp and James, *Life*, 271, Book VII.xi.

The last three accounts of pilgrims bent double concern a woman and two children. Thomas writes that he witnessed the healing of an unnamed woman from the province of Lindsey. She stayed with Chole the smith in Norwich for “many days” and “no one testified to having seen her in any way but bent.”⁴⁸ Like the others before her, this woman, too, was healed by the boy martyr. The final two examples are both found in Book VII.xvi and concern two children—a girl and a boy. The girl, Hugelina, was brought by her father from their home in Rockland (most likely the group of villages near present-day Norwich) in a wheeled litter (“vehiculo rotatili”) because her “feet were stuck to her buttocks due to a defect of nature.”⁴⁹ The boy, whose name was Baldwin, was also brought to the tomb that same day by his father all the way from the province of Lincoln in a similar vehicle because the “sinews from the knees down to the calves and feet had dried out” and he was therefore unable to walk except with great difficulty: “when need forced him, he went on his knees, supported by hand-crutches.”⁵⁰ Both children were completely healed at the tomb and Thomas mentions nothing more about them. Though these accounts are brief in the extreme, Thomas again follows his formula which specifically invokes independent confirmation of the supplicants’ condition before arriving at the tomb, followed by a statement about the healing. Though he does not mention the presence of a crowd, at least four people were present at the tomb at the time of the cure: the two children and their fathers. But an equally important part of Thomas’s formula is that he calls far greater attention to the miraculous healing than he does to the impairments. This suggests, perhaps, that the fact of prior

⁴⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 180, Book VII.xii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 182, Book VII.xvi.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

disability matters more than the details of the impairment itself, and, moreover, that the complete restoration of full health trumps any lasting concern with the ailment.

The miracles discussed in this section concern the most frequent ailment specified by Thomas in the *Life*. My analysis suggests that being bent double affected men, women, and children, all of whom were healed by William. Unlike the pilgrims with unidentified illnesses, which I discussed in the previous section, Thomas seems to take an interest in the afflictions of these crippled pilgrims as well as their miraculous cures, if only because this ailment can be specified. The frequency of pilgrims who were bent double may imply that William had a reputation for curing people suffering from this condition; but as a catch-all term for a variety of physical deformities it may also simply reflect the broad range of physical impairments of the population of Norwich in the twelfth century. If this is true, Thomas's use of the term "contractam" and its variants suggest that medieval people may not have differentiated between various physical impairments that limited mobility.

Due to the nature of their ailment, these pilgrims required additional assistance from technology and kin (for these reasons, many of the pilgrims in this section will also be discussed in Chapter 3). As such, their condition may have been perceived as more burdensome than other ailments and so there appears to have been greater pressure to seek out a cure. I therefore believe that being bent double in medieval Norwich should be understood not just as an impairment, but in fact as a disability, following the distinction that disability depends on a society's views of an impairment whereas the impairment is simply the physical manifestation of a condition. The ten pilgrims who were bent double that Thomas records having received a cure at William's shrine were cured not only of their impairment, but indeed of their disability. These accounts include some of the most vivid

scenes of healing in the *Life* and involve supplicants writhing in pain as the sounds of their bodies crackling filled the tomb. But these scenes are significant not because of their gory detail, but rather because they so frequently took place in front of large crowds which witnessed the miracle and thus could attest that the person had been healed and was therefore no longer disabled.

Madness and Demonic Possession

Physical disability was not the only significant affliction cured at William's shrine. There are eight instances where pilgrims were mad or possessed, and these stories are spread throughout the *Life*. In Book IV, for example, the two instances are ten chapters apart; in Book V one directly follows the other; in Book VI, all three are in sequence; and there is only one instance early on in Book VII. Out of the eight cases, twenty-five percent are female and seventy-five percent are male. The number of pilgrims who have names compared to those who do not is an even 50/50 split, and we know the location for eighty-eight percent of them. I will return to madness and demonic possession in Chapter 3 because these stories concern pilgrims who could not take care of themselves, and thus required the care of their families. Here in Chapter 2, I will consider the medical implications of these cases, as described by Thomas.

The first instance of madness occurs in Book IV.iii, but it is not the main focus of that chapter. Thomas begins the story by describing how Ralph, a local Norwich moneyer, was suffering from a serious illness and was healed by William upon making a vow and fulfilling it.⁵¹ The incident with the mad workman is almost an aside: "It also happened about that time that while the moneyers of Norwich were at their work," the young man "was seized by the

⁵¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 110, Book IV.iii.

demon in front of his eyes, and he behaved so badly that he soon had to be restrained with strong chains.”⁵² Thomas does not say whether or not the workman was taken to the tomb or stayed where he was when the possession occurred, but thanks to those who were still sane (and William), he was freed from the demon’s possession. Ten chapters later, Thomas mentions Eustace, the moneyer from Norwich, for a second time. Earlier in Book III.xxii, Eustace’s wife Ida had been cured of podagra by William.⁵³ This time, however, his unnamed daughter was “brought in a state of insanity to the tomb of the holy martyr, and after the space of an hour return[ed] healthy.”⁵⁴ This story only takes up two lines of text, and Thomas dedicates more than double that to say that even though others had come to the tomb, he will not record their cases:

And others besides, who had illnesses and diseases, we have seen come to him; and we know from their subsequent accounts that they had received cures. I have not inserted their names and the whole list of events into this book, in order to avoid tedium, because too much prolixity most often vexes the good will of readers.

Here ends the fourth book.⁵⁵

True to his word, Thomas does not mention any other instances of madness again until nine chapters later, in Book V. In these preliminary examples, Thomas establishes a pattern that will hold in his other accounts of madness and demonic possession but which he varies according to the individual cases. We can see, however tentatively, that pilgrims who were brought to the tomb to be cured of madness and demonic possession were brought against their will by their families and that they arrived in a state of insanity and received a complete cure. Hence, we can already state that madness and demonic possession should be

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 100–1, Book III.xxii.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 119, Book IV.xiii.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 120, Book IV.xiii.

understood not just as mental impairment but in fact as a disability whose cure was deemed necessary by caretakers and by society. As we will see, Thomas's accounts of madness and demonic possession vary in length and detail and will offer further insights into how medieval people understood mental illness within medical and social contexts.

The next miracle concerning a mad or possessed person is prominently placed following a miracle concerning Thomas himself and the case of his lost psalter on Holy Saturday.⁵⁶ In this first instance of madness or demonic possession in Book V, Thomas discusses the unnamed peasant "belonging to Simon de Hempstead," but he devotes less than fifty percent of his text to the actual miracle; the rest, found in the beginning, addresses those unnamed persons who would dare suggest that William's miracles are not real: "while we have faithfully related the miracles of the blessed martyr William for the devotion of the faithful, as far as we have been able to know them by what we have heard or seen, he sins who puts about that we have struck the stamp of truth on untruths or have dressed up events with figments of the imagination."⁵⁷ Obviously, the unnamed mad peasant who was brought to the tomb completely bound and returned home the next day "hale and healthy" is an example of the good works wrought by William and witnessed and recorded by his custodian.⁵⁸

In the next instance, Thomas states that during Pentecost he witnessed the healing of the unnamed adult son of Richard de Needham and his wife Silverun who was brought to the tomb because "suddenly one day he was possessed by a demon and then began to behave so

⁵⁶ Ibid., 132–3, Book V.xi.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 133–4, Book V.xii.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 134, Book V.xiii.

violently that seven men could hardly restrain him in chains.”⁵⁹ Before finally being brought to the tomb, he was in this state for six days, and he did not eat or sleep. This is one of just a handful of stories in which Thomas relates what the pilgrim said; in this case, the man clearly had no interest in being there, for as he approached the tomb, he suddenly “cried out in a horrible voice and said: ‘What do you want of me? Where are you leading me? I won’t go there! I won’t go there!’”⁶⁰ After thrashing about and even attacking his mother, Thomas states that the man was healed, acted as though he had never been afflicted by a demon, and fell asleep. Upon awakening, he asked for and received food, which no doubt helped his overall countenance, and he went home “sane and in good health” with his parents.⁶¹

In addition to receiving a complete cure of his impairment *and* disability, this man’s story suggests that those suffering from madness and demonic possession could not be trusted to seek out their own cures, but rather that they needed to be brought by their families—against their own will, if necessary. As we will see, this man is not unique in raving along the journey but then falling quiet in the presence of William’s powerful spirit. Indeed, a number of other pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession even fell asleep at the tomb as part of their cure. Though medieval people do not seem to have made strong delineations among various kinds of mental illness, it appears that they understood insanity as deriving from demonic possession which was appropriately cured at the site of a saint’s shrine.

The next three miraculous healings of possessed pilgrims take place one after the other in Book VI. The first, in Book VI.iv, concerns a Norwich fisherman by the name of

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 135, Book V.xiii.

Everard, who was “disturbed by an unclean spirit” and taken to the tomb with his hands and feet bound.⁶² Much like the man in the previous miracle, Everard managed to break free and was a danger to those present. In addition to the liability he already posed due to his madness and demonic possession, Everard was further impaired by hunger and sleep deprivation. However, as Thomas states, Everard fully recovered after eating and sleeping at the tomb, where he received his cure. In Book VI.v, Thomas states that he himself witnessed the healing of Robert, a member of the parish of St. Michael Consiford in Norwich, who came to the tomb with his unnamed mother. He was not a physical danger to himself or anyone else, but he was nevertheless a terrifying sight: his “eyes burned like fires” and “his cries were terrible. His own mouth made many different sounds” and he “twisted and tore off his clothes.”⁶³ According to Thomas, the man was healed thanks to the prayers offered to William, who worked on behalf of God. Not only was Robert healed of his malady that day, but he was also given “health thereafter.”⁶⁴

The final instance of madness in Book VI is that of Sieldeware, a woman from Belaugh, who was “troubled by a malign spirit and was brought to Norwich by her relatives to be cured by Saint William’s merits.”⁶⁵ Like the son of Richard de Needham in Book V.xiii, Sieldeware had to be dragged to the tomb by several strong men, all the while screaming and struggling to get free from her makeshift restraints.⁶⁶ Unlike Richard de Needham’s son, however, Sieldeware appeared to be cured while at the tomb—but when she was taken to a separate room, she began to thrash about, “kicking [the ground] with her

⁶² Ibid., 148, Book VI.iv.

⁶³ Ibid., 149, Book VI.v.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 149, Book VI.vi.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

heels” and trying to break away from the veil and belt that restrained her.⁶⁷ When she was laid by the tomb a second time (at Thomas’s insistence), she calmed down again. Like the son of Richard de Needham before her, Sieldeware was finally able to sleep, eat, and be healed by the “celestial remedy” of William’s pity.⁶⁸ Like the other examples in which pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession were brought to the tomb against their will, this story points to William’s power over demons. Moreover, Sieldeware’s story suggests that William was believed to be capable of healing the unwilling—if their support system was willing. In this way, I believe that madness and demonic possession should be understood not simply as impairment but as a disability which families and society wanted to have cured. As we will see in Chapter 3, however, pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession differ from other pilgrims who were able to take an active role in their healing. Demonic possession, therefore, appears to have been so incapacitating that these pilgrims were unable to act on their own behalf, whether in seeking or receiving their cures.

The last instance of madness in the *Life* occurs in Book VII.iii, when a clerk named Robert, the son of William de Cachesford, was brought to the tomb by several people because he was “suffering from insanity of a troubled mind.”⁶⁹ Thomas’s account of this event is brief compared to others of a similar nature, such as the son of Richard de Needham or Sieldeware. Thomas simply states that he witnessed this healing and that after falling asleep for three hours, Robert awoke and “felt both the madness of his head and the pain in his limbs to have been abated.”⁷⁰ There also happened to be a crowd there that day, who were lucky enough to witness “such a great and speedy miracle” of the healing of the man

⁶⁷ Ibid., 150, Book VI.vi.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 151, Book VI.vi.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 175, Book VII.iii.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

who had arrived mad but left sane.⁷¹ As I argued in my discussion of pilgrims who were bent double, and as we will see in Thomas's descriptions of many other miracles, these cures take place in a public venue and frequently in front of a large crowd. I want to stress, however, that it is not the supplicant who is on display, but rather the cure. In his own accounts of these pilgrims as well as in his descriptions of the crowds and their reactions, Thomas signals that those people suffering from madness and demonic possession were not the center of attention because they were raving or bound up in chains. If anything, these pilgrims matter because they are the objects of pity and compassion in the community, even if they are there as outsiders. For Thomas, these details matter only insofar as they are evidence of a condition that has ceased to cause a burden to the individual or his or her family. In these ways, Thomas suggests that people suffering from madness and demonic possession were not simply discarded by their families or by society.

The tomb of a martyred saint is a logical site of healing madness and demonic possession, since it would be especially fortified against the demons' power. Fully ten percent of the pilgrims seeking healing at William's tomb were brought there by family members or friends because they were suffering from mental impairment, often perceived as demonic possession. These cases suggest that men, women, and children could be affected by mental impairment. Moreover, those pilgrims brought to the tomb had the benefit of a family support system, as we will see in Chapter 3. Though these accounts vary in length and the level of detail, Thomas tends to include certain key elements in his narratives of miraculous cures involving madness and demonic possession. Rather than mobility aids such as handbarrows or crutches, these pilgrims were frequently brought bound in a variety of

⁷¹ Ibid.

restraints, ranging from a belt and veil to iron chains. These pilgrims are generally forced to the tomb against their will and subsequently are completely cured without their own consent. Perhaps the most important aspect of these stories, then, is that these pilgrims are a liability during the journey but that they fall calm at the tomb, in many cases falling asleep at the shrine as part of their cure. Furthermore, like pilgrims suffering from a variety of physical ailments, those with mental impairments are brought by their families. But those suffering from madness and demonic possession differ from supplicants who could exhibit their own piety at the tomb, and instead were relieved of their disability through the piety exhibited by their families and caretakers. And it is the family's involvement, I believe, that elevates madness and demonic possession from impairment to disability in medieval Norwich.

Blind and Mute Pilgrims

The next most prominent categories of miracles are those of blindness and muteness. In their late nineteenth-century translation of the *Life*, Augustus Jessopp and M. R. James refer to all mute pilgrims as “dumb.” This term is no longer considered politically correct. In her new translation of the *Life*, Miri Rubin refers to “mute” pilgrims rather than “dumb” ones. Even the *Oxford English Dictionary* lacks any instances of the word when referring to muteness beyond the mid-nineteenth century.⁷² I will therefore refer to those pilgrims who could not speak as mute.

Each category, blindness and muteness, has five miracles, with three miracles (or sixty percent) fitting both categories, where the pilgrim was both blind and mute; in fact, two of the three miracles concern pilgrims who were not only blind and mute but also deaf. Of those pilgrims who were blind, fifty percent are male and fifty percent are female; fifty

⁷² *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “dumb.”

percent are named, while fifty percent are unnamed; and Thomas specifies the origins for all of these pilgrims. Only two of the females suffering from blindness (thirty-three percent) had blood spurt or gush from their eyes as part of the cure, whereas none of the male pilgrims endured such agony. In contrast, sixty percent of the mute pilgrims are male and forty percent are female; twenty percent are named while the remaining eighty percent are not; and Thomas provides origins for eighty percent of mute pilgrims. The blind miracles are found in Book IV (thirty-three percent), Book V (seventeen percent), Book VI (seventeen percent), and Book VII (thirty-three percent), while the mute miracles occur in Book III (twenty percent), Book V (forty percent), and Book VII (forty percent).

Book IV.ii is the first instance in the *Life* of a blind pilgrim. This story, which is relayed to Thomas by Gurwan, a tanner from Norwich whose son had been miraculously healed by William in the paragraph immediately preceding it, concerns the story of a poor unnamed blind man. Thomas hints that these two miracles took place shortly after William's murder in 1144 and therefore could not have been witnessed by Thomas, because he did not arrive in Norwich until 1149 or 1150. He writes that the blind man was visited by William in a vision shortly after his martyrdom.⁷³ This miraculous healing, along with that of Gurwan's young son in the same chapter, took place five or six years before Thomas came to Norwich and was thus likely related to him by Gurwan as part of Thomas's effort to collect miracle stories showcasing the holy power of the boy saint. The blind man, along with other poor people, lived with Gurwan "during days of great hunger and mortality among other poor people."⁷⁴ Like the woman from London who was visited in a vision by William and relayed his instructions to Gurwan—that in order to ensure the health of his son, he needed to offer a

⁷³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 109, Book IV.ii.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

candle to the saint every year of the boy's life on the day of the Nativity of the Virgin—the blind man was also visited by William in a vision “at a time when his martyrdom was still recent.”⁷⁵ William instructed the blind man that he needed to have “three Masses of the Holy Spirit sung and that during the third he would without doubt be cured.”⁷⁶ The blind man called upon Gurwan for help, and he arranged to have the masses sung. At the third mass, the blind man “offered three pennies to the honour of the Holy Trinity” and, as predicted, he regained his sight.⁷⁷

The miracle in Book IV.xi concerns Ravenilda, wife of William of Hastedune, who lost her sight gradually over time. Thomas does not specify her particular ailment other than stating that her eyes had been weakening for a long time. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3, she was led to the tomb “by another”—the Latin is “*alieno ueniens ducatu*”—and *alieno* refers specifically to someone who is not family.⁷⁸ This textual evidence suggests that Ravenilda was brought to the tomb by someone she was not related to, and certainly not by her husband. Thomas does not go into any detail about the specifics of the miracle—she simply “rejoiced in receiving full sight” and promptly returned home.⁷⁹ Ravenilda's case is a rare instance of Thomas noting that the pilgrim was led to the tomb by someone other than family.

In Book V.xvii, Thomas describes the cure, which he had witnessed firsthand, of the unnamed daughter of a poor woman from Grimston. This girl had been born blind, mute, and as Thomas learns later in the narrative, deaf. Her eyes were covered with a film “like a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 119, Book IV.xi; *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *alienus*.

⁷⁹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 119, Book IV.xi.

membrane of an egg” and when she was placed at the head of the tomb by her mother, “blood began to gush from her eyes and to trickle down to the floor [and] she cried out [in] pain, weeping and plucking at her cheeks.”⁸⁰ After a series of events that I will discuss in Chapter 3, the girl was healed and was no longer blind, deaf, and mute.

In Book VI.viii, Thomas describes the story of a woman named Gilliva, the daughter of Burcard, a carpenter, from Lynn (later known as King’s Lynn, which is where Margery Kempe lived). As I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 3, the original Latin refers to Gilliva as *mulier*, which denotes an adult woman.⁸¹ If Gilliva had been younger, she would have been referred to as *virgo*, a young maiden or girl.⁸² Moreover, she is characterized by her relationship to her father, Burcard, and not a husband. Therefore, it is probable that Gilliva was an unwed adult woman, living in Lynn with her father. Like Ravenilda in Book IV.xi, she was not born blind; her blindness was the result of some unknown accident and it lasted for three years. Further, she was not able to open her eyes, as if her lashes had been “stuck together with glue.”⁸³

Word had apparently traveled from Norwich to Gilliva’s village about the miraculous healings wrought by William, because she decided “to seek refuge in the haven of the blessed martyr William, as sole and singular remedy; and with greater confidence, since she had learned by common report that others similarly condemned to blindness had been cured at his tomb.”⁸⁴ Lynn is some forty-four miles from Norwich, so her pilgrimage represents a fairly significant journey and investment of time and resources in search of a cure. Holding a ball

⁸⁰ Ibid., 137, Book V.xvii.

⁸¹ Cassell’s Latin Dictionary, s.v. *mulier*.

⁸² Cassell’s Latin Dictionary, s.v. *virgo*.

⁸³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 152, Book VI.viii.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

of cord, she was led to Norwich by her nephew, and she had only been praying at the tomb a short time when she was suddenly afflicted with violent pain. Her exhortations and thrashing caught the attention of a large group of people who had come to the tomb in a procession, and both men and women were so moved that they cried and offered prayers.

The presence of a crowd is now a familiar element of the miraculous cures in the *Life*. Thomas often invokes the crowd in order to assert the veracity of these stories, but the presence of a crowd also points to the model of disability I have been proposing whereby a cure was deemed effective not by the individual supplicant but rather by members of society. Indeed, Gilliva eventually rose and opened her eyes and, much like the girl from Grimston, blood shot out of them and she was no longer blind. Further, the motif of blood spurting out of the eyes of blind pilgrims who came to the tombs of saints is not unique to the *Life*. Edward Wheatley has observed that “among miracles in which matter is extruded from the eye as a sign of a miraculous cure, the most common type involves blood.”⁸⁵

The final two instances of blindness occur in Book VII; both of these pilgrims are also mute, but I will discuss them here rather than in my section on muteness. At a mere eleven lines of text, Book VII.ix is quite brief; only four of those lines are dedicated to the miraculous healing of the unnamed blind and mute boy from Repps. Rather, Thomas introduces the next several miracles by stating that during Pentecost 1156,

divine power was observed around the tomb of His glorious martyr even more frequently than usual. For then it happened that many of both sexes, debilitated by various illnesses, obtained the remedy of health. Some of these we have decided to pass over in order to avoid excessive length, and some, of which we are surer, we have decided to put down on this page.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, 173.

⁸⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 178–9, Book VII.ix.

Here Thomas notes that although there had been a plethora of miracles during this particular time of the church year, he is only going to include those which he either witnessed himself or heard about from reliable witnesses. He then mentions the woman from Repps who brought her son, who had been born blind, deaf, and mute, to the “cure-giving tomb of the glorious martyr.”⁸⁷ He and his mother went home the same day after he had been healed by William. Unlike the previous narratives, Thomas does not go into any detail about what the woman or her son did at the tomb; for instance, he omits details he normally deems germane, such as prayers or votives being offered, or whether the boy had blood spurt out of his eyes.

However, other miracles in which vision is restored are not lengthy or detailed. In Book VII.xvi, for instance, Herbert, the son of Berengar from Norwich, was healed of his blindness and muteness, with which he had been afflicted since infancy. Like the boy from Repps, Thomas only devotes four lines of text to Herbert’s affliction and subsequent healing; the rest of the chapter is given over to the healings of the girl named Hugelina from Rockland, as well as the two boys, Baldwin, from Lincoln, and Ralph, from Hadeston. Though these accounts are brief and offer little insight into the lived experience of people suffering from various afflictions in the Middle Ages, Thomas mentions other incidental details which I will consider in relation to familial support in Chapter 3.

Having now discussed the three of the five miracles concerning mute pilgrims which also fell into the blind category, I will now consider the remaining two miracles in which the pilgrims were simply mute. The first of these occurs in Book III.xvi, and it concerns the unnamed son of Colobern and Ansfrida, who lived in Norwich. The boy, age seven, had been mute since birth. According to Thomas, both Colobern and Ansfrida were visited on the same

⁸⁷ Ibid., 179, Book VII.ix.

night by William in a vision urging them to take their son to the tomb the following day. They did so and prayed a long time. With a candle in his hand, the boy kissed the tomb and then “turned to his father and mother, suddenly breaking into speech in his mother tongue [English], asking that they return home.”⁸⁸ Thomas states he was present and verified the vision and cure with the parents, after which he gave praise to God and His holy martyr William.

The final instance of a mute pilgrim occurs in Book V.xvi. This female pilgrim was also seven years old and in addition to being mute, she was also bent double. This particular miracle took place in either 1151 or 1152 on Maundy Thursday, or the Day of Absolution, which is when William’s body was allegedly left by the Jews in Thorpe Wood in 1144.⁸⁹ Neither the young girl nor her mother are named in Thomas’s narrative, nor does he say where they might be from. Despite this, a close reading of the text suggests that they indeed were from Norwich, because Thomas’s witness, Godiva, the wife of Sibald, and others stated that they knew the mother and daughter and had seen the girl bent double and mute before. This suggests that the unnamed mother and daughter were Norwich natives. Upon entering the tomb, the mother put her daughter down and sat down next to Godiva and continued to pray. When an egg was brought to the tomb, the girl, “who before could neither move nor speak—with the same Godiva as witness—rose up and took the egg, turned to her mother and said in her mother tongue [English]: ‘Look mother, I have an egg.’”⁹⁰ Upon hearing the commotion—the mother crying tears of joy and proclaiming to the crowd the merits of the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 97, Book III.xvi.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 20, Book I.vii; Book V of the *Life* begins with the translation of William’s body from the chapter house to the church on July 3, 1151. See Simon Yarrow’s discussion of this chronology in *Saints and their Communities*, 131.

⁹⁰ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 136, Book V.xvi.

saint—Thomas rushed up in order to verify and confirm the miracle. Yet again, the social context of the crowd plays an important role in validating the cure, which suggests, yet again, that these afflictions should be understood both as impairments and as disabilities.

In his book on blindness in the Middle Ages, Wheatley briefly mentions the unnamed girl from Grimston in Book V.xvii who had been born blind, mute, and deaf, and who had her sight miraculously restored. He observes that “the narrative does not imply that either she or her mother, who is acting on a vision, had sinned.”⁹¹ It seems to me that all of the pilgrims in the *Life*, not just those who were born blind or later went blind, are remarkable in Thomas’s accounts because they do not seem to be making their pilgrimage out of penance, as was common in the Middle Ages. Rather, they appear to be earnest in their belief that William could cure their conditions. Recall, for example, Gilliva, who traveled over forty miles from Lynn to Norwich because of William’s reputation for healing blindness. These cures often took place in the social context of a crowd already gathered at the tomb; like the sounds of bones crackling as part of the cure for some pilgrims who were bent double, some supplicants seeking a cure for their blindness emitted outward displays of their healing in the form of blood spurting from their eyes. Such details offer further evidence of their cures beyond their own assertions regarding their previous and subsequent conditions; in this way, the crowd plays a central role in determining whether or not they had been cured. Through this social involvement, blindness (at least once it is cured) is shown to have been a disability and not merely an impairment.

⁹¹ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, 174.

Other Common Ailments

The next four categories each have three instances: deafness, fevers, kidney pain, and toothache. These miracles take place in Books III, IV, V, and VII. Two of the miracles concerning deaf pilgrims take place in Book V, and the other in Book VII. Two are female and one is male; only one—the adult—is named, while the little girl and boy are not. Thomas states the origins for all of them. Of these three, two of them (Book V.xvii and Book VII.ix), discussed above, were also blind and mute.

Alditha, whom Thomas describes in Book V.xxiii, stands out because she is deaf but not blind or mute, and yet this is not the first time she is mentioned in the *Life*. Prior to this, the pain in her limb was healed by William in Book III.xiv, where Thomas described her as “the wife of Toke the chandler [of Norwich].”⁹² In Book V.xxiii, however, Thomas refers to her as “the widow [of Toke] the chandler,” which shows that Toke had died at some point between the two incidents.⁹³ Thomas initially refers to her ailment as a “long-standing illness,” but he later stipulates the exact nature of the complaint: in her faith, she “begged for a remedy for her deafness.”⁹⁴ Unlike the two other pilgrims discussed earlier, she was not born deaf, but rather gradually lost her hearing over several years to such a point that “unless you put your mouth to her ears she could not have heard you at all.”⁹⁵

I believe Alditha may differ from many of the other pilgrims I am considering in her view that her impairment could turn her into a spectacle. Unlike the other accounts in the *Life*, where Thomas suggests that the cure, rather than the affliction, is the center of attention, Alditha was so worried about her reputation within the town that she refused to go out or

⁹² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 96, Book III.xiv.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 143, Book V.xxiii.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

speak to anyone who was not family specifically because she did not wish to “inspire ridicule” among the rest of the community.⁹⁶ This statement suggests that Alditha’s deafness was more than an impairment and that it was, in fact, a clear example of disability: the social implications of her impairment, it seems, are more noteworthy than the impairment itself. Put differently, her deafness was a cause not only of hardship but indeed for ridicule in public.

Alditha thus made her way to William’s tomb, where she offered prayers and a candle. This is the second of two stories in the *Life* in which the cloth covering the tomb plays a role in a miraculous cure (the other concerns Goda in Book V.xxii, whom I will discuss in the section on kidney pain, below). Alditha “covered both ears with the cloth that covered the tomb” and “the petitioner’s faith extracted the mercy of divine pity and the deaf woman received hearing in her ears.”⁹⁷ Alditha’s miracle is the last of Book V, and Thomas closes her story, as well as this book, by stating that since he has “let our horse run on a loose rein” for some distance he will now take a break and rest.⁹⁸

Another common ailment for which medieval people sought a miraculous cure may be somewhat surprising. Thomas records three instances of individuals suffering from fevers (a condition that is usually self-limiting and can make travel dangerous). One of the miracles concerning feverish supplicants is found in Book III, while the other two are found in Book V. One of the supplicants is a female, and the remaining two are male. Only one is named, and we know the origins of all of them, which will become important when I discuss the practical considerations of travel in Chapter 3.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 144, Book V.xxiii.

⁹⁸ Ibid.,

The first miraculous cure of a fever does not take place at the tomb, but rather at home, some thirty miles from Norwich. In Book III.xxv, the unnamed little daughter of Bartholomew de Creak (of Norfolk) had a burning fever, which her mother (also unnamed) was quite worried about. As soon as the mother began to make a candle as a symbol of her vow to William, the fever began to lessen “just as a pot commonly goes off the boil when cold water is thrown into it.”⁹⁹ At this, the mother had the candle offered at the tomb.

Thomas does not say how he learned of this miracle, or from whom, but based on the high ranking of the girl’s father, it is likely that Thomas did not think that it was necessary for him to witness the miracle.¹⁰⁰ This case is not the only example of a supplicant cured far from the tomb in Norwich, but who subsequently made the pilgrimage in order to present a wax votive offering. As we will see, although most of the cures took place at the tomb itself in Norwich, in several of Thomas’s accounts the cure took place at home and then someone (sometimes the pilgrim, sometimes someone else on their behalf), made the journey as recompense to William. While obviously no crowd was present to witness these miraculous cures at private residences, Thomas attempts to verify them himself by speaking with the pilgrim or the supplicant’s representative at the tomb. In this way, I argue, he is acting on behalf of society in confirming that the healing did, in fact, take place, and therefore that the disability existed and was eradicated.

The other two instances of fevers are found in Book V.iv. Thomas states that these miracles took place shortly after William’s translation from the chapter house into the church.¹⁰¹ The first pilgrim is Adam, whose father, John, was “our bishop’s steward.”¹⁰² His

⁹⁹ Ibid., 102, Book III.xxv.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 233n51.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 125, Book V.iv.

fever was so acute and lasted for so long that all the color had left his skin and he looked as if he was about to die. But the advice of his kin coupled with his own faith and devotion encouraged Adam to go to the tomb to pray for a cure. In another case of a cure which fully restored the supplicant's impairment, Adam fell asleep and "after two hours had passed he then got up healthy and unharmed as if he had never before sensed any pain."¹⁰³ In this same chapter Thomas also discusses an unnamed soldier of Robert of Canterbury ("Roberti ...ariensis" in the manuscript), who had a fever similar to Adam's.¹⁰⁴ Thomas succinctly states that this soldier did the same thing as Adam and received the same result. There were other pilgrims, too, who had fevers, but Thomas does not discuss them in any detail, just saying that he learned that "many others besides, suffering from fevers, frequently received [at the tomb] a remedy of health by the merits of Saint William"¹⁰⁵

Another common ailment, that of the kidneys, is found in one instance each in Book III, Book IV, and Book V. All of the afflicted pilgrims are female, two of them are named, and Thomas states the origins for all three of them. The first instance occurs in Book III.vii, when Claricia, the wife of Geoffrey of Marc and niece of the Gerold brothers, came to the tomb with pain in her kidneys and knees.¹⁰⁶ She had spent significant time and money on doctors who had been unable to cure her. Even though she was brought to the tomb by her kin, she went willingly because she had faith that William would heal her. The miracle occurred at the exact moment she placed her bare aching knees—as well as she could—on

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ According to Miri Rubin, the parchment is torn at this spot, and she states that the incomplete word is "Va[letreius]" (Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 126 and 136n8). After consulting Rubin's transcription (<http://yvc.history.qmul.ac.uk/passio.html>) on p. 146 of the PDF where she reads the word as "[va]atiensis" and the Latin in Jessopp and James (p. 191, Book V.iv), where they read the word as "...ariensis," I have decided to accept Jessopp and James's reading and am therefore completing the word as "Cantuariensis."

¹⁰⁵ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 126, Book V.iv.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 86, Book III.vii.

the bare stone of the tomb. Thus Claricia, who had to be carried to the tomb by others, was able to go home on her own.

In Book IV.xii, the unnamed wife of Richard de Bedingham, whom Thomas mentions briefly in Book IV.viii in the context of pilfered candles in a story unrelated to William's curative powers, suffered from pain in her kidneys and stomach. Thomas does not state whether she came to the tomb at all, or whether the miracle took place at her home. He does not mention her making contact with the tomb, as he does with the other two cases. Thomas simply states that she was determined by William to be worthy of a cure.

The last instance of kidney pain is found in Book V.xxii. Goda, wife of Copman of Norwich (who was "called of the Spring"),¹⁰⁷ had had pain in her kidneys for a long time which eventually moved to her knees, much like Claricia in Book III.viii. Her knees swelled so much that they were "the size of pots," and she was not able to walk or sleep.¹⁰⁸ In addition, her left eye became swollen and resembled an egg. She had herself carried to William's tomb and prayed and offered a candle. While she was doing this, she also touched her bare knees to the tomb and "with the cloth that covered the tomb carefully wiped the eye that was suffering so badly."¹⁰⁹ According to Thomas, her faith was so great and William so generous that as soon as she had touched the stone with her bare knees and wiped her eye with the cloth, she was healed. "And so," Thomas writes, "she who had arrived sad suffering from a severe illness returned joyful, cured by celestial medicine."¹¹⁰ Like Alditha, whose story immediately follows hers, Goda used the cloth from the tomb to activate her miraculous healing. In this case, the result of a complete cure is perhaps more important than the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 142, Book V.xxii.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 143, Book V.xxii.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

mechanism of the healing at the tomb, however remarkable it may be. Moreover, I believe Goda's impairment should be understood as a disability not only because of the public, social context of its healing but also (as we will see in Chapter 3) because of the important role her family played in transporting her to the shrine.

The final common ailment for which pilgrims sought a cure at William's tomb was toothache. There are two examples in Book III and one in Book VII. All of the afflicted pilgrims are male, and Thomas gives names and origins for all of them. Moreover, these three miracles are the first and last miracles that deal with physical ailments discussed by Thomas in the *Life*. Thomas begins Book III.iv by referencing Prior Elias's Easter Day slight towards the boy saint in the chapter immediately prior. Upon hearing that Thomas had more or less dared to presume William's sanctity by placing a cloth on the tomb and a large candle on top of it, Prior Elias "ordered that what had been put there, as if with presumptuous boldness, should be contemptuously removed and never be put there again."¹¹¹ This slight on the part of Prior Elias (which was an insult not only to Thomas but also to William) sets the stage for the next chapter, where Thomas states that even though (or perhaps because) William suffered this slight, he was still capable of miraculous healing. Geoffrey, a clerk of William the Sheriff, came to the tomb in hopes of being cured of his toothache. He took a bit of the stone from the tomb and rubbed it against his teeth. Immediately the pain abated "as if he had never had it" and he left the tomb completely healed.¹¹²

The second such miracle takes place in the next chapter, where a monk of Norwich, named Edmund the younger, also came to the tomb with a toothache about the same time as Geoffrey. Edmund either heard of what Geoffrey did with the piece of stone or witnessed it

¹¹¹ Ibid., 83, Book III.iii.

¹¹² Ibid., 84, Book III.iv.

himself, because Thomas states that the “clerk described above came to his mind and so he soon made his way to that same haven” in order to be healed.¹¹³ And, like Geoffrey before him, Edmund was healed of his toothache upon rubbing the stone of the tomb against his teeth.

Thomas does not mention any other instances of toothache until the very last miracle in the *Life*. In Book VII.xix, which takes place in 1172, a certain Geoffrey of Canterbury had a serious toothache. At the advice of his friends, he had three teeth pulled and then had a rich supper of “the most beautiful peas [and] the fattest goose with garlic [and] new beer.”¹¹⁴ He seems to have suffered from some kind of allergic reaction, either to the tooth extraction or the food, because his head swelled so much that his eyes sank in their sockets, his nose became flat, and he had such trouble breathing that his friends put a reed or stick into his mouth to open it. His friends then took him to the tomb of St. Thomas Becket, and he spent the night there. He eventually fell asleep and was visited by Thomas in a vision, where he was told to go home immediately, apply wax to his face in the name of William, and then bring the wax to the boy saint’s tomb at Norwich. Geoffrey did as he was instructed, and as soon as he put the wax on his face, the swollen skin burst open. There is much more to say about this story, which I will discuss in Chapter 3 in my section on pilgrims who had the benefit of spiritual support.

These four categories of common ailments that I have discussed in this section—deafness, fevers, kidney pain, and toothache—are impairments which Thomas suggests were perceived as disabilities in his society because people sought cures for them in social contexts and for social reasons. Perhaps foremost among the pilgrims I considered was

¹¹³ Ibid., 84, Book III.v.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 192, Book VII.xix.

Alditha, who worried that her gradual deafness would signal to her friends and neighbors that she was in fact disabled rather than simply impaired. Unable to perform her role in society as the chandler's wife, she sought a miraculous cure at William's tomb. These common ailments were cured in social contexts, as well. For example, Bartholomew de Creak and his wife made a candle in William's name while still at home in their efforts to obtain miraculous healing for their daughter; when the candle was subsequently brought to the tomb by Bartholomew's representative, Thomas acted on behalf of society at large in verifying the story. In confirming the miracle, Thomas also acted as a surrogate for the crowd and may even be said to have conferred the removal of the little girl's disability within its social context. Likewise, Claricia, the wife of Geoffrey of March, came to the tomb in search of relief from the pain in her kidneys and knees; before asking for Thomas's help, she had sought the aid of physicians, which shows that she and her family had deemed this impairment as a disability that needed to be fixed. After receiving no significant help from physicians, Claricia's family brought her to the tomb where she received her cure in the presence of those already gathered there. By witnessing Claricia's healing, the crowd played an important role both in verifying the miracle and in the social process whereby the disability was removed. Finally, those men who sought a miraculous cure for their toothaches suggest that the impairment of a toothache should be viewed as a disability which prevented them from performing the duties required as part of their jobs. Additionally, they sought help for their toothaches in the social context of William's shrine (though one man had visited a physician for relief prior to seeking William's aid). Upon being healed, all the men were able to go back to their daily lives and contribute to society just as they had before. Each of these

pilgrims suffered from a particular kind of impairment that was deemed by society to be a disability. Upon receiving a cure from William, society deemed them whole.

Less Common Ailments

I define less common ailments as those afflictions which are specified but appear in only one or two instances. These conditions include dropsy, epilepsy, flux, podagra, confinement in iron shackles, pain in limbs, weakness in limbs, swelling in the breast, and viper attacks. While some of these stories appear in succession in the *Life*, others appear seemingly at random. I include the miracles involving iron shackles as a physical impairment in this section because William intervened to relieve these men of this condition. Even though these ailments are less common, they still account for a significant share of the stories found in the *Life*. Again, rather than attempting to diagnose these ailments according to modern medicine, I seek to categorize and analyze them as they were described in the *Life* in an attempt to better understand how these conditions were perceived in the Middle Ages as part of my broader exploration of the social dimensions of these impairments.

The first, dropsy, affected two pilgrims, found in Books III.xxvi and V.viii. Both pilgrims are unnamed men from outside of Norwich; the first from Tudenham, and the second “from the province beyond the Humber.”¹¹⁵ Thomas does not state what these men’s occupations were, nor does he specify how long the man from Tudenham had been ill, though he notes that the man from York had been sick for many years. The pilgrim from Tudenham came to Norwich on his own and he stood at the tomb praying for some time before offering a candle to the saint. Suddenly, “the pain in his stomach [was] eased, and he

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 128, Book V.viii. Later in the chapter, the man tells Thomas and the other monks that he is from the province of York: “Natiuum mihi solum Eboracensis prouintie est regio” (Jessopp and James, *Life*, 196, Book V.viii).

went away with much lighter a step than when he had come.”¹¹⁶ It is likely that Thomas did not witness the miracle himself—not only would he have mentioned that he had witnessed it, but he also would not have needed to confirm the cure with the man’s neighbors.¹¹⁷ In contrast, both Thomas and the other monks of Norwich Cathedral witnessed the man from York offering a large piece of wax in the form of boots to the saint. Upon asking about his affliction, the man explained that he had been visited by William in a vision in which the saint told him that if he wanted to be healed he would need to cover the affected limbs with wax, and then bring that wax as an offering to Norwich. As soon as he had done so, he was cured. The man was so amazed at his quick recovery that he came to Norwich right away with his votive offering.

Thomas discusses both cases of epilepsy in Book VI.vii; the original Latin is “caduco morbo” in both stories, which denotes that each supplicant suffered from a “falling sickness.”¹¹⁸ Jessopp and James and Rubin both take this to mean epilepsy. Both pilgrims are unnamed males from outside of Norwich, one from Haughley and the other from Lothingland. The first, a young unnamed boy whose father, Ranulph, was a knight, had suffered from the condition for many years. He was brought to the tomb by his family where he prayed and gave an unspecified offering. “And, as we later learned from the mother’s messenger,” writes Thomas, “[he] no longer felt the suffering of that illness.”¹¹⁹ The second man was a peasant who had come to the tomb with his parish priest. According to Thomas, his case was so severe that he suffered seizures on a daily basis. Like the boy from Haughley, this pilgrim prayed at the tomb. In addition, he offered a candle and was healed. Thomas

¹¹⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 103, Book III.xxvi.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Jessopp and James, *Life*, 228, Book VI.vii; Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 151, Book VI.vii.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

writes that “we later found out the truth of the matter both from him and from others.”¹²⁰

These comments again suggest that Thomas did not witness the miracles himself and had to verify them at a later time.

Only two and a half percent (or two) of the eighty miracles discussed here concern women with flux. The first pilgrim, found in Book III.viii, is a woman by the name of Muriel. She was probably a woman of high rank and importance because Thomas specifies that her husband was Alan de Setchy and that their nephew, Richard, was a sub-prior of Norwich at the time. Even though Thomas does not state how long Muriel had been suffering from flux, he does note that it had bothered her for a long time. She came to the tomb with her husband seeking a cure after other medicines proved useless. Upon entering the tomb, Muriel prayed on her knees and offered the saint two candles—one each for her and her husband. Afterwards, she kissed the tomb and she “suddenly felt the flux stop, though earlier it had flowed without even a moment’s pause.”¹²¹ She immediately sought out Thomas, because, he says, she viewed him as an “intimate friend,” and relayed the miraculous event to him in private.¹²² Like those cases which Thomas privately verified because they did not take place in the public space of the tomb, Muriel appears to have been relieved of her disability with Thomas acting as a surrogate for the crowd.

The second pilgrim suffering from flux, found in Book IV.iv, was a Norwich native by the name of Agnes, wife of Reginald, a cowherd. Like Muriel before her, Agnes had spent “no small amount of money on doctors, who did her little or no good.”¹²³ And also like Muriel, Agnes suffered from flux for a long time—in this case, five years. The cure was also

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid., 86–7, Book III.viii.

¹²² Ibid., 87, Book III.viii.

¹²³ Ibid., 111, Book IV.iv.

similar to Muriel's: Agnes offered a candle in prayer on bended knee and kissed the tomb. "By some secret power of God the trouble of flux ceased" and she went home praising William.¹²⁴

Two pilgrims in the *Life* sought cures for podagra, both of them female. In Book III.xxii we meet Ida, the wife of Eustace, the moneyer of Norwich.¹²⁵ After suffering from pain her knees for three years, it worked its way up to her right arm and shoulder. She was in such pain that she and her family were certain she was close to death, and so a priest was summoned to hear her last confession. But the next morning, Ida suddenly remembered William and had her family take her to his tomb in hopes of a cure. As soon as she was placed on the floor of the tomb, she began to yell and thrash about, eventually tiring herself out. Unlike pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession, who raved and writhed on the journey but fell calm near William's spirit at his shrine, Ida appears to have been animated by the intensity of the cure itself. Afterwards, she prayed to William, offered a candle, and kissed the tomb. According to Thomas, it was at that very moment when she was cured before everyone and that she, "who had only just been able to arrive there carried by others, was amazed and exultant to be able now to return home by her own [strength]."¹²⁶ Ida fits Thomas's formula of healing at William's shrine, especially in the presence both of her family and of the public as central elements in her cure; this is, again, suggestive of the social dimension of disability and it shows that podagra should be understood as a disability within its social context and more than mere impairment in the English Middle Ages.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Eustace also makes an appearance in Book IV.xiii, when his unnamed daughter is cured after being possessed by a devil.

¹²⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 101, Book III.xxii.

The second pilgrim afflicted with podagra was an eight-year-old girl named Agnes, whose parents—Bondo and Gunnilda—were from Norwich. Not only had she suffered from podagra in her hands and feet since birth, but her neck was so crooked that her left cheek rested permanently on her left shoulder. Like Ida, Agnes was also healed after being brought to the tomb. Although both Ida and Agnes suffered from a relatively less common ailment, their stories will become important in Chapter 3 because both received significant support from their families as caretakers and eventually in making the pilgrimage to William's shrine.

Even though this next category—that of pilgrims bound in iron shackles—is not normally categorized as a traditional physical ailment, I include these two examples here for two main reasons. First, while not a pathogenic physical ailment, iron shackles definitely hinder one's physical capabilities (and are certainly meant to, in these stories, as a form of punishment). Second, these stories are two of the most fascinating in the entire collection. A third, less important reason, is that some of the pilgrims suffering from mental illness and demonic possession that I will consider again in Chapter 3 were also bound in shackles, though I will not discuss them in this context because their restraints were not their primary limitation. I wish to argue that iron shackles may be seen as a man-made impairment that was perceived in the Middle Ages as a disability worthy of a saint's intervention.

It is in these stories concerning iron shackles that Thomas attempts to portray William of Norwich's tomb as just as important as that of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and show that William himself is just as powerful—indeed, sometimes more so—than other martyred saints such as King Edmund and Thomas Becket. Moreover, in his attempt to prove that William was destined for holy greatness, Thomas recalls a miracle that the pious boy

performed as an infant: that of breaking a man's iron shackles at a feast celebrating the day he was weaned.¹²⁷ Both miracles occur in Book VI and they appear in sequential chapters.

The first concerns a French pilgrim from Lorraine, Philip de Bella Arbore, who, according to Thomas, was of "noble descent, a knight by profession, [and] pre-eminent in the honour of secular affairs."¹²⁸ Slated to inherit land and castles, Philip had been betrayed and defrauded by his brother. One day the brothers met on the road, and the evil brother ran and took refuge in a church, refusing to come out. Enraged, Philip lit the church on fire and, thanks to a gust of wind, it and the adjoining buildings burned down and the people inside perished with it. Eventually word of the crime reached the archbishop of Trier, who was the head of the diocese to which Philip belonged.¹²⁹ He ignored three commands to appear before the archbishop and so he was subsequently excommunicated.

Philip spent the next two years on the run as a criminal until he was finally persuaded by his men to repent. He begged for mercy at the feet of the archbishop, who sent him and his retinue to the pope (Eugenius III, r. 1145-53) in Rome, who in turn sent him back to Lorraine with a decree of penance. In addition to repairing the burnt church, Philip was ordered to spend ten years in exile, wandering, wearing mail on his bare chest, wearing his own sword, and with his arms in iron rings. Also bound in iron shackles, his lawless retinue accompanied him. After a period of seven years, God's mercy looked upon Philip, and at the

¹²⁷ Ibid., 11, Book I.ii.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 154, Book VI.ix.

¹²⁹ According to Miri Rubin, this archbishop would have been Hillin von Fallemanien (1152–69). She adds that she could not find any textual evidence to demonstrate that Philip de Bella Arbore actually existed. Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 239n12.

“Lord’s sepulchre in Jerusalem the iron rings on Philip’s mail were broken and loosened” and he was subsequently “freed of the greater part of his punishment.”¹³⁰

Later, at the shrine of St. Brendan in Ireland, Philip’s sword was broken. But for Thomas, the most impressive miracle was reserved for William’s tomb. After wandering around England for an indeterminate amount of time, Philip, obviously under the influence of God’s grace, came to the tomb in Norwich, which, according to Thomas, was already famous. Thomas writes: “There, while he poured out prayers of pious devotion, immediately in front of our eyes the iron ring of the right arm cracked and the sound of it was astonishing to the ears of those present.”¹³¹ After recounting the story, Thomas addresses the nonbelievers, stating not only that he witnessed this with his own eyes and could therefore verify it firsthand, but also that there happened to be in Norwich at that time a wine merchant from Cologne who recognized Philip and told Thomas all that he knew about the nobleman and soldier.¹³²

The second miracle involving a shackled person appears directly after Philip’s. This story concerns Glewus, who lived in Repham and who was wealthy enough to have his own houses and land. Like Philip, Glewus also had an evil brother who connived to take away his wealth, and he too lost all love for his brother. One day, the brother, along with two of his sons, was tilling a field that he had usurped from Glewus. When he heard of this, Glewus grabbed an iron pitchfork and killed his brother and nephews. As punishment for his crime, Glewus was ordered by William, archdeacon of Lincoln, to fashion an iron ring out of the

¹³⁰ Ibid., 155, Book VI.ix. Based on the information Thomas provides about Philip visiting Pope Eugenius III, it is possible that the French knight fought in the Second Crusade (1147–49), perhaps as part of his penance.

¹³¹ Ibid., 156, Book VI.ix.

¹³² The mention of the wine merchant from Cologne, though ostensibly included here by Thomas in an effort to corroborate the miracle, also gives social and cultural historians a glimpse into the kind of trade networks that Norwich was a part of in the mid-twelfth century.

pitchfork and wear it on his arm—the same arm which he used to commit the murders. In addition, he was required to wear a hair shirt and wander throughout England in exile for eight years, visiting the shrines of various saints in the hopes of receiving some kind of mercy.

After spending three years in this state, Glewus arrived at the shrine of St. Edmund.

And praying and weeping to the martyr, the iron ring snapped, but it did not fall off:

[Glewus] uttered his prayers with tears, hands raised high for a while in the presence of the holy martyr, and suddenly the iron circle snapped, broken by divine power; but I do not know by what secret design of God, although the crack stretched to an opening the size of a thumb, it still remained so, unmoving, around the arm. And so it was that one end of the broken ring pressed the flesh most tightly, and the other stuck superficially to the skin. And so it happened that it caused more acute pain when it was broken than it had done while it was whole.¹³³

Lamenting his new condition, Glewus regretted having prayed to St. Edmund, saying that he would have rather worn the iron ring intact than bear with such pain. The following evening, he was visited in a vision by St. Edmund who urged him to go to William's tomb in Norwich, where he would be delivered from the rest of his penance. Upon arriving at the tomb, Glewus waited several days before he would receive a cure. Eventually, while he was praying one day with his arms outstretched, the iron ring suddenly burst apart, with one piece flying out behind him and the second falling in front of the tomb. Many people witnessed the miracle, and Bishop William, after doing his due diligence in investigating the matter, "led a hymn of praise to the Lord, with the monks and clerics chanting responses to him in turn, with tears of joy."¹³⁴

After this, Thomas directly addresses his audience, and specifically William's detractors, in a chapter entitled "A commendation of this miracle." In it, he quotes Psalm

¹³³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 157, Book VI.x.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 158, Book VI.x.

35:7 (“The wisdom of God is a great deep”) and Romans 11:33 (“the judgements of God are unsearchable and His ways past finding out”), to urge his readers not to doubt God’s providence or to ask “why this one is cured and another is not heard, why he is absolved in this place, but not freed in that, unless you wish to err.”¹³⁵ Thomas goes on to compare Edmund and William, who each had a hand in releasing Glewus from his bondage. Both were martyrs; Edmund “triumphed in the times of the ancients” and William lived and died in Thomas’s own time; they were both killed by enemies of Christ—Edmund by pagans, William by Jews; Edmund was already famous for his miracles while William’s popularity was growing. “Nevertheless,” Thomas writes,

in this sign of eminent power which we have just recorded, as this case shows, both equally have worked together for a good result. As we have said, the former broke the circle on one side, and the latter, the other. And since things are so, I do not assert that the latter is to be preferred over the former, nor do I affirm that the former is not equal to the latter. But let envy not be stirred against us for this reason in anyone, if we compare the blessed martyr William to other saints in the display of miracles, because since saints are not envious of each other in glory, why indeed should we bite into each other for the miracles the saints perform? I single out one in particular, but I speak of every one. [...] Whoever you are, when the question strikes your mind, why did the glorious king Edmund, a martyr of such virtue, not release that Philip whom I have mentioned above, or at least did not wholly free Glewus? I answer with confidence that I believe that he could have done it if he had wanted to. [...] As we conjecture from the manner of the affair, in this particular miracle the glorious king and martyr Edmund wanted to have the glorious martyr William as his fellow-worker, whom he happens to have as an associate in martyrdom in his own region; and what Edmund had begun, he directed William to complete.¹³⁶

Even though Thomas says here that he has one particular disparager in mind, he does not say who this person might be. This passage shows that there were people in the community who doubted William’s sanctity and questioned why a great saint such as King Edmund did not bother to finish the job, so to speak. Thomas is deliberate in his writing: he in no way intends

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 159–60, Book VI.xi.

to detract from the power of Edmund in order to raise William up, and neither does he claim that William is superior to Edmund. Rather, he is arguing that both saints are powerful and worthy of reverence; indeed, Thomas portrays William as at least as powerful and influential as Edmund, despite his status as a relatively new saint. After all, Thomas declares, since the saints are not jealous of each other, why should people prefer one saint to the detriment of another? Ultimately, these stories suggest that although they are a man-made impairment, iron shackles were understood (at least in Thomas's mind) as a disability worthy of a saint's intervention.

Though not as remarkable as seeking relief from shackles, another relatively uncommon condition for which pilgrims sought a cure at William's tomb was pain in the limbs. There are two such examples in the *Life*, both in Book III, and both concerning women. The first, Alditha, the wife of Toke the Chandler of Norwich, is discussed in Book III.xiv.¹³⁷ I argue that her ailment moved from an impairment to a disability when she sought a cure from William: after enduring six months of unbearable pain which prevented her from doing any kind of work requiring the use of her hands or walking without the assistance of a cane, her family and friends suggested that she pray to St. William for succor. At this, she had a large candle made as an offering to the boy saint. As soon as she had done this, the pain lessened and she was so heartened with this turn of events that she took the candle to the tomb to thank him and ask for further healing. Upon doing this, she was completely healed and was able to return home as if she had never been sick.

The second pilgrim suffering from pain in her limbs (as well as her heart) was an unnamed woman who lived in the royal town of Ormesby with her husband, Walter Flotberd.

¹³⁷ Alditha was also healed of her deafness by William in Book V.xxiii, where she is referred to as the widow of Toke the Chandler.

She had suffered from pain in her limbs and heart for an entire year before William visited her in a vision and told her to come to him at Norwich. She arranged to be taken by boat and, once there, her family carried her to the tomb. She offered a candle to William and promptly fell asleep. When she woke up, she felt better but she was not completely cured. This woman and her kin retired to the inn where they were staying, and after three days she returned to the tomb with a second candle “made to the measure of the tomb.”¹³⁸ It was at this moment that she was fully cured: “and so it happened that she, who had come supported by the help of another, went away walking alone, confident in her own strength, and returned home; from that day on, never again did she feel any suffering from that illness.”¹³⁹ We will return to this woman’s story in Chapter 3 because she is unique in Thomas’s accounts in her mode of transportation, a boat.

The next category, pilgrims who suffered from weakness in the limbs, affected two people—one woman and one man. Thomas appears to distinguish this condition from pain in the limbs, discussed above. Both accounts of pilgrims suffering from weakness of the limbs are found sequentially in Book VII. The first, in Book VII.xv, tells of a woman named Hathewis whose father, Edwin, was a priest in Taverham. Having a relative who was also a married priest (William’s uncle, Godwin Sturt, was married to his maternal aunt) was not the only thing she had in common with William; her grandmother and William’s grandmother were sisters, which would make them second cousins. The entire story of her ailment and subsequent cure takes up only five lines of text. According to Thomas, Hathewis came to the tomb solely because of their familial connections, and she was healed instantly. The next pilgrim, Ralph, a boy from Hadeston, is mentioned in a rather lengthy chapter (Book VII.xvi)

¹³⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 98, Book III.xviii.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 98–9, Book III.xviii.

that discusses four pilgrims in total, all of them children.¹⁴⁰ Ralph is the last of the children to be discussed in this particular chapter, and his story is only given two and a half lines of text. Despite the brevity of this tale, Thomas manages to state the boy's origin (Hadeston) and who his father was (Richard). In addition, because he was weak in the limbs, Ralph was brought to the tomb by his family and "cured thanks to the merits of Saint William."¹⁴¹

Perhaps not surprisingly, both pilgrims with pain and swelling in the breast were women. In Book VI.xvi, Matilda, a daughter of Rathe from Swafeld, had suffered from pain and swelling in her right breast, with discharge pouring out from nine openings. Thomas writes, "She was gripped for a long period of time by this grave illness and spent a great deal on doctors, who profited her not at all" and "so she renounced human and embraced divine medicine."¹⁴² She vowed a large piece of wax to Saint William and applied it to her breast. According to her father, the pain subsided immediately and the discharge slackened. She and her parents then went to Norwich with the wax where she offered it to William in thanks. Because there was still some discharge oozing out, she placed her bare breast on the tomb and prayed for ultimate relief. She was, of course, healed completely, and she went home with her parents. Matilda will become a key figure in Chapter 3 because of her family's contributions to her own initiative in her treatment.

The second pilgrim is an unnamed woman from Thornage; her story is found in Book VII.vi. Thomas refers to the pain and discharge in the woman's breast as cancer (*cancrum*), which doctors and medicine were unable to heal. Like Matilda, this woman took wax and

¹⁴⁰ The other three, Hugelina from the Rocklands, Baldwin from Lincoln, and Herbert of Norwich are discussed on pp 60, 74, 130, and 152–3.

¹⁴¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 183, Book VII.xvi.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 168, Book VI.xvii. According to Miri Rubin, this quotation echoes I Corinthians 13:3: "And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 241n36.

applied it to her breast, praying to William for a cure, which she received. Unlike Matilda, however, this woman did not hasten to Norwich in thanks as soon as she had been healed (as she had vowed she would) but dilly-dallied instead. Hence, “the disease recurred [and] re-entered her breast and afflicted her with pain worse than before.”¹⁴³ Thomas continues:

From this we deduce that the blessed martyr desired that she should make amends for the sin of breaking her vow by a punishment, and that the neglectful woman be reminded to pay her vow by suffering recurrent pain. And so the woman, recognizing the guilt of her faithlessness, took up the wax, put it around her breast and in a short while received her lost health. For the rest, from then on and in the future, paying heed for herself, she hurried to Norwich, offered the wax at the tomb of the holy martyr, paid her vow and returned home full of joyful thanks.¹⁴⁴

Within these two miracle stories, Thomas contrasts the correct and incorrect way to pray to William for relief. In Matilda’s case, she prayed for a cure and upon receiving it she immediately made her way to Norwich. The second woman did not. In Thomas’s view, William was obviously angered by her brazenness, which explains why her cancer not only came back a second time but was more painful than before. Once the woman had completed her vow by going to Norwich with the wax offering, however, she—like Matilda—experienced the full benefit of William’s healing powers.

The last relatively uncommon ailment is viper attacks. One pilgrim, an unnamed boy from Helgheton, vomited up a viper and its young at the tomb in Book V.iii, while the second, an unnamed man from Blythburgh, suffered from a poisonous viper bite in Book VI.xv. The boy had fallen asleep while tending his flock and “while he snored with an open mouth” the viper slid in and found a “pleasant dwelling” in his intestines.¹⁴⁵ Subsequently, he suffered for several years from abdominal pain and his father eventually brought him to

¹⁴³ Ibid., 177, Book VII.vi.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 124, Book V.iii.

Norwich, where he offered a candle and soaked some tomb scrapings in holy water for the boy to drink. Once it reached the viper,

the raging serpent began to suffer inside and it could not bear the presence of the sacred drink. And so the pain increased and the youth went out of the church hastily, and, lying on the ground in front of the doors of the church, with greatest pain he vomited a serpent and two of its young; much else besides came out and he remained lying on the ground for a while, as if dead.¹⁴⁶

Naturally all who witnessed this were frightened, and the father was so bereft that he killed the viper and its two young and put them in a cleft stick, “preserv[ing] them as a sign of such a miracle.”¹⁴⁷ Because this is a miracle, however, the boy does not die and instead after an hour he awoke, gave thanks to William, and “return[ed] home with his father, full of joy.”¹⁴⁸

The second pilgrim who suffered at the hands of a viper was an unnamed adult male from Blythburgh. According to at least two reputable sources, “Geoffrey of St Christopher and Ralph, son of the late Harvey the Baker,” this man had been attacked in his field by a viper in the month of August as he was monitoring his workers.¹⁴⁹ The man beat the viper down, but not before it “sent forth from its mouth a fearful sulphurous vapour against its foe, and infected him on the instant with its pestiferous breath.” Like the father in the previous story, this man also killed the viper and its two young and put them on a stake as a sign of his triumph. When he returned, however, his workers did not recognize him because the poison had already begun to take effect and had caused him to swell up and turn black. He lay in his bed for three days and everyone thought he was dead. On the fourth day, he swore a vow to St. William in hopes of a cure and had a candle made to match his dimensions, which he

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 125, Book V.iii. In medieval bestiaries, the female viper is often depicted with two of her young gnawing their way out of her side, killing her as they are being born. For a visual depiction, see <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastgallery267.htm#>. Accessed Feb. 14, 2016.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 125, Book V.iii.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 166, Book VI.xvi. Harvey the Baker is mentioned previously in Book V.vi; his son, Robert, had been seriously ill and was cured by William.

would take to the tomb as thanks once the cure had been administered. Like so many other miracles that took place at home with the aid of a candle, the cure began to take effect as soon as the candle began to be prepared: “the whole swelling disappeared, totally emptied. And what is more—you will find this even more amazing—it was done so that not a trace of the swelling appeared on him, as if he had previously suffered no discomfort.”¹⁵⁰ In accordance with his vow, the man took the candle to the tomb in thanks and “returned happy to his own home.”¹⁵¹

Only one other pilgrim in my analysis suffered from poison. This particular pilgrim, found in Book VI.xiii, was a woman named Wimarc who came from Brandney. Thomas writes that “during the reign of King Stephen, when the times were bad, [she was given as] a hostage for her husband, who had been caught by robbers at Gainsborough.”¹⁵² Wimarc had been in prison for some time with three other women and a man when as a group they decided to poison their guard in order to escape. Their prison cell was overrun with toads, and the guard was accustomed to drinking with the prisoners on a regular basis. Therefore, they put some of the toad’s poison in the beer and offered it to the guard, but he detected some kind of treachery and insisted that the prisoners drink it first. Everyone except Wimarc died, and because they thought her to be close to death, her captors released her. Even though she was alive, she spent seven years suffering from such severe swelling that, according to Thomas, “seeing her shape you would not believe it to be human but the figure of some

¹⁵⁰ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 167, Book VI.xv.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 163, Book VI.xiv. Per Rubin: “*Brandney: Brandeneia* in Latin, but no such place name exists. Perhaps a corruption of Brand End in Lincolnshire.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 241n27. This is highly plausible since Gainsborough is a town in Lincolnshire on the River Trent.

exceptional new monster.”¹⁵³ After spending significant time and money on doctors to no avail, Wimarc turned to spiritual healing, visiting many shrines throughout England and eventually arriving at Norwich a few days before a feast day.

It was on that feast day that she was cured, when she kneeled in front of the tomb, prayed, and kissed it. She immediately vomited up the poison, of which there was so much that it could “fill the contents of a very large jar,” and was so horrible that the “sacrists had the holy place cleansed of that filth and strewn with fragrant herbs.”¹⁵⁴ Within an hour’s time, Wimarc returned to the tomb—having vomited up the rest of the poison outside the church—and “appeared graceful and healthy ... as if she had never suffered any evil swelling.”¹⁵⁵ She subsequently took it upon herself to visit Pope Adrian IV (r. 1154-59) so that she could relay to him the miracle she experienced at the hand of St. William.

Though Thomas frequently remarks that a supplicants’ cures were full and that their health was restored as if they had never suffered from their ailments, this seems to mean something slightly different in the context of viper attacks and poison, where he deploys a language of monstrosity missing in other descriptions of disability. Nevertheless, as part of their cure, Thomas stipulates, the victims of viper attacks and poison are relieved of their physical monstrosities which caused them to be unrecognizable to their friends; as such, they are discharged of their disability and their social status is restored.

This category of less common ailments, including dropsy, epilepsy, flux, podagra, iron shackles, pain in limbs, weakness in limbs, swelling of the breast, viper attacks, and poison, affected only one or two pilgrims each. But despite the relative rarity of these

¹⁵³ Ibid., 164, Book VI.xiv.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 165, Book VI.xiv.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

ailments, I argue that they are nevertheless aligned with the more prevalent impairments I discussed in earlier sections because each was determined to be a problem by the pilgrims and their families, and in turn they sought miraculous healing from William. Likewise, each of these pilgrims' cures was once again witnessed by a crowd already assembled at the tomb, or, in a few select cases, Thomas acted as a proxy for society as a whole in confirming the miraculous healing and proclaiming the pilgrim cured. In these ways, the data suggest, the prevalence of a particular impairment does not seem to have been a factor in its status as a disability, for even relatively rare ailments were considered disabilities by people living in twelfth-century Norwich and its surrounding areas.

Rare Ailments

The last nine miracles I will discuss in this chapter affected only one pilgrim each, but these, too, follow the pattern Thomas established in his accounts of more common conditions. They include cases of dysentery, a goiter, palsy, paralysis, weakness of constitution, and a tumor. These pilgrims are significant both because of the variety of their conditions and because of the incidental information their stories provide. Additionally, even though these cases only have one instance each, they may be representative of the kinds of ailments from which people in the Middle Ages suffered. Taken together, these cases further suggest that, indeed, William was not a specialist saint in his curative powers and that people thought these rare conditions could be cured through divine intervention.

The first of these unique cases was a young unnamed boy whose father was Robert the Palmer of Norwich. This boy suffered from dysentery for one year. In Book III.xvii, Thomas states that Robert brought his son to the tomb, where he gave the boy a drink made from the tomb scrapings dissolved in holy water, and his pain immediately subsided. Thomas

concludes this miracle by stating the he later heard from the father “that the flux of dysentery had ceased in his son on the very day on which he had imbibed the remedy of health in the sacred drink.”¹⁵⁶

Likewise, in Book VI.xiv, a woman named Gillilda, the wife of Thurgar from Mildenhall, suffered from a goiter that caused her face and chin to swell for two years, during which the pain was incessant and prevented her from sleeping. At the advice of her family, she made a vow to William and wrapped a piece of wax around her face and chin. As soon as the wax touched her skin, it burst open and discharge flowed out. Upon being cured, Gillilda and her husband went to the tomb at Norwich with the wax to thank the boy saint.

In Book VII.ii, a boy named Schet suffered from palsy (*paralitico* in Latin) for a long but unspecified amount of time. While originally from Haddiscoe, at the time of the miracle he was living in Yarmouth in order to make a living as a fisherman. At the tomb, he received healing that very day and was able to speak and walk again. Because he held an unusual place in society, as both child and young man, we will see much more of Schet in Chapter 3.

In Book III.xxvii, Roger and Godiva from Tudenham brought their (unnamed) ten-year-old son to the tomb at Norwich so that the boy—whose body was totally powerless, much like Schet from Haddiscoe—could be healed by William. Thomas states that he saw the parents bring the boy to the tomb with some candles, and they laid him “down on the tomb near the martyr’s head, within our view.”¹⁵⁷ After a short prayer his parents lifted him up and he was able to walk of his own accord. He “returned home with his parents, who were crying for joy, and in a short while he recovered fully.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 98, Book III.xvii.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 103, Book III.xxvii.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

In Book V.ix Thomas describes Robert, a dean from the province of Lincoln, whom he says he met as the pilgrim was coming to the tomb in order to pay his vow of four pennies in return for being healed by William. According to Robert's own words, he had suffered from a "long-standing weakness because of a defect in my constitution," during which his limbs and head became swollen.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, he looked so sickly that everyone around him was sure that he was going to die at any moment. Miraculously, he was visited by William in a dream who, with kind words, told him that his recovery was forthcoming and that he was to pay him four pennies every year as thanks. William then passed his hand over Robert's body and when he awoke he discovered that he had been made whole. He immediately mounted his horse and made his way to Norwich, where he paid the four pennies and told his story to Thomas.

The last miracle in my analysis, found in Book III.xxxii, concerns a young unnamed boy from Norwich. His father, Aluric, worked at the monastery's tailor shop, and the boy suffered from such a severe and swollen tumor on his throat and jaws that "he offered those who saw him a miserable sight."¹⁶⁰ He was taken to the tomb by his mother (also unnamed), and Thomas states that when he saw the boy he gave him a mixture of holy water and tomb scrapings. The boy immediately began to feel better and was fully healed within a short period of time.

These rare ailments, which include dysentery, a goiter, palsy, paralysis, weakness of constitution, and a tumor, affected only one pilgrim each. But like the previous cases of ailments in this chapter, where anywhere from two to ten pilgrims were affected by a particular affliction, Thomas points to the social context in which these impairments were

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 129, Book V.ix.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 106, Book III.xxxii.

situated and which signals that they were considered disabilities in medieval English society. Also like those cases of less common ailments, I argue that a condition's rarity does not appear to have been a consideration in that impairment's status as a disability; rather, it is the disruption caused not just to the individual but also to his or her family as well as to society that determined whether the pilgrim and his or her family would seek help from William. Another social dimension of these rare disabilities emerges in the final stage of healing, in which society deemed the supplicant to be considered fully cured. Hence, the rarity of a condition does not preclude a supplicant from receiving William's intervention, but, to the contrary, suggests that even after his death William of Norwich was understood to play an active role in the social life of his community.

Summary

The medical miracles discussed in this chapter all follow the same formula: an impairment draws social recognition and is recognized as a disability which requires saintly intervention by the supplicant and his or her family; in most cases, the journey is taken to William's tomb in Norwich; the miraculous healing of the impairment is then witnessed by a crowd, which in turn deems the disability to be healed. I have considered the physical ailments and their social contexts. Thomas's formula focuses much more on the cure than on the ailment; nevertheless, by following the distinction favored by theorists of disability studies (wherein an impairment is the physical condition and the disability is its social construct) I have explored the relationship between impairment and disability.

As we have seen, William does not seem to have been a specialist saint. He cured pilgrims suffering from over twenty-five distinct conditions in addition to another seventeen who suffered from unidentified illnesses (which may have been unique or other common

ailments). It does not appear that William had a special relationship with any one group, though the incidents of pilgrims who were bent double could suggest either that he was very good at treating that condition or that being bent double was a common condition in East Anglia in the twelfth century. William heals men, women, and children of varying social statuses. His sacrist, Thomas, seems to emphasize those stories concerning children and adults of social prominence in the Norwich community, but these stories are by no means limited to them and even include stories about beggars. Moreover, the pilgrims do not come just from Norwich, and indeed William even heals some supplicants many miles from his shrine at Norwich. However, he does expect that those who are healed at home come to the tomb bearing votive or money offerings. Another aspect of these stories is that they seldom involve acts of penance, or at least if they did, Thomas does not say so.

In this chapter I have examined pilgrims mentioned in the *Life and Passion of William of Norwich* in an attempt to systematically categorize and analyze them according to their physical or mental impairments to show how these conditions were understood in their social context of twelfth-century Norwich. As part of this analysis, I have emphasized the role of the community both in identifying conditions that were considered disabilities and in confirming that a miraculous cure had occurred, in which case the pilgrim would no longer be considered by society to have a disability. In Chapter 3, I will draw on the same group of eighty pilgrims who sought relief from St. William. However, my focus will be different: I will consider what some of these stories can tell us about familial support and technological aids in the Middle Ages as a way of exploring some of the social and logistical aspects of medieval medical pilgrimage.

Chapter 3

Contexts of Traveling: Familial Support and Modes of Transportation

Much like travelers today, people in the Middle Ages made use of various modes of transportation. Of course, many pilgrims went on foot, but those with physical and mental ailments were often carried to shrines, whether in the arms of parents, in a handbarrow, or in a cart. Some pilgrims are even said to have been transported by the saints themselves. As I will discuss in this chapter, transportation was thus not limited to able-bodied and wealthy people; disabled and poor people made use of transportation as well.¹

In a recent 2015 essay, the doyenne of medieval disability studies, Irina Metzler, has sketched out the beginning of a new area of inquiry into this often overlooked—yet crucial—aspect of social history. In “Have Crutch, Will Travel,” Metzler uses textual and visual evidence from throughout the Middle Ages to “describe and interpret the extent to which such [disabled] people may or may not have been able to act ‘autonomously.’”² In her study, Metzler draws on a variety of miracle stories, manuscript images, and marginalia; her research is not limited to a single time period, text, or location. As Metzler summarizes, “considering that travel to a shrine in the hope of a cure was one of the main motivations for undertaking a pilgrimage in the first place,” the lack of information within the miracle stories about modes of transportation used by disabled pilgrims is a bit disconcerting.³

¹ The collection of essays, *Travels and Mobilities in the Middle Ages from the Atlantic to the Black Sea*, ed. Marianne O’Doherty and Felicitas Schmieder (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2015) discusses this issue at length.

² Irina Metzler, “Have Crutch, Will Travel: Disabled People on the Move in Medieval Europe,” in *Travels and Mobilities in the Middle Ages from the Atlantic to the Black Sea*, 94.

³ Metzler, “Have Crutch, Will Travel,” 93.

In *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, Thomas of Monmouth makes a brief summation of the types of pilgrims who visited the shrine, including those who were disabled:

Yet we have seen a great number of people, over a long period, suffering from various ailments—blind, dumb, deaf, lame, hunchbacked, bent, walking on all fours with crutches, people suffering from swellings, dropsy, those with ulcers, with swellings of the throat, the insane—and many others of either sex, suffering from diverse sicknesses, cured by the merits of the holy martyr William.⁴

It is these ailments and diseases that I analyze in my thesis by looking at eighty examples from throughout the *Life*. Fully half of these eighty miracles provide information on how the pilgrim got to Norwich—either by themselves (with or without technological assistance), with the aid of family, or with the aid of family and technological assistance. I have also identified one pilgrim who was escorted on his pilgrimage from Canterbury to Norwich by the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund. The remaining fifty percent either do not specify how the pilgrims got to the tomb or state that the miracle took place somewhere else. I begin this chapter by examining pilgrims who traveled by themselves. I then consider pilgrims who were aided by family. Third, I examine pilgrims who were brought by family with technological assistance. I conclude by discussing the last pilgrim Thomas describes in the *Life*, the memorable story of a Canterbury man who was transported more than ninety miles in one day by the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund.

In this chapter, I propose that Thomas makes so many references to the modes of transportation used by supplicants for the same reason he cites the authority of witnesses from Norwich as well as guests who could attest to the pilgrims' prior conditions. These are not merely incidental details, but rather a central component of his attempt to demonstrate

⁴ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 57, Book II.viii.

that the pilgrims had arrived in a state of impairment. Though he never overtly states his logic, he implies that no family would go to the trouble of carrying someone over great distances for a cure if that person were able to make the journey unassisted. Whether the pilgrim was carried or used some kind of technological aid, Thomas is meticulous in recording the modes of transportation as a key aspect of these miracles. Like the impairments I considered in Chapter 2, no study has yet to categorize or analyze the modes of transportation in discussing the pilgrims who sought medical healing at the tomb of William of Norwich.

Pilgrims Traveling Alone

Very few pilgrims—only six—came to the tomb on their own, and their stories can be found in Books III, V, VI, and VII. The first and only instance in Book III concerns a woman named Goldeburga who had been sick for many days with an unidentified illness.⁵ This entry is one of the shortest in the *Life*, and in it Thomas records little information about the pilgrim, her condition, or her journey. Once again, it is the miracle itself that takes center stage. Nevertheless, even though Thomas does not specify what Goldeburga’s illness may have been, he does say that her limbs were barely able to support her as she walked to the tomb from parts unknown. It is of greater significance to Thomas that the cure she sought “[spread] slowly through her limbs” and that within a few days she was fully cured.⁶ Since he does not mention his source of the information that she was fully healed, Thomas implies that Goldeburga must have remained at Norwich until she was fully cured; moreover, because she was traveling alone and he does not mention the presence of a crowd, the only possible source of this information is Thomas’s own interactions with Goldeburga. As with the

⁵ Ibid., 102, Book III.xxiv.

⁶ Ibid.

supplicants I discussed in Chapter 2, the most important detail to Thomas is Goldeburga's complete recovery. Her story stands out because it is unique for two reasons. First, of the six pilgrims I have identified as coming to the tomb on their own, Goldeburga is the only one who walked without any technological assistance. Second, of these six pilgrims who traveled alone, Goldeburga is the only one for whom Thomas does not specify the origin of her journey.

Two other pilgrims, both from Norfolk, walked to the tomb using a staff. The first was a Norwich money-changer named Godric who had already been suffering from pain in one foot for several days. The pain increased and spread so much that he finally took the advice of his family and "came as best he could with the help of a stick to the tomb of Saint William."⁷ And like the man in *Figure 3.1*, he offered a large piece of wax in the shape of a foot. Many pilgrims in the Middle Ages would make votive offerings in the shape of the body part which ailed them, or candles made in their dimensions. They might even leave behind their technological aids at the tomb as a token of thanks (much like the pilgrim from York, in Book VII.xi). As I argued in Chapter 2, such votive offerings could serve several purposes, chief among them showing William's power to others who visited the tomb in search of a cure for a similar ailment as well as highlighting the public's confirmation of the healing. Taken individually, these tokens may not seem like much, but they no doubt represented to other pilgrims and devotees what the saint was capable of. Once Godric offered the votive of wax in the shape of a foot, it would have been evident to everyone who had gathered at the tomb—either searching for a cure themselves or just to pray and

⁷ Ibid., 147, Book VI.iii.

worship—that not only had he sought aid from God through William, but that he had received it.

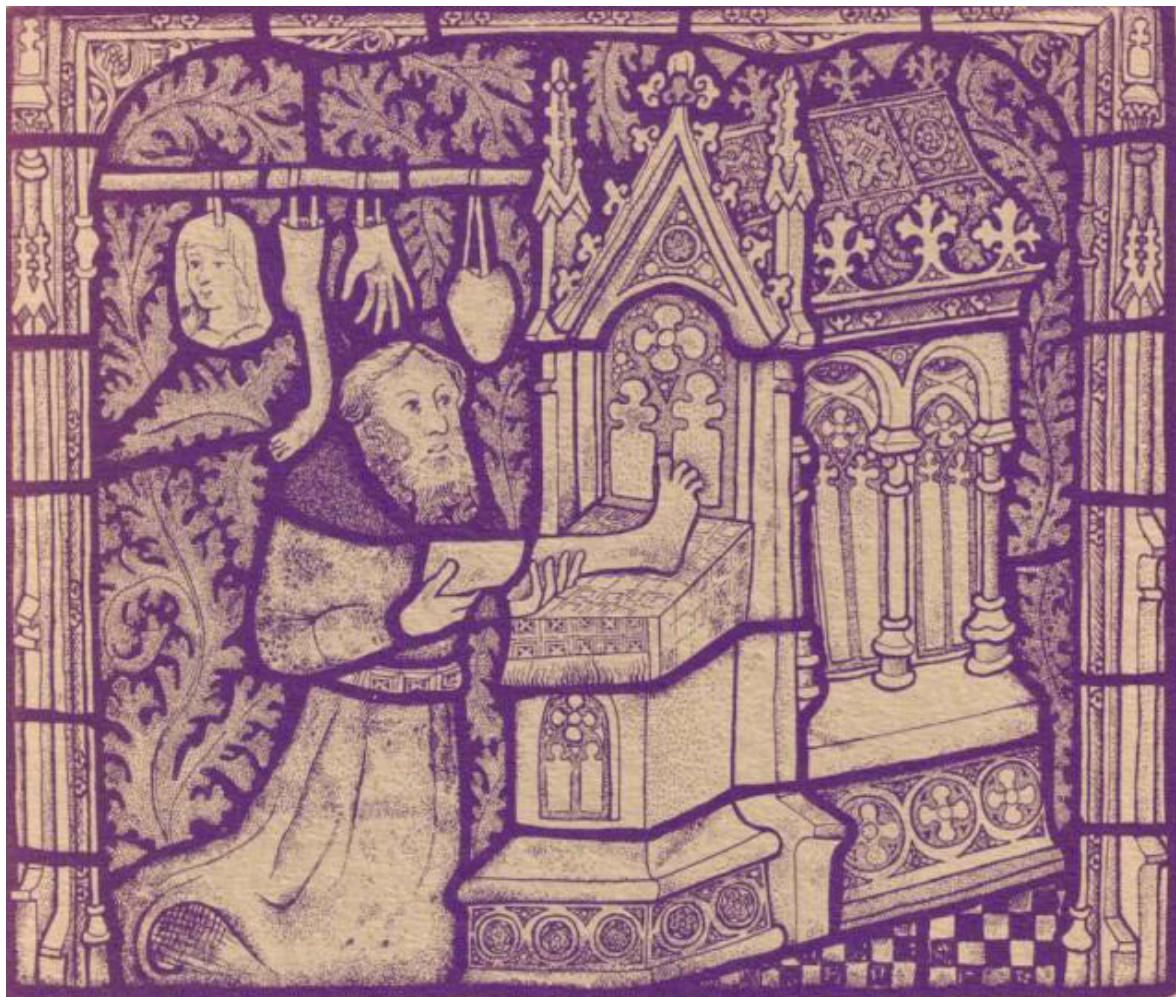


Figure 3.1: Image of a pilgrim offering a wax leg to the shrine of Saint William Fitzherbert (1324-1472) at York Minster. Note the other offerings behind the pilgrim, presumably made of wax and made to resemble what other supplicants prayed for help with.
<http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/york-minster/st-william-s-shrine>

The second pilgrim who took it upon herself to walk alone to Norwich aided by a staff was Matilda, who had been bent double since “the flower of her adolescence.”⁸ Peter,

⁸ Ibid., 160, Book VI.xii.

the priest in Langham, a village about thirty miles north of Norwich, took her in as an act of charity (*elemosine gratia*). With the priest's help, Matilda visited several shrines:

And whenever she desired to visit holy places in order to recover her full health, he had her carried on a horse—crosswise—like a full sack. And when no fruit resulted from the effort, she was carried back in the same state as before.⁹

Thomas does not state specifically which “holy places” she visited, nor does he supply a forthright explanation as to why she was never cured. However, he implies two main reasons: first, that she did not visit William's shrine to begin with, and second, that she was not fully penitent because she rode a horse to and from the shrines. As Jean Verdon points out in his influential work on medieval travel, the “most important [aspect of pilgrimage] was to walk at the moments of departure and arrival in order to show clearly the penitential nature of the journey. Thus a pilgrim reaching his destination would leave his horse, or even his litter if he were infirm, and finish his journey on foot.”¹⁰ Thomas continues his story by saying that Matilda was encouraged by the word of mouth that had traveled throughout Norfolk about the pilgrims who had been healed by William. He explains that

she conceived a hope that her health might be restored thanks to him. Full of enthusiasm and confidence, she took up her stick and set out on the road to Norwich. And as she was walking, she enhanced her mobility more from the fervency of her heart than from the physical support of her feet, and, trusting little in her own powers, she put more faith in the support of her stick. And each step was hardly the size of a finger, and between one step and another there was a long delay, and if you had seen her walking, you would not have thought a tortoise any slower.

And so at last it happened that having set out on the twelfth day before Lent, she arrived in Norwich on the fourth week after Easter.¹¹

Her pilgrimage took about three months, far longer than if she had taken her usual mode of transportation, a horse. It appears that her chosen mode of transportation (or lack thereof)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages*, 31.

¹¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 160–1, Book VI.xii.

was a contributing factor to her cure, if, perhaps, the grueling journey on foot was intended as an act of penance. There were, however, those who would have tried to paint this cure as a hoax, for Thomas concludes his story with an attempt to justify the veracity of the miracle:

But lest some faithless and unbelieving person might attribute [this cure] to a fraud rather than to a miracle, she took an oath not to leave Norwich as long as it took, until her master would come, the aforesaid Peter of Langham, who, by being witness to its truth, would demolish the gossips' charge that it was false. And so it happened that she waited for Peter's arrival, and when he came he gave witness to the truth.¹²

Unfortunately, Thomas does not tell his audience who these "gossips" might be or why they would want to spread word that Matilda's cure (and presumably others as well) was a hoax. Moreover, as I discussed at length in Chapter 2, Matilda's cure took place in front of a crowd which did not believe that she had been cured. I suggested that the public, rather than Matilda herself, determined whether or not her cure had been effective, which would explain why she insisted on waiting at the tomb for the arrival of Peter, the priest from Langham who sheltered her as an act of charity, since he alone could attest to her prior impairment and thus the crowd could agree that she was no longer disabled. However, though Thomas states that Matilda was fully cured, he does not specify how she set out for her journey home, as he does in some other cases.

Another pilgrim who traveled alone walked to Norwich from her home in Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk, using the aid of trestles or hand-crutches.¹³ Like several other pilgrims, she had been visited by William in a dream where he instructed her to go to his tomb. The cathedral and tomb were particularly busy when this "little [unnamed] woman" came because

¹² Ibid., 161, Book VI.xii.

¹³ Ibid., 135, Book V.xiv.

it was the “Saturday before the feast of the Holy Trinity” during the season of Pentecost.¹⁴ Due to the gathering throng, the woman was unable to reach the tomb (“and approaching as far as she could on account of the crowd”), but her prayer and devotion to God were sincere and fervent enough to warrant a cure.¹⁵ Thomas witnessed this woman’s prayer and subsequent healing where her muscles, which had been distended and contracted beforehand, were bent straight with a large crack that could be heard throughout the entire sanctuary. After lying near the tomb for an hour or so, the woman was able to rise and walk on her own, “[giving] thanks to God and His holy martyr William for the health restored to her.”¹⁶ As I showed in Chapter 2, most of the pilgrims in the *Life* who managed to make it to Norwich made some kind of physical contact with the tomb, either by kissing it, drinking stone scrapings in holy water, or touching the afflicted body part to the tomb, and so on. However, this woman was unable to do so because of the large crowd of people gathered at the cathedral in anticipation of an important church feast day. But this detail does not seem to bother Thomas, who reminds his audience that because of the special feast day there was a large crowd assembled and so the woman would have had a legitimate reason in not being able to touch the tomb. Moreover, like Matilda from Langham, this woman walked a long distance in order to obtain spiritual healing and was therefore sufficiently repentant and penitent.

Although Thomas often invokes the trope of a pilgrim’s body being animated by faith inspired by William’s power, in addition to those supplicants who are healed at home after

¹⁴ The Feast of the Holy Trinity falls on the fiftieth day after Easter and is also known as Trinity Sunday. See <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Feast-of-the-Holy-Trinity> for more information. Accessed Feb. 18, 2016.

¹⁵ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 135, Book V.xiv.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

making an offering or saying a prayer to William, the woman from Bury St. Edmunds points to a third way in which William could bridge the distance between his tomb and a supplicant in his ability to heal. This miracle is in harmony with other supplicants healed by William without making physical contact with his tomb and it is suggestive of Finucane's memorable explanation about relics emitting a sort of "holy radioactivity" that could not only cure individuals but which could even alter the physical makeup of nearby objects.¹⁷

The fifth pilgrim Thomas records having journeyed solo to the tomb in Norwich was a man named Thomas who came from York. Thomas used crutches in order to get around, and like Matilda and the woman from Bury St. Edmunds, he walked with his crutches, "making [so] little progress [that] his lengthy journey took up many days."¹⁸ Also like Matilda and other pilgrims before and after him, he was led to the tomb not by his crippled legs or crutches, Thomas insists, but rather by faith and drawn by hope ("Euntem fides sustentabat debilem, spes trahebat inbecillem").¹⁹ Following the tradition of leaving some sort of token that not only represents the pilgrim's thanks but is also a visual reminder of the miracles performed by the saint, upon being cured Thomas left his crutches at the tomb and he was able to return home to York without them.

¹⁷ In the late Middle Ages, pilgrimage sites such as Aachen (famous for relics such as the Virgin Mary's robe, the swaddling clothes and loincloth of Jesus, and the cloth that held the decapitated head of John the Baptist) were so popular that pilgrims were no longer able to receive miraculous healing by direct touch. The problem was circumvented by attaching convex mirrors to pilgrim badges so that the pilgrims could "draw in and store for future use the powerful rays believed to be emanating from the holy relics." T. Craig Christy, "From Badges to Moveable Type: How Gutenberg Came to Bring Mass Production Technology to the Production of Books," *The International Journal of the Book* 8.4 (2011): 1–26, at p 2–3. This observation of Christy's is reminiscent of Ronald C. Finucane's phrase "holy radioactivity" which he uses to describe the commonly held belief that relics emitted rays meant to be absorbed by pilgrims hoping for a cure. See Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, 26.

¹⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 179, Book VII.xi.

¹⁹ Jessopp and James, *Life*, 271, Book VII.xi.

The last pilgrim in the *Life* to travel alone is one who was cured at home and then came to Norwich in order to fulfill his vow to William. A dean from the province of Lincoln, Robert had suffered for a long time from such a weakness of constitution that his extremities and head were swollen and that everyone who saw him thought he was at death's door.²⁰ One night in a vision he was visited by William, who comforted and cured him by running his hand over his limbs and head. In return, William commanded Robert to journey to Norwich every year and pay a tribute of four pennies. Upon waking, he had saddled up his horse and ridden to Norwich, where Thomas happened upon him and he learned of Robert's holy night visitor. "Having heard this," Thomas writes, "we marvelled greatly and were happy, and we glorified the favours of divine pity."²¹ Unlike Matilda and Thomas, Robert did not undertake his journey on foot. Whether or not it was because he was a clergyman, Thomas does not say. But we can extrapolate from this miracle story that the mode of transportation was not the primary concern; rather, it was that the dean immediately followed through on William's instructions and paid the four pennies at his tomb.²²

Pilgrims with Familial Support: Children

Familial support was an important aspect of pilgrimages made in search of healing. About one third of the pilgrims that Thomas records as having come in search of a miraculous cure were brought to the tomb by their families. Although Thomas records some twenty-eight such cases, he does not note whether or not technological aids were a key component in getting the pilgrims to their destination. Before I can examine the stories in

²⁰ Per Rubin, this particular Robert may be "Robert, the Archdeacon of Lincoln, who occurs between 1141/5 and 1169, and who succeeded William of Bayeux; see Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae II*, p. 25." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 237n12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 130, Book V.ix.

²² For a contrasting example, see Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 176–7, Book VII.vi for the story of a woman who did not hasten to the tomb to offer the wax which healed her breast and therefore was attacked a second time by her ailment. This recurrence prompted her to finally make the journey to Norwich.

which pilgrims were not only aided by their family but also used technological aids, I will first address those pilgrims traveling with relatives but for whom Thomas does not mention some form of physical support. Twenty-three out of the twenty-eight pilgrims in this category hailed from Norfolk, with the others coming either from Suffolk or parts unknown. The split between the minor children and adult pilgrims brought by their families is 50/50, fourteen of each. I will first consider the minor children to show that they lacked agency of their own and that their parents took responsibility for their care and treatment. In the next section, I will ask whether grown-up children who might not have been fully autonomous were treated as adults or more like the children in these accounts.

The majority of the children were brought to the tomb by their mothers, followed by both of their parents together, then their fathers, and then the generic “family.” As was true of William’s own life, these accounts suggest that mothers may have been more involved in their children’s lives than fathers: William’s father, Wenstan, is mentioned only briefly in Book I and according to Thomas he had very little to do with William’s conception (much like Joseph in the Bible). It is William’s mother, Elviva, who is given the sole credit for educating her son and fostering an atmosphere of spiritual piety before sending him to Norwich as a tanner’s apprentice around 1140, when he would have been about eight years old.²³

These fourteen children who were brought to William’s tomb in Norwich can be found scattered throughout the *Life* in Books III, V, VI, and VII. Most of them were boys (seventy-one percent). The first story concerns a seven-year-old boy and it is representative of the genre. His parents, Colobern and Ansfrida, “led an honourable though poor life” in

²³ See Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 10–14, Book I.i-iii.

Norwich, and the boy had been mute since birth.²⁴ One night, “a person with a venerable face” (“quadam reuerendi uultus persona”) visited both of the parents in a dream and encouraged them to take their son to William’s tomb, “where they would rejoice in his cure.”²⁵ This is the only miracle story in the *Life* that I know of where the person in the dream is not named. Thomas does not give any explanation as to who this person might be, but it is plausible that it was indeed William. The next morning, Colobern and Ansfrida compared their dreams and determined that the next step would be to take their son to the tomb. Their story continues:

After they had together continued in prayer for a long time, and finally offered the candle, carried in the boy’s hand, the boy kissed the tomb and turned to his father and mother, suddenly breaking into speech in his mother tongue [English], asking that they return home. Upon hearing this, father and mother could not contain their tears of happiness. We, who were also present, seeing such things, cried, pierced by compassion. And when they had made known to us both the vision and the outcome, they returned home full of joy with a son no longer mute, and we joined them in praise of the Lord, who does great things in His martyr William.²⁶

This story contains many of the earmarks of a typical miracle story. After being visited in a dream by some kind of holy person, the parents rush straightaway with their son to the tomb. They show their piety and devotion not only by praying, but by having the mute boy—the one whose cure they are praying for—offer a candle and kiss the tomb. The parents’ devotion combined with the votive offering and the boy’s physical contact with the tomb helped ensure a desirable outcome. Upon kissing the tomb, the boy was healed and his first spoken request was to go home! In addition, Thomas points out that he was there to witness this miracle, and was therefore able to verify it. As Rubin notes, “Thomas makes himself felt and

²⁴ Ibid., 97, Book III.xvi.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

known throughout these tales, praising William's virtue and favour with God and making interjections designed to reassure readers of the veracity of his reports."²⁷

The parents' involvement, an offering at the tomb followed by an immediate cure, and an attempt on Thomas's part to authenticate the story, taken together, are emblematic of Thomas's formula for these stories. His strategy clearly served to allay the objections of his medieval contemporaries who doubted William's sanctity. It points to the ways medieval people understood miracles to work, but at the same time, I argue, it also illuminates their understanding of disability within its familial context. That is, because he so frequently emphasizes the role of parents in these accounts involving children, I believe that Thomas's formula should be understood not only to have emerged out of familial and social contexts of impairment (and therefore disability), but indeed to have served to reinforce those familial and social contexts of disability.

In the story immediately following that of the mute boy, Thomas writes about another child who was brought to the tomb by his father. Also from Norwich, this boy and his father, Robert the Palmer, came to the tomb "as the fame of such mighty miracles spread more and more, as if sprouting new shoots."²⁸ Thomas states that Robert was led to the tomb by his faith that William could cure his son of the dysentery he had suffered from for an entire year. While the boy did not touch or kiss the tomb as many pilgrims did, he was given a mixture of holy water with tomb scrapings to drink; "immediately he felt the pain subside and strength quickly pour into his limbs, which had been gradually weakened."²⁹ This particular type of remedy would have been germane to the boy's ailment, since dysentery affects the large

²⁷ Rubin, "Introduction," *Life*, xxviii.

²⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 98, Book III.xvii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

intestine and results in loose and bloody stools.³⁰ They returned home. When Thomas spoke with the father at a later time, he was happy to report that his son had not suffered another bout of dysentery since the day he had taken the holy drink. Although Thomas did not witness this miracle himself, he completes the formula by stating that he later confirmed it with the father.

Another sick boy from Tudenham was brought to the tomb by his parents, Roger and Godiva. At ten years old, he had been unable to move at all by himself for many days and his parents feared that he was close to death. They “carried him [to the tomb] with many laments and tears and with candles, and put him down on the tomb near the martyr’s head, within our view.”³¹ Roger and Godiva prayed to God and to William to cure their son, and Thomas witnessed the young boy walk and turn around on his own to face the tomb and thank the saint for curing him. The devotion of the parents, paired with the boy’s physical contact with the tomb, led to his miraculous healing.

I now wish to argue that the parents’ involvement in these miracles involving children is a theme that can be connected to my earlier discussion of pilgrims who were suffering from madness and demonic possession in Chapter 2. I observed that pilgrims suffering from mental impairments did not typically play an active role in seeking out their own cures, and in fact I found that they were brought against their will by their families. However, the children I am discussing here differ from those pilgrims I considered in Chapter 2 suffering from madness and demonic possession in significant ways, most obviously in that although the children are usually carried by their families, they do not need to be restrained; because

³⁰ For more information on dysentery, see *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, ed. Kenneth F. Kiple (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 696.

³¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 103, Book III.xxvii.

they do not arrive thrashing about, the children do not fall calm in the presence of William's spirit as was typical in Thomas's accounts of madness and demonic possession. Nevertheless, these children are similarly incapacitated and unable to act on their own behalf, whether in seeking or receiving their cures. In this way, children and those suffering from madness and demonic possession differ from supplicants who could exhibit their own piety at the tomb, for both children and those with mental impairments were relieved of their disability through the piety exhibited by their families and caretakers. Put differently, while children and those suffering from a variety of mental conditions lacked agency in their cures, in both cases their impairments are recognizable as disabilities because their families and other supporters sought cures for their conditions on their behalf. As with the cures themselves, which so frequently take place in a public or communal context in Thomas's accounts in the *Life*, we can now see how the pilgrimages are also defined by the social and familial contexts which frame impairments as disabilities.

The last miracle in Book III is of special interest not just because it concerns a child, but also because Thomas uses it to comment on how and why he has chosen to include some miracles in the *Life* but not others:

Although the glorious martyr was becoming famous—as so many miracles took place around his tomb—we have not been able to take note of all of them, both because many have escaped our notice and because for quite a few we have been unable to track down the full certainty of truth. Meanwhile, it has pleased us to insert into this book those we know for sure by sight or hearing, and we know that telling them will not be displeasing to people of devout hearts.³²

Here Thomas is addressing those in his audience who might question why certain miracles made it into his book while others did not. As William's sacrist, not only was it Thomas's duty to ensure the safekeeping of the relics associated with the martyr, but he was also

³² Ibid., 106, Book III.xxxii.

responsible for recording miracles that had been performed by the saint. It would have behooved Thomas only to record those miracles he had witnessed, or confirmed with reputable sources. Additionally, it is probable that many of the miracles putatively performed by William had escaped the notice of Thomas and the cathedral community as a whole, if only because they were never reported. This story is of additional interest because it signals that the monks of Norwich Cathedral employed secular workers, for in this story William cures the son of a tailor named Aluric who worked in the monks' workshop. This boy suffered from a swollen throat and jaws and "since the nature of the illness excluded any hope of [a] future cure," the boy's mother brought him to the tomb.³³ Like Robert the Palmer's son in Book III.xvii, this boy was also given a drink of holy water mixed with tomb scrapings, this time by Thomas himself. As the drink flowed throughout his body, the tumor began to subside and "in a short while he was cured of the tumour and retained no mark of the swelling anywhere on his body."³⁴ Thomas credits this holy mixture, which would have touched the inside of the boy's throat and jaws as he swallowed it, as the remedy which healed the boy. Here, Thomas completes his formula by bragging that he not only witnessed the miracle, but he was a key participant in it.

In Book V.iii Thomas gives the gripping account of a young shepherd boy and his father from Helgheton. The father had brought his son to Norwich because he had suffered for several years from severe stomach pains. This is the only case in the *Life* where stomach pains were caused not by any kind of disease, but rather by a viper and its two young. Several years prior, the boy had fallen asleep while tending his flock and a viper slipped through his gaping mouth and into his bowels. The boy and his father did not know for sure what was

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

ailing him, but Thomas says that the viper's movements within the boy's entrails suggested a "presence of evil."³⁵ Because of the increasing sharpness of pain throughout the years, they began to form an idea of what it might be.³⁶ Upon arriving at the tomb, the boy and his father prayed and offered a candle. Then the father scraped some stone from the tomb, mixed it with holy water, and gave it to his son to drink. Like the sons of Robert the Palmer and Aluric the tailor, this boy was effectively cured by the holy drink making contact with the viper:

As soon as that sacred drink descended into his innards, the raging serpent began to suffer inside and it could not bear the presence of the sacred drink. And so the pain increased and the youth went out of the church hastily, and, lying on the ground in front of the doors of the church, with greatest pain he vomited a serpent and two of its young; much else besides came out and he remained lying on the ground for a while, as if dead.³⁷

Believing that his son was dead, the father killed the viper and its young and placed them in a cleft stick to commemorate the event. After an hour or so, the boy arose "healthy and thanked God and Saint William, his liberator, returning home with his father, full of joy."³⁸ Though this story is thematically related to other medieval accounts concerning madness and demonic possession, it is striking that Thomas does not call attention to such a parallel. As I discussed in Chapter 2, he instead treats it as a straightforward account of a viper attack, which suggests that the boy's condition was understood as a physical impairment rather than a mental or spiritual defect. But whether it is read literally, as I believe it should be, or as a metaphorical account of an exorcism, this story is another example of the importance of familial support in seeking out cures for those unable to act on their own behalf.

³⁵ Ibid., 124, Book V.iii.

³⁶ Ibid., 125, Book V.iii.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

In Book V.xvi we meet the first girl in this analysis of child pilgrims who were brought to the tomb by family members. An unnamed woman carried her bent and mute seven-year-old daughter to the tomb on Maundy Thursday while Bishop William Turbe was celebrating the mass. Because it was the Thursday before Easter, the cathedral was busy and full of people. The woman walked up to the tomb and placed her daughter next to it, in full view of the worshippers. She then sat down next to Godiva, the wife of Sebald, whose father was Brunstan.³⁹ The mother fell asleep and did not notice when an egg was brought up front during the mass. The girl and Godiva were awake, however, because Godiva witnessed the girl—who beforehand “could neither move nor speak”—get up, take the egg, walk over to her mother and say in English “Look, mother, I have an egg.”⁴⁰ Hearing her daughter speak for the first time, the mother “burst into tears for sheer delight” and “publicly announced to those present the great gifts which divine mercy had bestowed upon her by the merits of Saint William.”⁴¹ Ostensibly because he and the monks were celebrating the mass as well, Thomas was in the cathedral to hear this proclamation and was able to verify it with Godiva and others who knew the mother and daughter. In this case, it was not merely the physical touching of the tomb by the girl, as one would expect from an adult supplicant, which resulted in her miraculous healing. Because she was a child, this girl’s cure was also dependent on her mother’s faith and piety.

A few days later, another unnamed woman—this time from Grimston—brought to the tomb her daughter who had been blind, mute, and deaf from birth. She had been visited by

³⁹ Per Rubin: “*Sebald, son of Brunstan*: Sebald is recorded as a donor of land in Norwich to the Abbey of Saint Benet at Holme, when his nephew joined the community as a monk; see *The Register of the Abbey of St Benet of Holme*, ed. J. R. West, Norfolk Record Society (1932), no. 177, p. 99.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 238n23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 136, Book V.xvi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 136–7, Book V.xvi.

William in a vision where he told her to bring the girl to him at Norwich if she wanted her to be cured. She came at once, carrying her daughter in her arms, and laid her at the head of the tomb, and “said with a clear voice: ‘Glorious William, martyr of God, look, I have brought my daughter as you have commanded: do to her, Lord, as you have promised.’”⁴² Thanks to her mother’s love and piety, the prayer “reached up to heaven.”⁴³

Unexpectedly, the film which obscured the maiden’s eyes—like a membrane of an egg—was removed, and blood began to gush from her eyes and to trickle down to the floor. She cried out on account of the distress [caused by the] pain, weeping and plucking at her cheeks; we all came running to find out what was going on. And although we had learned the outcome as the mother described it, we wanted to know the truth more surely, and we placed a burning candle on top of a stick. We put it in front of her eyes and, moving it from side to side, the maiden observed the light and wondered at it as something truly unknown to her; whenever it moved, the candle was followed by her eyes. Taking the candle away, we then showed her an apple. She took it up and, as she admired it, her mother said to her in English: “Eat, daughter, eat the apple.” And when the little girl repeated the words, she believed herself to have answered her mother, since she did not know how to say anything else, except what she had heard from another. And from that we concluded that she was no longer blind, mute and deaf.⁴⁴

Here is another example of Thomas assuring his audience that he took the proper measures in verifying the miracle; even though what the “little poor woman from Grimston” told him turned out to be true, he further verified that the girl had been blind, mute, and deaf prior to this by checking her eyesight with a candle on a stick and showing her an apple. Thomas thus describes two separate tests of the cure; the communal nature of both underscores the social context which distinguishes disability from impairment. The girl was cured of disability as a result of her society’s recognition of her cure, but her impairment was healed as a result of her familial support. Put differently, like the girl on Maundy Thursday who had been brought to the tomb by her mother and was placed by it, this girl too received the hoped-for cure

⁴² Ibid., 137, Book V.xvii.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 137–8, Book V.xvii.

thanks to her mother's actions. Once again, although Thomas himself seems uninterested in the family relations, perhaps because those structures were so obvious to him that he did not need to comment on them, this exciting miracle nevertheless points to the important role parents played in seeking miraculous cures for their children's afflictions because children lacked both the piety and the agency to secure such cures for themselves.

In Book VI.ii, "the little daughter" of Reginald de Warenne, an Anglo-Norman nobleman and royal official under Henry II (r. 1154-89), was carried to the tomb by her family because she had been ill for a long time and was at death's door.⁴⁵ This was all the more grievous to the little girl's parents because "they had always loved [her] above all others."⁴⁶ When she and her family arrived at the tomb, the little girl "touched the tomb with an offering" and was immediately helped by the "divine pity" of God and Saint William.⁴⁷ The girl recovered her full health and went home with her family. This particular miracle story is significant not only because it involves a sick child who was brought to the tomb by her family. It is also significant in its placement within the *Life*, for it is the first miracle recorded in Book VI and immediately follows Thomas's account of the last translation of William's body to a chapel north of the chancel in Norwich Cathedral:

And that year was AD 1154, in which the day after Easter Monday was the nones of April [5 April], when Bishop William [Turbe] girded himself to execute the solemn business of the translation, and with the bishop the holy community of monks. On that day, I say, a great multitude of people crowded together and the body of the martyr was carried there with the greatest veneration. There he lies, buried under the altar in the said chapel dedicated to holy martyrs. And there he rests, buried in body but alive in glory that shines in daily miracles. He lights the earth with his limbs and

⁴⁵ Per Rubin: "On Reginald [Rainald II] see *Domesday Descendants*, pp. 776-8." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 239n2. Per Jessopp and James: "[Reginald de Warenne] and his wife Alice were benefactors to the nunnery of Carrow near Norwich when King Stephen founded it, in 1146: his daughter Muriel was a nun there." Jessopp and James, *Life*, 222n1, Book VI.ii. Unfortunately, Thomas does not say what the little girl's name was so we do not know for certain which of Reginald's daughters had been cured at Norwich.

⁴⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 147, Book VI.ii.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

inherits heaven with his merits. There the martyr so acceptable to God shines forth in frequent miracles until this very day, and shows in the most revealing signs how much virtue and merit he has with God. There we have frequently seen the restoration of sight to the blind, walking to the lame, speech to the mute and good sense to the insane.⁴⁸ We have also seen many sick people cured and not a few people bound by shackles freed. Not only are miracles present there, but they even grow more and greater; it is evident that his merits are special and precious in heaven.⁴⁹

Thomas himself provides a clear statement here that healing is something that is witnessed, judged, and experienced publicly. It was the day after Easter in 1154 that William's body was moved for the final time to a place in Norwich Cathedral reserved for the veneration of saints and martyrs. According to Thomas, this was the ideal place for a martyr such as William because it was large enough to accommodate the growing throngs of pilgrims visiting the tomb and because it was situated in a quiet enclosure which would encourage piety and devotion.⁵⁰ It was also in that week when Reginald de Warenne and his wife brought their sick daughter to the tomb.

By stating that the daughter of an important nobleman and royal official was the first person cured by William after his final translation, Thomas is clearly attempting to bolster the power and appeal of the boy saint. It was not some unnamed, unknown pilgrim from a small village in Norfolk who received the benefit of this first miracle after William's translation; rather, it was the daughter of a well-known nobleman who was not only a royal official but was also a benefactor of at least one Benedictine community.

⁴⁸ Per Rubin, this is reminiscent of Matthew 11:5: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them.' John of Salisbury also used this list with reference to the miracles of St Thomas Becket: 'In the place where Thomas suffered, and where he lay the night through, before the high altar, awaiting burial, and where he was buried at last, the palsied are cured, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, folk suffering from fevers are cured, the lepers are cleansed,' *The Letters of John of Salisbury II*, Letter 305, pp. 736–7." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 239n1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, *Life*, 146–7, Book VI.i.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 146, Book VI.i.

A second noble child in Book VI was brought to the tomb by his father, a knight named Ranulph from Haughley, a village in Suffolk. The boy suffered from epilepsy for many years and upon arriving at the tomb he “uttered a prayer [and] made an offering,” much like Reginald de Warenne’s daughter.⁵¹ Thomas does not specify how the boy was brought to the tomb by his family, but he does state that he learned of this miracle after it had occurred by way of the messenger who was sent to him by the boy’s mother. These two accounts of high-born children, a boy and a girl, suggest that Thomas thought that such stories would add prestige to the tomb and William’s curative powers, perhaps in an attempt to draw families from across the social spectrum.

Indeed, Book VII is filled with accounts of sick children of varied social statuses who had been brought to the tomb by their parents. The first example concerns Schet, a young boy who had been born in Haddiscoe, but at the time was living in Yarmouth as a fisherman (perhaps, given his age, as an apprentice).⁵² His father, Eilmer, took the boy to Norwich because he suffered from a “paralytic complaint” for several days (“per multos dies laborabat incommodo”). Whatever this ailment was, it affected Schet’s entire body; upon being healed, “the chain of his tongue was loosened, speech was restored to him and health returned to his weak limbs.”⁵³ If the boy or his father made a votive or another kind of offering, Thomas does not say. Like the grown-up children we will see in the next section, Schet could be viewed as straddling both spheres of youth and adulthood. His work as a fisherman suggests that he was on his way to being or was already autonomous; however, Thomas signals that, at

⁵¹ Ibid., 151, Book VI.vii.

⁵² The Latin reads “Alio quoque tempore iuuenis quidam Schet nomine in uilla que Hadescho dicitur de patre Eilmero natus.” Jessopp and James, *Life*, 264, Book VII.ii.

⁵³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 175, Book VII.ii.

least when he was sick, he still relied on the support of his family in order to restore his previous autonomy.

Thomas writes that during Pentecost in 1156 the tomb witnessed a surge in devotees who came in order to be cured. He also writes here, as he does elsewhere, that he is not going to bother with recording most of the cures because it would make the *Life* much too long and that he will only record those which he can readily verify. He nevertheless proceeds to tell the story of an unnamed boy from Repps who had been blind, deaf, mute, and unable to use his limbs since birth. He was brought to the tomb by his mother in the hopes of a cure. “[On] the day she came,” Thomas writes, “she took him back home—full of thanks—healthy and unharmed in all his limbs.”⁵⁴ Despite stating in the previous sentence that he will only write down those stories “of which we are surer,” Thomas does not tell his audience how he came to learn of this particular miracle—either by witnessing it himself or from a reputable source.⁵⁵ The key element, once again, is a sick child brought by a parent in search of a cure. Perhaps Thomas found such stories noteworthy because, like those pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession who were not only brought to the shrine against their will but who were even cured against their will, even brief accounts of miraculous cures concerning children who lacked both the agency and the piety to affect their own cures helped to establish William’s power as a saint.

The miracle in Book VII.xiv is one of the most compelling and emotional examples of disabled medieval children and their support systems. This story concerns a family from

⁵⁴ Ibid., 179, Book VII.ix.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Norwich, Bondo Hoc, his wife Gunnilda, and their eight-year-old daughter Agnes.⁵⁶ Agnes suffered from podagra, a kind of rheumatic arthritis, since birth.⁵⁷ Her body was totally useless: she was incapable of raising herself or turning herself from side to side; her neck was weak and her left cheek and shoulder were permanently stuck together. Eating was also a difficult task: “whenever she needed to eat, the food was crumbled on the ground or on a board, and, lying on the ground, she ate like a beast; and she could only eat what her tongue and teeth managed to reach.”⁵⁸ Because of her physical ailment, Agnes had to continually be “turned [in bed] [and] raised up and carried around by the hands of others.”⁵⁹ On the second Sunday in Lent, Agnes was brought to the tomb in her mother’s arms “and before all the people who had gathered in that church on that feast day she suddenly obtained the remedy of health by the intervening merits of the holy martyr.”⁶⁰ It is likely that as a monk, Thomas would have witnessed this miracle himself, given that it took place not only during Lent, but more importantly, on a Sunday. Buried deep in the *Life*, this story about Agnes and her family provides textual evidence that disabled people in the Middle Ages were not always abandoned by their families or poor beggars in the streets. This is in direct opposition to social scientists who have touted a “beggared view of history.”⁶¹ This moving example of Agnes in Thomas’s *Life* further supports an idea that may be perhaps intuitive to many modern readers: the idea that families in the past cared deeply for their children, even those with severe ailments.

⁵⁶ Per Rubin: “[Bondo Hoc] is a distinctly Scandinavian name: Bondi, turned in Latin into Bondo; see John Insley, *Scandinavian Personal Names in Norfolk: A Survey Based on Medieval Records and Place-Names* (Uppsala: Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy, 1994), pp. 98–107.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 243n14.

⁵⁷ *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “podagra.”

⁵⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 182, Book VII.xiv.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Gleeson, *Geographies of Disability*, 62–6.

The last two children who were brought to the tomb by their parents are both found in Book VII.xvi. They are at the end of a miracle story involving two other children who were brought to the tomb by their parents with technological assistance and whom I will discuss later in this chapter. Thomas does not have much to say about the other two boys, Herbert and Ralph, who were brought by their families without technological aid. Herbert was from Norwich and was brought by his father, Berengar, because he had been “blind and mute from his earliest youth.”⁶² Ralph and his father, Richard, were from Hadeston, and because the boy was “weak in all his limbs,” his family brought him to Norwich.⁶³ The same day that Herbert was brought to the tomb, he “returned home seeing and speaking” while Thomas simply states that Ralph “was cured thanks to the merits of Saint William.”⁶⁴ Despite the little information that Thomas gives his audience on these two boys, they are nonetheless further textual evidence that disabled people in the Middle Ages reaped the benefits of familial and spiritual support.

These examples of children brought to the tomb by their families without technological assistance share several similarities, both in the way that Thomas writes about them and in the facts of their journeys. Thomas tends to follow a pattern whereby the children are brought by one or both parents, the child is cured, they return home, and Thomas comments on the veracity of the tale. Though their ailments and social statuses varied, these children are also united by similarities in the care their families provided for them.

Some of these stories are exciting, some are moving, and some are mundane. Taken together, however, these accounts suggest that medieval parents took a particular kind of

⁶² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 183, Book VII.xvi.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 183, Book VII.xvi. Per Rubin, Hadeston is “a hamlet of Bunwell, a parish in Norfolk.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 244n19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 183, Book VII.xvi.

responsibility for the well-being of their children. I have argued that as part of their duties as caretakers for their children, parents were expected not only to seek out whatever cures might have been available, but that if those cures were to be granted at the tomb of a saint (in this case William of Norwich), the parents were obliged not only to carry their children to the shrine but also to show sufficient piety that the saint would offer his intervention. Understood in this way, the parents may also be seen, perhaps, as co-suplicants with their children. That is, children and other incapacitated people lacked the agency to make the pilgrimage on their own, but children are unique in the accounts in the *Life* (and distinguished even from those pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession, whom they often resemble) in their lack of spiritual agency, as well.

Pilgrims with Familial Support: Adults

I now wish to argue that children were not the only group of pilgrims who had the support of their families, for the accounts in the *Life* suggest that families also took care of their adult kin. Thomas records a number of examples of adult pilgrims who were brought to the tomb by parents, husbands, other family members, and even priests.⁶⁵ I find fourteen such examples of adult pilgrims who came to the tomb at Norwich with the support of their family. In this section, I will be asking to what degree these adult pilgrims were able to act autonomously, before and after their miraculous healing.

However, by autonomy I do not mean total independence in any modern sense, given the tight family and social structures of the English Middle Ages; rather, I am following Metzler's lead in her attempt to discover the extent to which impaired medieval persons

⁶⁵ I have not come across any examples of wives bringing their husbands to William's tomb, or wives going in place of their husbands, as Toche the Baker of Norwich did for his wife, Botilda, who was so ill that she could not leave her home. Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 111, Book IV.v.

may or may not have been able to act ‘autonomously’. If the desired autonomy of mobility in our society is achieved through technological aids, such as wheelchairs, elevators, or computerized voice-synthesizers, then surely such means were lacking in the pre-modern, pre-technical past. How then did disabled people in the Middle Ages achieve mobility, and to what degree was this dependent on others?⁶⁶

In this section, I aim to build on Metzler’s concept of autonomy to see whether it might also be applied to questions of agency broadly, and not only in terms of mobility. Even so, I believe the evidence in the *Life* is insufficient to go so far as to consider what changes to the family structure or living arrangements might have occurred after a miraculous cure took place and a person’s agency or autonomy was restored (if it had even been limited in the first place).

The first relevant story concerns Robert, an insane man from the parish of St. Michael, Conisford, in Norwich. He was brought to the tomb by his mother because he suffered from “bouts of insanity at unpredictable times.”⁶⁷ Apparently, Robert had been quiet and calm on the way to the tomb, because Thomas indicates that he immediately began to shake as soon as they arrived at the cathedral. Robert’s mother, who at this point was crying, coaxed and soothed him enough to where he agreed to be placed in front of the tomb. A large crowd began to assemble out of curiosity about the madman who was in their midst and to witness whatever miracle was about to occur. According to Thomas,

All of a sudden his whole body shook as if he were falling apart, and he was suffering to an incalculable degree. His eyes burned like fires; his cries were terrible. His own mouth made many different sounds; forgetful of being human, he twisted and tore off his clothes. He was not ashamed of showing his private parts; he performed many deeds of strength, while being unable to control himself. The crowd gathered round him, seized with fear; all were stupefied; some wept and many prayed for the recovery of the patient.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Metzler, “Have Crutch, Will Travel,” 94–5.

⁶⁷ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 149, Book VI.v. The original Latin refers to Robert as *uiro*, which tells the reader that he was of age and therefore not a boy (*puero*).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Given the story's inclusion in the *Life*, Robert was indeed cured; Thomas states that "we believe that the merits of the holy martyr intervened and divine mercy looked upon him and expelled the insane spirit from the raving man, giving health thereafter."⁶⁹ Robert and his mother are further examples of familial support of disabled people. Since Thomas does not say whether Robert had a wife and family of his own, which may be unlikely given his ailment, it is probable that even though he was an adult, he was unmarried and lived with his mother, who took care of him during his bouts of insanity. It appears that even though he was an adult, Robert's insanity precluded him from living autonomously.

One of the most striking stories of an adult who depended on her family for help in reaching William's tomb is somewhat anomalous in that it concerns someone who otherwise seems to have lived autonomously and was highly involved in her own medical and spiritual treatment. Matilda was a young woman (*uirgo*) from Swafeld, a village in Norfolk, who suffered from severe pain and swelling in her right breast. "To make things worse," Thomas writes, "a great deal of bloody matter flowed constantly from nine apertures in the breast."⁷⁰ She sought relief from secular medicine and doctors, apparently on her own, but they were no help.⁷¹ In turn, she finally turned to "divine medicine" by praying at home to St. William, offering him a large piece of wax, and applying it to the painful breast.⁷² Immediately the pain began to lessen and the bloody matter that was oozing out of the openings dried up. Matilda's father, Rathe, and her unnamed mother were both ecstatic at this recent turn of

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 167, Book VI.xvii.

⁷¹ Per Rubin, this sentiment of Matilda visiting doctors "who profited her not all" echoes I Cor. 13:3: "And if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 241n36.

⁷² Ibid., 168, Book VI.xvii.

events and brought her to the tomb in Norwich so that she could offer the wax that had begun to heal her to William. Not only did she offer the candle, but she also placed her bare breast on the tomb, which caused it to be healed completely.

Here we have another example of an adult—this time a woman—who was brought to the tomb by family, in this case, by her parents. Though her parents played a significant role in helping an ailing daughter make a difficult journey of nearly twenty miles, they do not appear to have been a factor in her healing, medical or miraculous. Matilda’s case stands out because she acted on her own by going to doctors and then placing the wax on her breast and vowing it to St. William. (The cases of Goda and Gilliva, which I will discuss later in this chapter, also involve women who were aided by their families but who seem to have taken primary responsibility for their treatments.) Unlike the children I discussed earlier in this chapter, who relied on their parents for both practical and spiritual support, Matilda does not appear to have depended on the piety of her parents in seeking William’s intervention. Matilda’s autonomy distinguishes her, moreover, from a number of adult pilgrims brought to the tomb by their kin. As we have seen in the case of Robert, and will see in a number of other cases, many of these other adult pilgrims were not able to act autonomously until after they had been cured at the tomb.

The last example of an adult pilgrim who was brought to Norwich by his parents occurs in Book VII.iii. Another man named Robert suffered from the insanity “of a troubled mind” and pain in his limbs. Thomas gives an unusual level of detail about this man. For example, Robert had a job outside of the home because Thomas states that he was a clerk and

that he was the son of William de Crachesford.⁷³ Despite this apparent autonomy, Robert's madness seems to have necessitated intervention by his parents, who brought him to the tomb. Although he was awake throughout the night, he did not seem to suffer from any bouts of madness.⁷⁴ At dawn, he fell asleep for several hours and when he awoke, he reported that the "madness of his head and the pain in his limbs" had gone away.⁷⁵ In this example, even though the afflicted pilgrim had a career and identity outside the home and separate from his family, it was they who took the initiative to bring him to the tomb. Put differently, there were limitations to Robert's autonomy such that he was treated as a child even though he was in fact an adult. This apparent shift in his status resonates with my comments earlier in this chapter where I argued that children and pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession were aligned in their lack of agency. I would now add that limitations to Robert's autonomy and agency may be related to his disability in that he is able to make the journey only with the support of his family and at their behest.

Other adult pilgrims were brought to the tomb by various people in various ways. Some were led to the tomb, some were carried, some were brought in shackles, one came with her husband and another person propping her up on either side, and one even came with his priest. For instance, yet another pilgrim named Robert was led to the tomb by his family. This man, the son of "Harvey the former baker ... was seized for more than four months by a most serious illness" and was thought by everyone, including the doctors, to be on the brink

⁷³ Ibid., 175, Book VII.iii. Per Rubin: "A family of this name [Crachesford] lived in Tuttington in the Hundred of South Erpingham in the early thirteenth century; see Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk VI* (London: William Miller, 1807), p. 349." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 243n5.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 175, Book VII.iii.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

of death.⁷⁶ He was so sick that he had no appetite, which in turn caused him to be so weak that he could “hardly murmur even the short Lord’s Prayer.”⁷⁷ His family led him to the tomb and as soon as he touched the stone he “rejoiced in being able to run through the whole psalter [and] gave thanks to omnipotent God and to Saint William [and] returned [home] trusting in his own steps.”⁷⁸

It is striking that Thomas judges the eradication of impairment (and thus the alleviation of disability) in terms of this man’s ability to say his prayers. Even so, Thomas repeats the trope that Robert regained his appetite and was returned “to full health in a short period of time.”⁷⁹ The recovery of his mobility suggests that, through the help of his family as well as the miraculous healing at the tomb, Robert regained his autonomy. Nevertheless, like Matilda, Robert played a key role in his own treatment by recognizing on his own that he was “in straits” and therefore “took refuge in divine mercy.”⁸⁰

Another pilgrim, this time from Hastedune,⁸¹ was led to the tomb by someone other than her husband.⁸² Ravenilda is named only in relation to her husband William; Thomas therefore may be signaling that it was not William who led her to the tomb.⁸³ Her ailment, however, required that she be led to the tomb by someone: she had been losing her eyesight gradually (*paulatim*) and she was totally blind by the time she went to the tomb. Even though

⁷⁶ Ibid., 127, Book V.vi.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 128, Book V.vi.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 127, Book V.vi.

⁸¹ Per Rubin, “[Hastedune] may be the village of Hasketon in Suffolk.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 235n20. A Google search for “Hastedune” brings up electronic versions of the *Life* and little else. A Google search for “Hastedon Suffolk” brings up an alternative search term, that of “Hasketon Suffolk.”

⁸² The original Latin reads “alieno ueniens ducatu ad sepulchrum sancti Willelmi,” which translates to English as “coming to the tomb of Saint William led by another.” Jessopp and James, *Life*, 182, Book IV.xi.

⁸³ If he had been, the Latin would have read something like “ueniens ducatu uiri sui ad sepulchrum sancti Willelmi.”

her husband did not lead her to the tomb, she had enough of a support system that someone else could take the time to lead her the forty-five or so miles from southern Suffolk to Norwich.

Book VI.vi contains a lengthy and fantastical miracle story concerning a woman named Sieldeware who came from Belaugh, on the River Bure. “Troubled by a malign spirit,” Sieldeware was brought to the tomb by her relatives. Thomas explains that

when she arrived at the entrance of the church, she resisted her escorts there and could hardly be drawn inside, even by four of the strongest men. She demonstrated amazing strength and tried to escape from the hands of those who were holding her. She cried out in a loud voice: “What do you want to do with me? Where are you dragging me? I will not go there, there!”⁸⁴ Then they gathered their strength and seized her most forcefully; removing the veil from her head, they bound her arms with her veil and her feet with her belt. Bound in this way, she was carried to the tomb of the holy martyr, crying and wailing; she was placed nearby with the consent of the guardian monk.⁸⁵

Thomas then states that while she was near the tomb, she was so calm and quiet that her family thought she had been cured. They thus had her moved to a separate room so that “the people who gather[ed] at the tomb with offerings [were not] disturbed by her presence.”⁸⁶

Though Thomas hints that Sieldeware had the potential to cause a disruption because of her impairment, he attempts to downplay this aspect of her story, just as her family had her moved to another room so as to downplay her disability at the tomb.

Once she had been moved, however, she began to knock and thrash about again. Thomas writes that “from this [scenario] it is possible to deduce that he [the evil spirit] was really afraid of the blessed martyr” and therefore did not cause Sieldeware to lash out while

⁸⁴ The original Latin reads “*Illuc illuc nullatenus ibo.*” Jessopp and James translate this as “I won’t, I won’t go *there!*” Jessopp and James, *Life*, 226, Book VI.vi. In her translation, Rubin suggests that “this repetition of *illuc* may be a scribal error or may be intended to suggest the tenor of the insane woman’s speech.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 239n6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 150, Book VI.vi.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

near the tomb.⁸⁷ Having witnessed this spectacle, Thomas takes credit for having her moved back to the tomb, where she was once again calm. She eventually fell asleep and “lay continuously asleep for two half-days and one night.”⁸⁸ When she awoke, she ate and drank and was fully healed. Sieldeware’s situation is another example of a medieval disabled person who lived with her family and was not abandoned by them. Rather, they brought her to William’s tomb in hopes that she would be cured, and, according to Thomas, their prayers were answered. In this way, Sieldeware is aligned less with Matilda (who took initiative in her own care) and more with Robert in Book VI.v (who was also mad and was also brought to the tomb by his family). In these instances of pilgrims who lack autonomy on account of madness or demonic possession, Thomas signals, it was the family’s receptiveness, and not the agency or piety of the putative supplicant, which brings about the eventual healing.

There are also a number of pilgrims who Thomas specifically states were carried in the arms of family members. In III.vii, Thomas describes the case of Claricia, the wife of Geoffrey of March, who had been suffering for quite a long time with pain in her kidneys and knees.⁸⁹ In Thomas’s account, Claricia had sought the aid of doctors to no avail, and her visit to William’s shrine was a last resort. Thomas’s phrasing in this story (“Claricia . . . ad beatissimi martiris uenit sepulcrum”) suggests that Claricia (like the earlier example of Matilda) had autonomous agency in her treatment, even though he later adds that she was

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 151, Book VI.vi. Per Rubin, “two half-days and one night” is the equivalent of twenty-four hours over two days. Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 239n8.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 86, Book III.vii. Per Rubin: “A Geoffrey of March occurs in the resolution of a dispute over some land and a mill, settled at Westminster on 15 June 1203; see *Feet of Fines for the County of Norfolk for the Reign of King John, 1201–1214*, ed. Barbara Dodwell, Pipe Roll Society Publications 70, new ser. 32 (London: Pipe Roll Society, 1958), no. 31, p. 15.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 230n25. Also, Thomas mentions that Claricia’s uncles were the Geraldine brothers: “Warin and Henry FitzGerald were Chamberlains to Henry II between 1153 and 1170. See *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d’Angleterre et duc de Normandie*, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1909), pp. 382, 468–9.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 230n26.

carried to the tomb “in the arms of those who had led her” (“manibus se ducentium”).⁹⁰ Even as he provides clues about medieval travel and family, Thomas emphasizes that it was Claricia’s faith which led her there—more so than her family. Such statements do not diminish the familial support system which in fact brought her to the tomb. It is striking that Thomas undercuts the contributions of the people who cared enough about her to carry her from her home in Norfolk to the tomb. And like so many other pilgrims before her, she was healed by Saint William to such an extent that she was able to go home “healthy and strong, needing support from no one.”⁹¹ Moreover, although she was carried to the tomb by her family, Claricia’s agency is never in question.

In yet another instance of a woman carried to the tomb by others at her own request, Thomas offers the case of Ida, the wife of Eustace the Moneyer of Norwich, who had suffered for three years from podagra.⁹² It began in her knees and then eventually spread throughout her limbs and shoulders. Thinking she was close to death, she had a priest come to her home and administer the last rites. But the next morning she “was reminded of the holy martyr William, and as best she could she had herself taken to his tomb.”⁹³ Ida’s miraculous cure follows the familiar trope of her being placed near the tomb, thrashing about, offering a candle, and kissing the tomb. She was cured and did not require the assistance of those who had carried her there when she left the tomb. Like Claricia in the previous story, Ida played a key role in her own treatment and her autonomy was never in doubt. Further, by recording the name of the afflicted woman’s husband and his occupation, as well as the name of the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 86, Book III.vii. For the Latin, see Jessopp and James, *Life*, 132, Book III.vii.

⁹¹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 86, Book III.vii.

⁹² Eustace is mentioned in another miracle, one that concerns his unnamed daughter who had been suffering from a bout of insanity, in Book IV.xiii. In addition, a coin that had been struck by Eustace during King Stephen’s reign has survived and is currently held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, CM. 1148-2001 (see *Figure 1.2*).

⁹³ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 101, Book III.xxii.

woman herself, Thomas suggests that Eustace and Ida may have been important and well-known members of the Norwich community. Therefore, it would not be surprising if Ida had a support system made up of family, friends, and even neighbors who were willing and able to carry her to William's tomb in hopes of a cure. Because Ida made the arrangements for her to be carried herself, and then was able to return home unassisted, she never had to surrender her autonomy.

The last pilgrim in my analysis who was carried to the tomb by kin is found in Book V.xxii. Goda was the wife of Copmann of Norwich, "who was called 'Of the Spring,'" and she had been suffering for quite a few days from pain in her kidneys which descended to her knees.⁹⁴ Eventually her knees grew to the size of pots and she was in such pain that she could not walk or sleep. What is more, her left eye began to swell until it "exceeded the size of an egg."⁹⁵ Like Ida and others before her, Goda "had herself brought to Saint William, whom she had always loved with a deep devotion."⁹⁶ Goda then prayed at the tomb, offered a candle to William, and not only touched the tomb with her painful bare knees, but she also wiped her swollen eye with the cloth that covered it. She was immediately cured by "celestial medicine" and returned home in a joyful mood—presumably of her own accord, since Thomas does not subsequently mention the people who had brought her to the tomb.⁹⁷ I therefore believe that Goda's autonomy is of a similar degree to that of Ida and Matilda, and never in question.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 143, Book V.xxii. The Latin for "Of the Spring" is "de fonte." Jessopp and James, *Life*, 216, Book V.xxii. I am not quite sure what Thomas means when he refers to Copmann as being "Of the Spring."

⁹⁵ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 143, Book V.xxii.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Other pilgrims Thomas describes in the *Life* appear to have needed some assistance getting to the tomb, but not so much that they would need to be carried. For instance, Ada, a woman from Norwich, had been suffering from an unspecified illness for a year. She came to William's tomb "supported by the arms of her husband Siwate on one side, and by another on the other [side]."⁹⁸ Thomas continues: "And it happened after the prayer that followed her offering that she who had come sad and dependent on the help of others returned in joy, confident in her own powers, already cured by celestial medicine."⁹⁹ Thus, Ada's agency was restored to her. These stories suggest, moreover, that a range of physical impairments was met with a range of responses from family and friends that afforded people who were suffering to a degree of autonomy.

In Book VI.vii, Thomas describes an unnamed man from Lothingland who suffered from epilepsy and who came to the tomb "with the priest of [his] village."¹⁰⁰ Thomas writes that "he was so disturbed by the illness that not a single day passed on which he did not feel its pain," which could be a key reason why he was accompanied on his journey by someone else.¹⁰¹ Thomas does not explain why this man was accompanied by his priest rather than by family or friends; I believe this piece of information signals that while this particular pilgrim (and presumably others) may not have had a support structure within the home, he most certainly experienced the benefits of support that could be offered by a member of the clergy. Of the eighty miracles concerning physical impairment in the *Life*, this one is unique in that a

⁹⁸ Ibid., 119, Book IV.xi.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 151, Book VI.vii. Per Rubin: "At the time, [Lothingland was] an island on the Broads, near Mutford." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 239n10.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 151, Book VI.vii.

member of the clergy accompanied an impaired layperson on the pilgrimage to William's tomb.

The last group of pilgrims I will analyze in this section are those who were bound in shackles when they were brought to William's tomb. Each of these three pilgrims suffered from some kind of malignant spirit, evil demon, or insanity to such a degree that those who brought them obviously felt that it was necessary to restrain them.¹⁰² The first is a peasant owned by Simon of Hempstead, who had been tormented by a devil for many days ("per dies multos a demonio uexatum") and who was brought to the tomb "bound hand and foot."¹⁰³ Even though Thomas does not state who brought the peasant to the tomb, he nevertheless signals that the peasant could not have brought himself in his state of bondage. Since either Simon, acting in his capacity as the peasant's lord, or the family, acting as his caretaker, made the decision to bring him to the tomb, this man's pilgrimage also took place within a social or familial context. Further, the healing itself took place within a social context because it was brought about not only by their wish that he be cured but also by the act of being carried by other people to the tomb. Like many pilgrims suffering from madness and demonic possession, the peasant of Simon of Hempstead lacked agency in seeking his cure and instead was at the mercy of those who may have been responsible for him in other aspects of his life, as well.

¹⁰² For a discussion on women and compulsory pilgrimage (where the women were often bound in shackles), see Craig, *Wandering Women and Holy Matrons*, chapter 5, pp. 175–219.

¹⁰³ For this story, I refer to the translation in Jessopp and James. "Rusticum quendam" is in the accusative case, making this "certain peasant" a direct object of Simon de Hempstead ("Simonis de Hemestuode"). On page 155 of her transcription of the *Life* (<http://yvc.history.qmul.ac.uk/passio.html>), Rubin also writes "rusticum quendam," yet in her translation she refers to the *peasant* as Simon de Hempstead. Her transcription, however, confirms that the translation by Jessopp and James is indeed correct. Jessopp and James, *Life*, 203, Book V.xii. (Either that, or he was the sanest madman who ever lived, recognizing his own insanity, tying himself up, and somehow making the journey on his own—a true feat of autonomy!)

In the miracle story immediately following that of the peasant of Simon of Hempstead, Thomas tells of an unnamed man who was healed at William's tomb during Pentecost. He was the son of Richard of Needham and his wife Silverun. Without warning he was possessed by a devil one day and behaved so erratically that "seven men could hardly restrain him in chains."¹⁰⁴ He remained this way for six days—tied up in chains, and not eating or sleeping. Thomas continues:

Bound in this way, he was finally led to the oft-mentioned tomb by his parents, and as they approached suddenly he cried out in a horrible voice and said: "What do you want of me? Where are you leading me? I won't go there! I won't go there!" When they led him there forcibly, he broke his chains not with his own, but with the effort of the malign spirit and, rising up, he threw his mother to the ground and grabbed her by the throat with his teeth. And he would have caused her death had the crowd running to them not snatched and freed her. He then hissed through his teeth and, gazing at those standing around with savage eyes, abused those he could in a miserable fashion.¹⁰⁵

He was tied up once again, this time with his hands bound to his feet, and placed "willy-nilly ... at the side of the tomb."¹⁰⁶ Like so many pilgrims who came before him, this man was not cured until he physically touched the tomb, at which time he immediately calmed down and became his old self. He had calmed down enough that his chains were unbound, he fell asleep, and upon waking up ate a hearty meal. He "returned home with all speed with his parents and friends, sane and in good health."¹⁰⁷ While Thomas does not specify the age or occupation (if any) of this unnamed man, he was young enough to have both of his parents still living. Moreover, it is more than likely that he was still living at home when he was possessed by the demon; since no wife or children are mentioned, it is doubtful that he was married. Either way, he had his parents (and friends, as Thomas mentions at the end of the

¹⁰⁴ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 134, Book V.xiii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

account) as a support system who had him brought to the tomb in order to be cured. Like the other pilgrims who suffered from mental illness, this man lacked both autonomy and agency: his parents made the decision that he would seek treatment at the tomb and brought him there in chains. Thomas clearly shows that he was taken against his will. His willful resistance suggests that while he did not perceive himself to be impaired or disabled, his family recognized his condition and sought a miraculous cure for his disability. In this way, Richard of Needham and Silverun point to the familial context in which their son's disability was identified and cured.

The last pilgrim who was brought to the tomb bound in chains is found in Book VI.iv. A fisherman from Norwich, Everard was so “disturbed by an unclean spirit” that his feet were bound in shackles and his arms tied behind his back. He was brought in this condition to the tomb “by the hands of a number of people.”¹⁰⁸ After he had been at the tomb for a while, Everard managed to slip out of his restraints and he attacked anyone he could with his nails and teeth, much like the man in the previous story. He was eventually subdued, tied up again, and placed nearer the tomb. He incessantly babbled “nothing but nonsense and blasphemies” throughout the night.¹⁰⁹ Finally, Everard fell asleep around dawn, at which time he was cured “by the merits of Saint William.”¹¹⁰ Thomas does not state specifically who had brought Everard to the tomb bound hand and foot; he makes no mention of Everard's family at all. But, again, he obviously had some kind of support system, perhaps made up of fellow fishermen, who were concerned either about his well-being or the peace of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 148, Book VI.iv. The Latin reads: “Qvadam itidem die quidam Ebrardus quem Norwicenses piscatorium dicunt, immundo uexatus spiritu, minibus post tergum ligatis, pedibusque compede constrictum [sic] ferrea, ad sepulchrum sancti martiris multorum manibus adducitur.” Jessopp and James, *Life*, 223–4, Book VI.iv.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 148, Book VI.iv.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

their social community and took him to William's tomb. Once more, Thomas presents a pilgrim lacking both agency and autonomy and so the decision to go to William's tomb for a cure fell upon his caretakers, whether friends or family.

In this section I have been asking whether grown-up children who might not have been fully autonomous were treated as adults or more like the children in the *Life*. On the one hand, it appears that the adult pilgrims who suffered from mental illness were indeed treated as children with no autonomy prior to being healed at the tomb. Many of them were brought against their will, and often bound in chains. Once healed, however, they recovered their autonomy and were at least able to walk home without assistance or restraints. On the other hand, it appears that those adult pilgrims who were not suffering from mental illness and were therefore able to take charge of their own healing and treatment were not viewed as children. Rather, they seem to have been treated as equals among their able-bodied counterparts. By considering accounts in the *Life* of pilgrims who were brought to the tomb by their families and other caretakers, I have found that both disability and healing were understood within the social and familial contexts of medieval Norwich. Indeed, for people suffering from both mental and physical impairments, kin and other support systems proved to be life-saving.

Pilgrims Brought to the Tomb with Technological Aid

There is ample textual and visual evidence from the Middle Ages to suggest that people used a variety of technologies for transportation, including ships, wheeled litters, handbarrows, and animals.¹¹¹ The pilgrims who visited William's shrine in Norwich in the

¹¹¹ For further discussion on medieval mobility and transportation, see Metzler, "Have Crutch, Will Travel," 91–117; Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*, chapter 4, especially pp. 142–7; *Trade, Travel, and*

last half of the twelfth century made use of all of these devices. And yet, perhaps surprisingly, in my analysis I came across only six (or seven and a half percent) pilgrims who came to the tomb with others *and* with technological aid. Interestingly, like the category of pilgrims who came to the tomb by themselves with and without technological aid (discussed above, pp 108–15), Book IV of the *Life* does not contain any mention of pilgrims who came to the tomb with others and with technological aid. All of the examples come from Book III (one instance), Book V (one instance), Book VI (two instances), and Book VII (two instances).

These pilgrims, who hailed mostly from Norfolk but who also came from Suffolk and Lincoln, came to William's tomb in a variety of ways: by ship, by horse, led by a string, in a handbarrow, and in wheeled litters. In recording these various forms of technology, Thomas signals that the pilgrims were recognizably disabled upon their arrival at the tomb in Norwich. Though he never explicitly says so, he quite reasonably seems to assume that a family would not bother, for instance, to carry someone in a handbarrow if that person could walk unassisted, as both people and handbarrows are heavy. This is an implicit form of evidence that gives credence to the subsequent miracle, and it echoes the other instances throughout the *Life* in which Thomas sought out corroboration from townsfolk or even visitors who could vouch for the prior condition of the pilgrim. Moreover, it seems to me that supplicants likely would not have accepted the use of such devices if they could make the journey unassisted; though not necessarily an act of piety, these medieval pilgrims would no doubt have known that William was watching them and thus feared his retribution if he were to detect any insincerity on their part. And, as I noted at the start of the present chapter in my

Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia, ed. John Block Friedman and Kristen Mossler Figg (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000).

discussion of Matilda from Langham, one important aspect of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages (as often remains the case today) was to walk at the start and end of the journey as an outward sign of one's piety. If possible, I noted, pilgrims reaching their destination would leave their horse in order to finish the journey on foot. As we will see, however, this characteristic display of penance is frequently missing in Thomas's accounts in the *Life*, which again suggests that the pilgrims who visited William's shrine did not do so as an act of penance.

The first such pilgrim who was brought by her family with the use of a technological aid is the unnamed wife of Walter Flotberd, who lived "in the royal village called Ormesby."¹¹² She was on the brink of death for a year, suffering from heart trouble and pain in her limbs, when she was finally visited by Saint William in a vision and told to come to Norwich. This woman is the only pilgrim in my analysis who Thomas mentions having traveled by boat ("Ab ipso autem sacro martire Willelmo per uisum admonita se nauigio Norwicum asportari fecit").¹¹³ She obviously did not travel alone, because once she arrived in Norwich she was "carried in the arms of her relatives to the tomb of the oft-mentioned holy martyr."¹¹⁴

Her cure by Saint William was a two-part process: when she first arrived at the tomb she prayed, offered a candle, and fell asleep. Upon waking, she felt better. However, she was

¹¹² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 98, Book III.xviii. Per Rubin, this town is a "parish in Norfolk: Ormesby St Margaret with Scratby." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 232n44.

¹¹³ Even though Thomas does not say, it is likely that she traveled south on land from Ormesby to the River Yare at Yarmouth from where she would have sailed east along the river and eventually arrived in Norwich. Also, according to Rubin, Yarmouth was "the seaport for Norwich, itself a river port. Norwich Cathedral became closely linked to the town after Bishop [Herbert] Losinga [who had founded the cathedral in 1096] built the church of St Nicholas and installed monks there to provide pastoral care; see *The First Register of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, ed. H. W. Saunders (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1939), fol. 3d33." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 232n45. For the original Latin, see Jessopp and James, *Life*, 151, Book III.xviii.

¹¹⁴ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 98, Book III.xviii.

not yet completely cured. She and her relatives subsequently retired to the guest house or inn (“postea uero ductu suorum [ad] hospicium recessit”). Three days later she came to the tomb for a second time, but this time she offered a larger candle that matched the “measure of the tomb.”¹¹⁵ It was at this point that she “felt the full cure of her long-standing illness” and “went away walking alone, confident in her own strength” and returned home.¹¹⁶ Aside from what Thomas records in this account, we do not know any other details about Walter Flotberd and his wife. They were apparently well enough off that they either owned a boat or she was able to hire one in order to get to Norwich. Perhaps they were able to catch a ride on a merchant vessel. What is clear is that she arranged for the transportation by boat and that they also had family that were available to accompany her on her riparian journey. Moreover, while it is quite common to read of pilgrims (like Margery Kempe) traveling by boat to such far-off locations as Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela, this is the first account I have encountered in which a pilgrim traveled to the shrine of a local or regional saint by boat.¹¹⁷ In this case, travel by boat appears to have been the most practical way to make the journey. However, the unnamed wife of Walter Flotberd did not walk the final leg of the pilgrimage unassisted, but rather had to be carried by her family the rest of the distance to the tomb, further evidence of her disability, which also suggests that her pilgrimage was not an act of piety.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ In addition to Book III.xviii being the only instance in the *Life* where a pilgrim traveled by boat to visit William’s shrine, the next few miracle stories are also unique: in Book III.xix William helped some Yarmouth sailors who were in the middle of a terrible storm at sea; in Book III.xx, he cured the sick pig of a woman who made her livelihood raising and selling them; and in Book III.xxi he healed the oxen of Denis, the chamberlain of the monks of Norwich. Denis is also mentioned in Book III.xii, where Thomas tells of the vision and subsequent death of Richard of Lynn, a Norwich monk. Another miracle concerning the cure of a falcon can be found in Book VI.xxi.

Another method of transportation used by pilgrims in the *Life* is travel on horseback. In Book V.xv, for example, Thomas writes of an unnamed woman from the village of Flordon who had gone through such a painful childbirth that she was weak, bent, and contracted. For several days after giving birth, she could neither feed herself nor walk on her own. She was eventually put on a horse (also unnamed) by her husband and several others. Although Thomas does not specify how this woman was positioned on the horse, given her bent and contracted state, and specifically her lack of control over her hands and legs, it seems implausible that she would have been riding in the traditional manner. Perhaps she rode the horse like Matilda in Book VI.xii, who was “carried on a horse—crosswise—like a full sack.”¹¹⁸

In this way, the horse is clearly functioning as a form of technology because this woman was transported to the tomb but she was not carried manually by her family. Upon their arrival in Norwich, her husband and family members took her to the tomb, where she prayed with her family. After three hours, she began to feel the effects of William’s miraculous intervention, and she “who had come sad and in need of the support of others, returned home happy with her own steps, in the company of her relatives.”¹¹⁹ This woman and her family—all unnamed—are another example not only of the familial support systems that existed in the Middle Ages, but also of the kinds of technology used in pilgrimage. Even something as ordinary as a horse should thus be seen as a mode of transportation and indeed as a sort of technology that had the potential to allow a pilgrim and her family make a journey that they might not otherwise be able to make. Again, it appears that Thomas mentions the relevant form of technology to support his case that the supplicant had arrived

¹¹⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 160, Book VI.xii.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 136, Book V.xv.

in a disabled state and that the pilgrim was subsequently cured through William's intervention.

Book VI includes two accounts of pilgrims who were brought to the tomb by family members with the aid of technology. In Book VI.viii, Thomas writes of Gilliva, a woman from King's Lynn whose father was "Burcard the Carpenter."¹²⁰ Three years prior she had been the victim of an unspecified accident which left her blind. In addition, her eyes hurt so much that they were continuously closed "as if stuck together with glue."¹²¹ After suffering like this for those three years, like Matilda, Goda, and other women who were responsible for their own cures and treatments, Gilliva finally decided that visiting William's tomb in Norwich would be her best course of action. The technology in question here is remarkably simple: her young nephew guided her, having tied a cord around her ("Iuuenis nepos illius tradito funiculo preuius ducatum prebuit"). It was with the aid of this simple technology and a family member that she arrived at Norwich. Upon her arrival at the tomb, Gilliva prayed to the saint. Thomas then launches into a lengthy account of her cure, wherein she rolled on the ground in anguish and blood spurted out of her eyes. Delighted at being able to see again, the woman said,

"Now to you, highest God, maker and repairer of all things, and to you, William, most holy martyr of God, I pay due praises and thanks, for after so much suffering I am now at rest, and after three years of continuous blindness I have sight."

Having said this, and wiping the blood from her eyes and walking on her own feet, she came closer to the tomb of the holy martyr, prayed and offered a candle, which was brought to her; and, turning to the people, she announced that she had received her eyesight. The people present were amazed, sorrow turned into joy, and with a single cry of all they extolled the glorious and manifest power of the blessed martyr William to the praise of God.¹²²

¹²⁰ Ibid., 151, Book VI.viii.

¹²¹ Ibid., 152, Book VI.viii.

¹²² Ibid., 153, Book VI.viii.

Once again, the public plays a central role in confirming that the miracle took place, thus discharging the supplicant of her status as a disabled person. But the crowd is not solely responsible for acknowledging Gilliva's cure and discharging her disability; in addition to her own piety, she also depended on her familial network and the use of technology to get to William's tomb and secure his intervention. If it were not for her young nephew who safely guided her from King's Lynn to Norwich, Gilliva would not have experienced this miraculous healing. She is the only pilgrim in my analysis who is accompanied only by a younger relative. Moreover, this story points to a simple technology that enabled this nephew to assist his blind aunt in making the pilgrimage to William's tomb at Norwich.

In Book VI.xiii Thomas recounts the story of a ten-year-old boy who, having been sick for a long time, had become so weak that his "muscles withered and contracted, his spine was curved and he grew hunchbacked. Thus, from being straight, the little boy became bent, and when he set out to walk his stomach stuck to his knees, and he put his palms on his knees or on the ground, and he had one or the other as support."¹²³ This unnamed boy lived in the Suffolk village of Flordon with his father, Godric, and his mother, also unnamed, who Thomas notes was the niece of Robert of Wales.¹²⁴ The parents took their son to doctors who were no help, and, in a subtle jab, Thomas says that they "belatedly ... pinned their hopes on the glorious martyr of God, William."¹²⁵ Godric put his son in a handcart (*manuali uehiculo*) and brought him the nine or so miles from Flordon to Norwich, where he "broke down in

¹²³ Ibid., 162, Book VI.xiii.

¹²⁴ Note that Robert is from Wales, as Thomas may have been. According to Rubin, "the name Thomas of Monmouth (*Thomas Monemutensis*) suggests that he came from Monmouth in South Wales, perhaps becoming a member of the local Benedictine monastery." "Introduction," in *Life*, xi. Also see *Life*, xxxviii, for selections from Augustus Jessopp's letters to M. R. James about the unlikelihood that Thomas was from Monmouth.

¹²⁵ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 162, Book VI.xiii.

tears and bargained for the joys of health for his son.”¹²⁶ Upon arriving at the tomb, the boy was healed and he and his father spent three days in Norwich before returning home. They had been home for a few days when the boy was once again racked with the pain that had previously caused him and his parents such grief.

Godric carried his ailing son to the tomb for a second time (“Super quo consultis pater amicis, ad piissimum martirem filium refert imbecillem”).¹²⁷ Though Thomas does not mention whether the handcart or any other technology was used on this trip, it seems likely, given that the boy’s condition had returned as if he had never been healed. When the boy was healed again almost immediately (unlike the first time), Godric “allowed his son to stay [at the tomb] for many days, so that he could be a servant to the boy martyr with his youthful services.”¹²⁸ The father had apparently “deduced from what had happened earlier that the holy martyr wanted the continuing presence of the boy to be proof of his great power in healing the boy.”¹²⁹ Godric is an example of a parent taking his ill and disabled child to William’s tomb in Norwich with the help of technology. In this case concerning a child who lacked agency and was carried by his family, Thomas once again records the use of technology not merely as an incidental detail, but rather to corroborate the severity of the boy’s impairment.

The last two cases of pilgrims being brought to the tomb by their family members with the aid of technology both occur in Book VII.xvi. Both were children who, physically deformed, had been brought by their fathers to William’s tomb with the expectation of a cure. The girl, Hugelina, lived in the Rocklands, a cluster of villages in Norfolk, and because

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Jessopp and James, *Life*, 245, Book VI.xii.

¹²⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 162, Book VI.xiii.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 162–3, Book VI.xiii.

her “feet were stuck to her buttocks due to a defect of nature,” she was brought “by her father in a wheeled vehicle—called a *civeria*—to the tomb of the holy martyr.”¹³⁰ As Rubin explains, “*civeria*” is from the French word *civière* and is often used in reference to a “handbarrow, litter or stretcher,” adding that “travelling such a distance is remarkable, even in a fine vehicle such as this.”¹³¹ On that same day, a boy named Baldwin was carried in a litter from the province of Lincoln by his father because the “sinews from [his] knees down to the calves and feet had dried out, [so he] was denied the power of movement.”¹³² Thomas states that “both, indeed, were carried to the tomb of the holy martyr at the same time and were restored to full health by the intercession of his merits at the same time, too.”¹³³ Both children and their fathers are examples of pilgrims who not only had family that supported and took care of them, but also had access to and use of more advanced technological transportation than, say, a horse or a cord.

These six examples demonstrate that, as part of medical pilgrimage, people in the Middle Ages used a variety of technologies, from the very simple to the slightly more elaborate. Such devices as cords, horses, litters, wheeled carts, and boats are linked in their ability to transport pilgrims from their homes to a tomb where they could seek divine intervention in search of a cure. In the accounts in the *Life* concerning technological aids, pilgrims never attempt to walk the final portion of their journey unassisted, as was a common practice that displayed a supplicant’s piety. I have thus proposed that Thomas mentions the use of technology as a way of documenting that a pilgrim was genuinely impaired before receiving a miraculous cure. Indeed, while many of the pilgrims I have considered in this

¹³⁰ Ibid., 182, Book VII.xvi.

¹³¹ Ibid., *Life*, 243n18. Per Google maps, the Rocklands are about twenty miles southwest of Norwich.

¹³² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 182, Book VII.xvi.

¹³³ Ibid.

chapter were accompanied or even carried by family and friends, it appears that many pilgrims may have required assistance beyond the physical limits of their kin. In such cases, even the simplest technologies could enable a pilgrimage.

Pilgrims and Spiritual Support

All of the pilgrims I have discussed so far in Chapter 3 have had some kind of familial or technological support, and in some cases, they have had both. The last category of pilgrim that I will examine in this chapter concerns a pilgrim who had spiritual support in place of kin or earthly technology. In my analysis of these eighty miracles, I have identified only one pilgrim that fits this description, Geoffrey of Canterbury. This account stands out from the rest not only because it is the last miracle story in the *Life* but also because Geoffrey had the spiritual support of two prominent and famous English saints. While the placement of this miracle at the end of Book VII is an obvious attempt on Thomas's part to end the collection on a high note in order to secure William's status as an important saint, this tale nevertheless includes (and even builds on) many of the tropes we have seen in the other accounts of medical pilgrimage.

Thomas begins this miracle story with a reference to John 14:2 by writing "in the realm of the highest city there are many and varied mansions," and then stating that he believes that that the "colleagues in pious merits [that is, the saints]" are not only "equally connected by a single harmony of charity" but that they "also equally work together in many miracles; and sometimes it happens that they are participants in a single miracle, even if they are not equal in merits."¹³⁴ In other words, Thomas is saying that all the saints have the same priorities and goals in their roles as intermediaries between earth and heaven, and that

¹³⁴ Ibid., 192, Book VII.xix. John 14:2: "In my Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you: because I go to prepare a place for you." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 246n39.

sometimes they join forces to help someone on God's behalf, even if they are not of the same caliber.¹³⁵ It is with this explanation that he sets up Geoffrey's miracle story:

And so, in AD 1172, a certain Geoffrey, called of Canterbury, suffered from a most fearful toothache. Therefore, encouraged by the advice of his relatives, he had the three molars in the left jaw—which troubled him the most—removed; and that done, thinking little of it, he sat down to a very unhealthy supper. Seeing the most beautiful peas placed on the table, and the fattest goose with garlic, allured by appetite, he tasted from everything to the fill; he drank new beer, but the taste of his contrary diet soon led to the most awful torment of swelling and pain. The anguish of the pain grew gradually, so that finally his whole head was swollen, so that it no longer looked like a human face, but presented a monstrous appearance of a monstrous animal; and the skin was stretched like a bladder, so that those who looked on were amazed that it did not burst. The tip of his nose was flattened and his eyes were buried in his face. The mouth was shut by swollen lips and he was no longer able to breathe. His relatives put a reed into his mouth, through which to breathe, lest the blocking of his airway choke his breathing.¹³⁶

In this painful state Geoffrey was led to the tomb of Thomas Becket, where he spent the night in prayer.¹³⁷ It was close to dawn when Becket visited Geoffrey in a vision:

[Thomas asked]: "Geoffrey, what do you seek here?" And he said: "Lord, that you should take pity on me and cure my sickness." And the saint said to that: "Your cure is not here. But so that your coming to me should not be in vain, I give you a piece of advice. Get up and go home, have a candle made in the name of Saint William the martyr of Norwich, and then roll it around your whole head in a circle, and immediately you will receive a cure. Once you are cured, hurry to Norwich, where you will offer the candle to him, your liberator." At this the sick man woke up, rose, returned home and rapidly executed the things he had been ordered.¹³⁸

Like so many other pilgrims before him, once the wax touched the affected extremities, the skin burst open, bloody matter rushed out, and the swelling immediately subsided. Before heading to Norwich, Geoffrey went once more to Becket's tomb to give thanks and to pray.

¹³⁵ For a similar situation, see Book VI.x, where Thomas writes of Glewus who had been helped out of his iron chains by both St. Edmund and St. William at different times. In Book VI.xi, Thomas gives a commendation of the miracle, explaining why Edmund and William worked together in this particular instance.

¹³⁶ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 192, Book VII.xix.

¹³⁷ Note that Thomas states that this miracle in 1172, prior to Thomas Becket's 1173 canonization, yet he refers to Becket as a saint (*sanctus*).

¹³⁸ Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 192–3, Book VII.xix.

Within an hour or so of leaving Canterbury on his solo journey to Norwich, Geoffrey passed through a village called Ospringe, where he prayed to God for an amenable companion to accompany him.¹³⁹ When he repeated the prayer a second time a bit later in his journey, he was immediately greeted by “two men of venerable appearance and distinguished habit. . . . One was resplendent in the whitest of clothes; the other wore the signs of the emblems of kingship.”¹⁴⁰ The men asked Geoffrey where he was headed, and when he replied that Norwich was his final destination, the man in white said ““then we should go together, since we, too, are going to those parts,””¹⁴¹ and they proceeded to Norwich with Geoffrey between them, as if they were supporting him.¹⁴² The distance Geoffrey and the two mysterious men traveled that first day was immense:

The same day [he had met the two men] in the afternoon, at sunset, having achieved such a feat of walking, they arrived at the thorn bush that marks the third mile from Bury St. Edmunds. As they stood there, the man in white said to Geoffrey: “So, brother, do you know where you are?” and when Geoffrey answered that he did not, he said: “Look, what you see is the tower of the church of St Edmund. Go then, in peace, and may the Lord be with you. And since this morning you had begged for a good companion, it was done just as you wished. Know then, that I am Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, and this other is the blessed Edmund, king and martyr. We have sent the blessed martyr William ahead to Norwich, and you will find him there.” Having said this, they both suddenly disappeared from Geoffrey’s sight.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Per Rubin, Ospringe is “a village in Kent, near Faversham and on the road to London.” Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 247n42.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 193, Book VII.xix.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² This is similar to Ada, who walked to the tomb between her husband and another person. See Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 119, Book IV.xi.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 193–4, Book VII.xix. Note that in this miracle story, Becket is the only of the two saints who speaks. Could it be that Edmund is mute because his head was cut off? Even in Book VI.x, Edmund does not have any dialogue.

The distance from Ospringe to Bury St Edmunds is just over ninety miles on foot and today includes a ferry ride across the River Thames.¹⁴⁴ According to my calculations, such a journey would take at least four days on foot. Hence, Geoffrey could not have covered that much distance in one day on his own. Nevertheless, Thomas states that

Since the speed of the mentioned journey was amazing, and seemed well-nigh impossible by human powers, I was thorough and diligent in tracking down the truth. And so, what I had perceived to be true in this matter, I have put down on this page. For very many attested to it in Canterbury, that he had gone on pilgrimage from there on 15 January, and we know for sure that on 16 January he was seen at the tomb of Saint William in Norwich, and—to declare it more plainly—he moved by foot from Canterbury on one day and arrived in Norwich on the next.¹⁴⁵

Thomas records Geoffrey's rapid journey as a miracle, attributing it to the spiritual support of Thomas Becket and King Edmund.

In this astonishing story, Thomas presents an account in which the trope he has repeated throughout the *Life* in which a pilgrim is animated by faith and propelled to a shrine in search of a cure (though frequently with the aid of family, technology, or both) now becomes literal. Throughout the *Life*, Thomas signals that a crowd witnessed the healing, and I have argued that this public display was a central aspect not only of confirming the miracle but also in the social context whereby an impairment would no longer be deemed a disability. In cases in which no crowd was present, I have noted that as part of his duties as William's sacrist, Thomas himself acted as a surrogate for the crowd in confirming that the miracle had occurred. In this final story concerning Geoffrey of Canterbury, it is not merely Thomas of Monmouth who verifies the miracle on behalf of society, for in this case the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund appear to serve as the proxy for society.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas writes that during his conversation with Geoffrey, he said that "he was so soothed by their [Becket and Edmund's] words that he did not feel the effort of walking on the journey or even notice how they had crossed the River Thames." Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 193, Book VII.xix.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 194–5, Book VII.xix.

Geoffrey is initially healed at a distance by William of Norwich, in this case at his home in Canterbury, but, like a number of other pilgrims recorded in the *Life*, he, too, makes a pilgrimage to William's shrine in Norwich in order to present to St. William the wax mold which had healed him. This votive offering is similar to the donation of four pennies made by Robert, a dean from Lincoln described in Book V.ix, as well as to the crutches left by Thomas of York in Book VII.xi. When Geoffrey is initially carried by the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund from Ospringe to Bury St. Edmunds, his impairment has left him incapacitated such that he lacks autonomy but not necessarily agency. That is, although he attempted to make the pilgrimage without assistance, he took an active role in praying for companions who would assist him in his journey. But in a clear sign of his restored agency and autonomy, Geoffrey is able to make the final leg of his pilgrimage to Norwich without any assistance, worldly or spiritual.

Summary

As we can see, pilgrims in the Middle Ages visiting the tomb of William of Norwich in search of a cure for their disabilities had a variety of support systems available to them, whether familial, technological, or spiritual. In this chapter I have again looked at the eighty miracles in *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* in which a variety of disabilities were discharged through some sort of public display. An overwhelming majority of these supplicants were assisted by family members who accompanied them or even carried them on their pilgrimage, though many of these had the aid of some form of technology, as well. Only six pilgrims were able to make the journey without the support of their families or other caretakers, and it is not surprising that all but one of these solo pilgrims had some sort of

technological aid such as a cane, crutches, or a horse. These devices were thus especially important to the pilgrims who traveled alone and who needed them for their autonomy.

I have found that virtually all accounts in the *Life* of pilgrims who used a technological aid were not local residents of Norwich. I have suggested in this chapter that although Thomas apparently goes to great lengths to argue the veracity of these accounts, the information he includes about technological aids and modes of transportation are not merely incidental to his storytelling, but, rather, they are a central component of his strategy for confirming the truth of the miracle. Pilgrims who had traveled more than a few miles were unknown to him and others at Norwich, which offers one possible explanation for why these details would have been so important to Thomas: a record of a technological aid or mode of transportation would help make the case that an unfamiliar person had been too impaired to make the pilgrimage without assistance and that their cures were therefore genuine. At the same time, however, it stands to reason that impaired and disabled pilgrims simply would have been more likely to need some sort of technological aid if they were making a longer journey.

Moreover, although pilgrimages were often acts of piety, and although other medieval pilgrims are known to have walked the final miles of their journey as an act of penance, the pilgrims Thomas records in the *Life* do not appear to have made their journeys as an act of penance. To be sure, those suffering from mental impairments then understood as madness and demonic possession were typically brought to William's tomb in some sort of restraints and were even healed against their will. But even those pilgrims who were able to take an active role in their journey (whether or not they needed technological or familial support) do not seem to have undertaken the pilgrimage as an act of piety.

Hence, the miracles I have examined in Chapter 3 suggest that the pilgrims coming to William's tomb in Norwich sought to be cured so that they could have their agency and autonomy restored. Families and technological aids played a major role in this restoration for many pilgrims who suffered from physical impairments. Once these impairments were cured and confirmed by the crowd, the disability ceased to affect these pilgrims, and, at the same time, they were able to return to their lives with health and status restored. However, Thomas seldom specifies whether these pilgrims experienced any changes to their living arrangements or family structure. He is, of course, more interested in the fact of the cure itself, which always resulted in a full recovery (even if it took more than one attempt, in some cases). As with my earlier discussion in Chapter 2 about the variety of conditions which William healed, in my discussion of familial support and modes of transportation in Chapter 3 I hope to have shown that all aspects of medical pilgrimage took place within social contexts which appear to have been well recognized (if seldom expressly discussed) in the Middle Ages.

Conclusion

This thesis has systematically categorized and analyzed the eighty medical miracles found in *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich*. It has also discussed those pilgrims who traveled alone with technological aid, children who were brought to the tomb by their parents, those pilgrims who acted on their own behalf, those who had familial support and technological support, and even one pilgrim who traveled from Canterbury to Norwich with the aid of the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund. In this way, I have aimed to describe the social context which defined both disability and pilgrimage in one corner of twelfth-century England.

My analysis so far has taken these miracles at face value, trusting Thomas at his word. From a distance of nine hundred years, it would be both impossible and futile to attempt to judge the veracity of the diagnoses or the claims of miraculous healing in these accounts. Instead, I have found it more useful to consider these from the medieval person's perspective. I have considered these ailments as they were understood and described at the time by relying on both of the English translations but in every case consulting the original Latin. (As Appendix B, I have included my own translations of ten representative miracles.) From a modern perspective it seems implausible that a person with cancer or lifelong deafness, muteness, and blindness, or someone with physical deformities from birth, could be cured by visiting the shrine, saying the correct prayers, and offering a wax votive. But that is not the point. We will never know what actually happened at William's shrine. What matters is that people—likely many hundreds of them—went on pilgrimage to Norwich in search of a cure for their medical conditions and that someone known to us simply as Thomas of Monmouth kept as meticulous records as he was able of those who believed they had

received a cure at the shrine. Thus, even setting aside contemporary and modern allegations that Thomas was merely acting as a propagandist, a PR man for William's cult, his accounts reveal a great deal about how various ailments were perceived and thought to be cured in the twelfth century.

As I have demonstrated, the eighty medical miracles found in Books III-VII of the *Life* are just as worthy of inquiry as the accounts of William's life and alleged ritual murder in Books I and II. By examining them through the lens of disability studies, we can begin to fulfill the project Finucane began two generations ago and describe in greater detail what some of the core beliefs of twelfth-century Norwich may have been. The entire process of miraculous healing—the decision that an impairment was indeed a disability which required divine intervention, the pilgrimage to William's tomb, and the miraculous healing witnessed by crowds assembled there—took place within a variety of social contexts. Not only were the afflictions themselves understood within cultural frameworks, but, moreover, the cures detailed in the *Life*, though miraculous, also had to be recognized by society in order to have been deemed effective.

But there is another way that we can look at these miracles to understand why these stories all seem to follow such similar narrative arcs. David T. Mitchell has observed that narratives about disability tend to follow a predictable trajectory. He describes what he has termed “narrative prosthesis,” a four-stage theory of how disability is portrayed in literature. While he is not writing about medieval texts, it seems to me that the typical miracle in the *Life* follows the trajectory Mitchell describes. According to Mitchell,

A simple schematic of narrative structure might run: first, a deviance or marked difference is exposed to a reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative

consequences; third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center stage of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story seeks to rehabilitate or fix the deviance in some manner, shape, or form. This fourth move toward the repair of deviance may involve an obliteration of the difference through a cure, the rescue of the despised object from social censure, the extermination of the deviant as a purification of the social body, or the revaluation of an alternative mode of experience.¹

As I now wish to discuss by way of conclusion, Mitchell's outline *generally* holds true of the eighty medical miracles in the *Life*.

For each miracle, Thomas states the ailment for which the pilgrim is seeking help; he gives the origin of the ailment when it is known (typically, if the person had been affected by a condition since birth, or, in rarer circumstances, it had developed more recently), thus consolidating Mitchell's first two stages. For example, he mentions in Book VI.viii that Gilliva became blind through "some accident" three years prior to her visit to the shrine.² In another story, he states that Colobern and Ansfrida's seven-year-old son had been mute since birth.³ However, most of the time he simply does not mention the etiology of the ailment he is describing. I found this somewhat surprising, in part, because there are no indications that Thomas believed these medical ailments were the result of sin on the part of the pilgrims. This observation coincides with my remark in Chapter 2 that these pilgrims did not seem to be coming as an act of penance, a point which I then brought into focus in my discussion of transportation and technological aids in Chapter 3. Both in my discussion of the ailments themselves and in my investigation of the logistics of travel for people with impairments, I have relied on the details Thomas included as part of his duty as William's sacrist, many of

¹ David T. Mitchell, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor," in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Brueggemann, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 20.

² Thomas of Monmouth, *Life*, 151, Book VI.viii.

³ *Ibid.*, 97, Book III.xvi.

which appear to be incidental to the storytelling but upon further investigation proved to be central to his strategies for demonstrating that a pilgrim had arrived in an impaired and disabled state so that he could prove that a miracle had taken place when the supplicant was subsequently cured. Understood this way, Thomas's accounts of the miracles performed at William's tomb should be seen not merely as propaganda for his cult, but rather as an early example of medical record-keeping.

Following Mitchell's schema, the third stage of narrative prosthesis (the deviance or disability is brought from the periphery to the center of the story) in most of these miracle stories is when the pilgrim arrives at the tomb and in some cases physically touches it, drinks holy water mixed with tomb scrapings, sleeps there, or brings a votive offering, among other rituals. In some cases, prayer is the only necessary aspect; in instances in which supplicants are still at home when the miracle occurs, they eventually journey to the tomb or send someone on their behalf. This third step of narrative prosthesis is essential to these accounts of healing because without it, the miracle could not occur. And it is the miracle, not the ailment itself, which Thomas intended to showcase in his book. In other words, Mitchell's hypothesis does not always neatly fit these medieval miracle stories because the deviance was already at the forefront, which is why the narrative was written in the first place. I might also add that some pilgrims with marked physical deviance, to use Mitchell's language, are literally the center of attention not just in the stories but also literally at the shrine itself, if they happened to come on a busy feast day when a large crowd was already present.

All of the miracle stories I examine end with a cure and the pilgrim goes home healthy and full of joy, singing William's praises. This fourth step in Mitchell's theory of narrative prosthesis universally results in a cure in the accounts of miracles at William's

tomb. However, Mitchell observes that in other literature the fourth stage sometimes results in “reevaluation of alternative modes of experience”—something that does not occur in any of these miracles. None of these miracle narratives state that the supplicant who came to the tomb in hopes of a cure went away in the same condition in which they had arrived (if only because there is no story to be recorded without the occurrence of a miracle). These stories reinforce their contemporary understandings of both illness and wellness. Indeed, there are no pilgrims who went home from the tomb still sick, disabled, or impaired; and there is no mention of society as a whole deciding to reassess its views on “alternative modes of experience.”

Similarly, Mitchell suggests that narrative prosthesis may end with the “extermination of the deviant as a purification of the social body,” another feature lacking in the eighty miracles I categorized and analyzed. As Edward Wheatley points out, it is striking that “the extermination of the deviant as the purification of the social body’ almost never occurs in medieval literature.”⁴ Even Mitchell’s neutral language of “deviance” seems odd for a discussion of the pilgrims described in the *Life*, for Thomas is enormously respectful of the people who came seeking a cure at William’s tomb: these supplicants are never portrayed as a spectacle on account of their affliction. To the contrary. Though some were said to have been monstrous or beastly, and at least one defined her disability as causing her reputation to suffer, if we are to gape, Thomas signals, it is at the miracle and not at the “deviant.”

William was never officially canonized, his feast day of March 26 was removed from the universal calendar, and his status as a saint has been in question since even before Thomas arrived in Norwich around 1150. These may be some of the reasons, perhaps, that

⁴ Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks before the Blind*, 26.

his miracles have been neglected in the scholarship. When I first undertook this project, I was hoping to fill this void and be the first person to systematically categorize and analyze the miracles of William of Norwich. I soon narrowed my focus to the subset of medical miracles. In those early stages of the project, I did not know quite what to expect.

But even though I did not know what I might find, I was surprised to discover that although he was a boy when he was purportedly martyred, William was not a specialist saint, either of healing children or curing any ailment in particular. Although he did not exclusively heal children, many children were brought to his tomb. As I discovered in the analysis presented in Chapter 3, for example, I found that it was always the parents who initiated the pilgrimage on behalf of their children. Sometimes entire families would travel together, but in other cases only one parent would accompany an ailing son or daughter. Indeed, though these patterns resonate with my own experiences as a traveler, I was not expecting to find that pilgrims overwhelmingly came with their families rather than alone. By mapping the origins of most of the pilgrims I discuss, I confirmed the one cliché about William and his cult—that he was not famous and that the supplicants he attracted were local and regional pilgrims. I was also surprised to find that of the handful of pilgrims Thomas specifically states came on their own, almost all used some kind of technological aid; many more were accompanied by their families, who in many cases also used some kind of technological aid to get the pilgrim from home to the tomb. In some cases these were quite simple, such as a piece of cord, while others could be quite elaborate, such as a wheelbarrow or even a ship. I had never thought of a horse as form of technology before.

But these boys and girls, men and women, were united in their belief that William of Norwich could heal their ailments. Taken together, these eighty miracles show that, at least

in Thomas's estimation, William was capable of healing all sorts of ailments suffered by all sorts of people. The miraculous cures in *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* were acts that restored pilgrims' physical and mental conditions as well as their autonomy and agency.

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Appendices

Appendix A Pilgrim Origins 174

Appendix B Original Translations from the *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich* .. 180

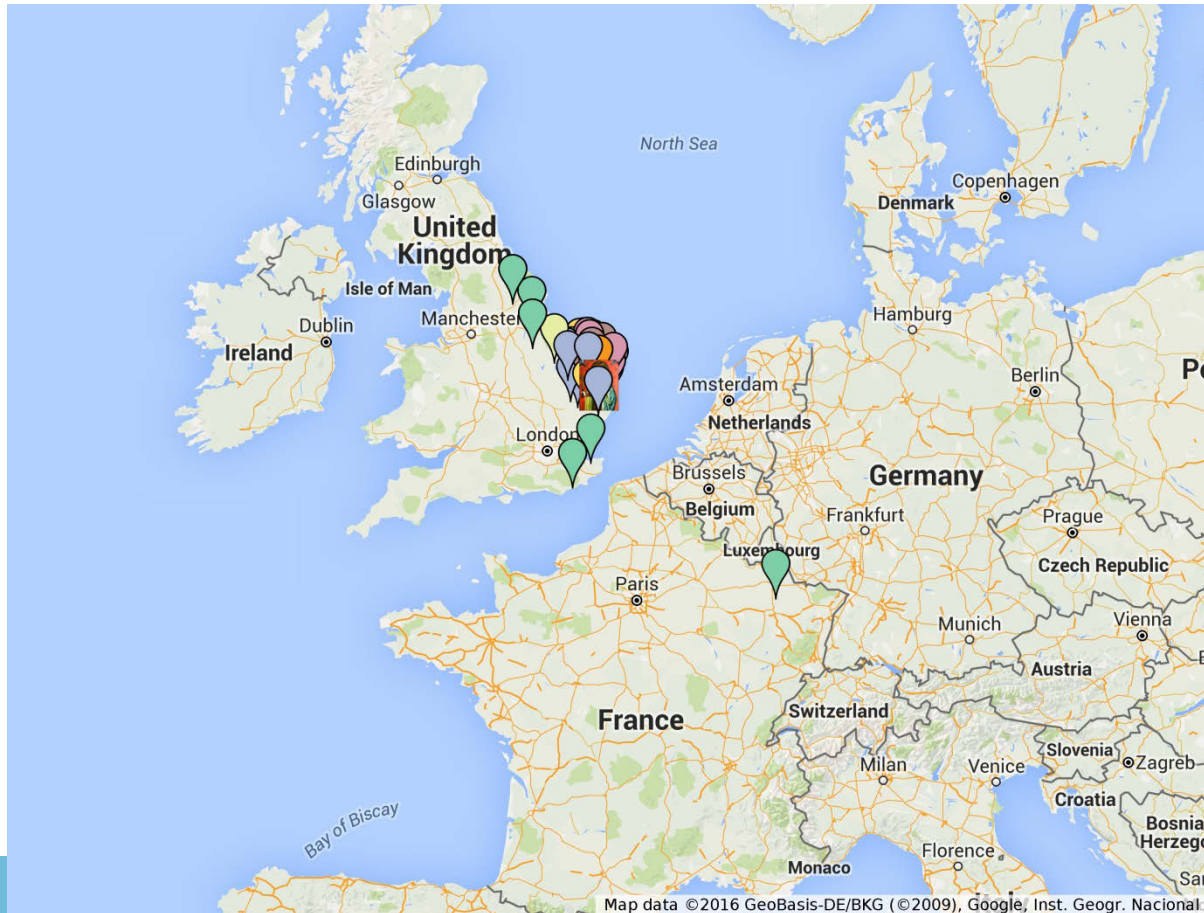
Appendix A

Pilgrim Origins

Of the 80 miracles concerning physical and mental impairments that I analyze in my thesis, I was able to determine origins for ninety-four percent of them. Most of these seventy-five pilgrims came from all over East Anglia seeking divine intervention for their ailments. One pilgrim even came from France after traveling throughout the Continent, Levant, and Ireland before finally arriving at Norwich. You can view these maps in their interactive forms at <http://www.sarahobenauf.net/pilgrims.html>.

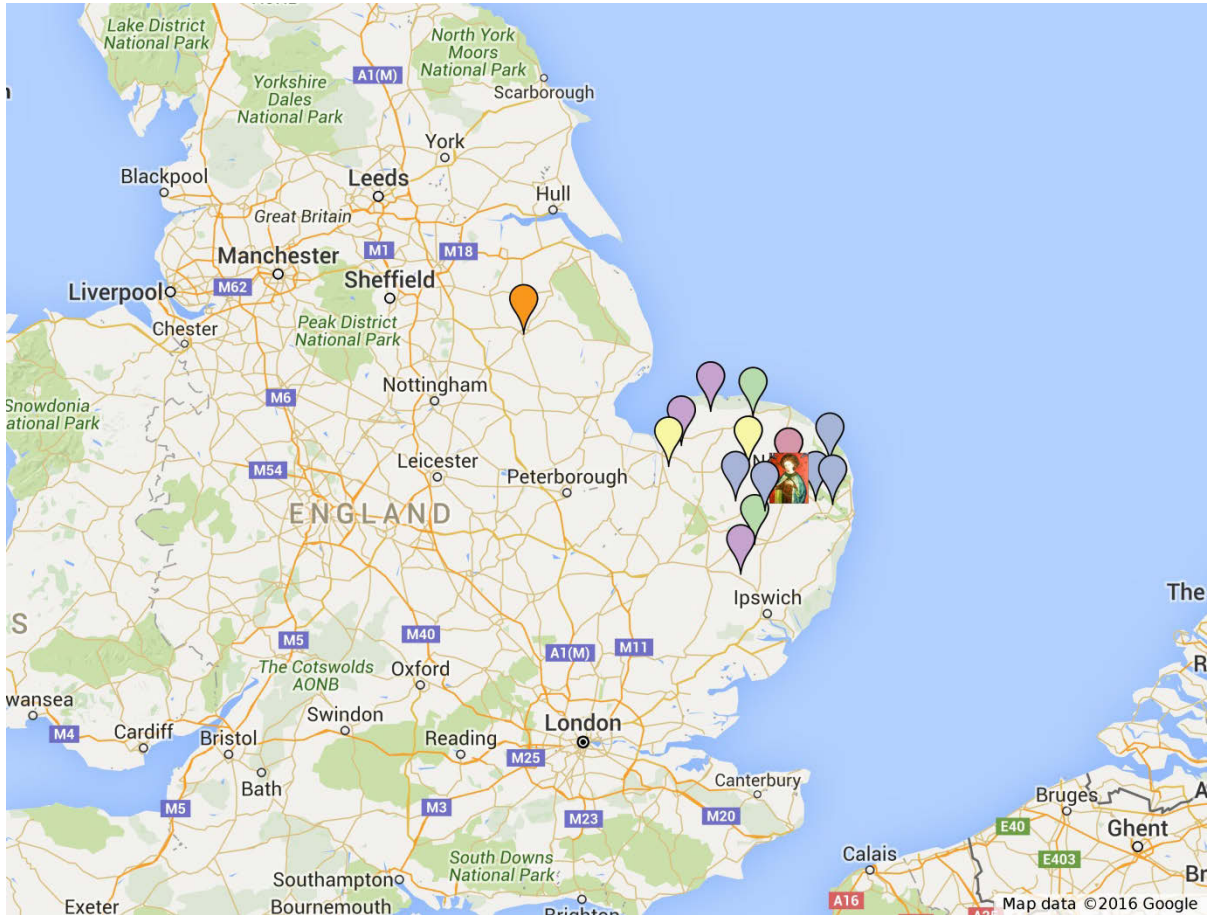
Map 1: Pilgrim Origins and Ailments

This map depicts the origins of most of the pilgrims I analyze. In this and all the other maps, they are categorized according to their distance from Norwich.



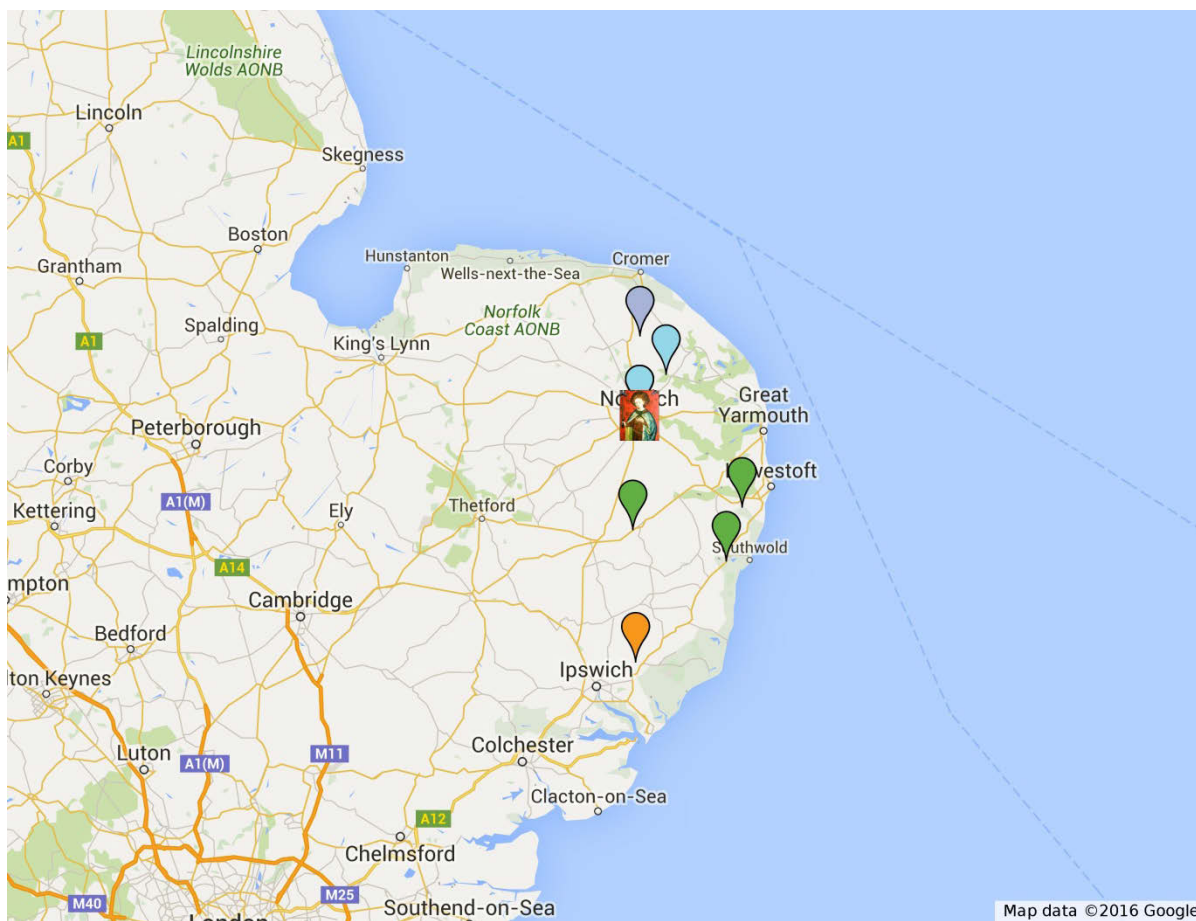
Map 2: Child Pilgrims

Thomas of Monmouth states the origins of twenty-three out of the twenty-four child pilgrims I discuss in my thesis. All of the children had familial support.



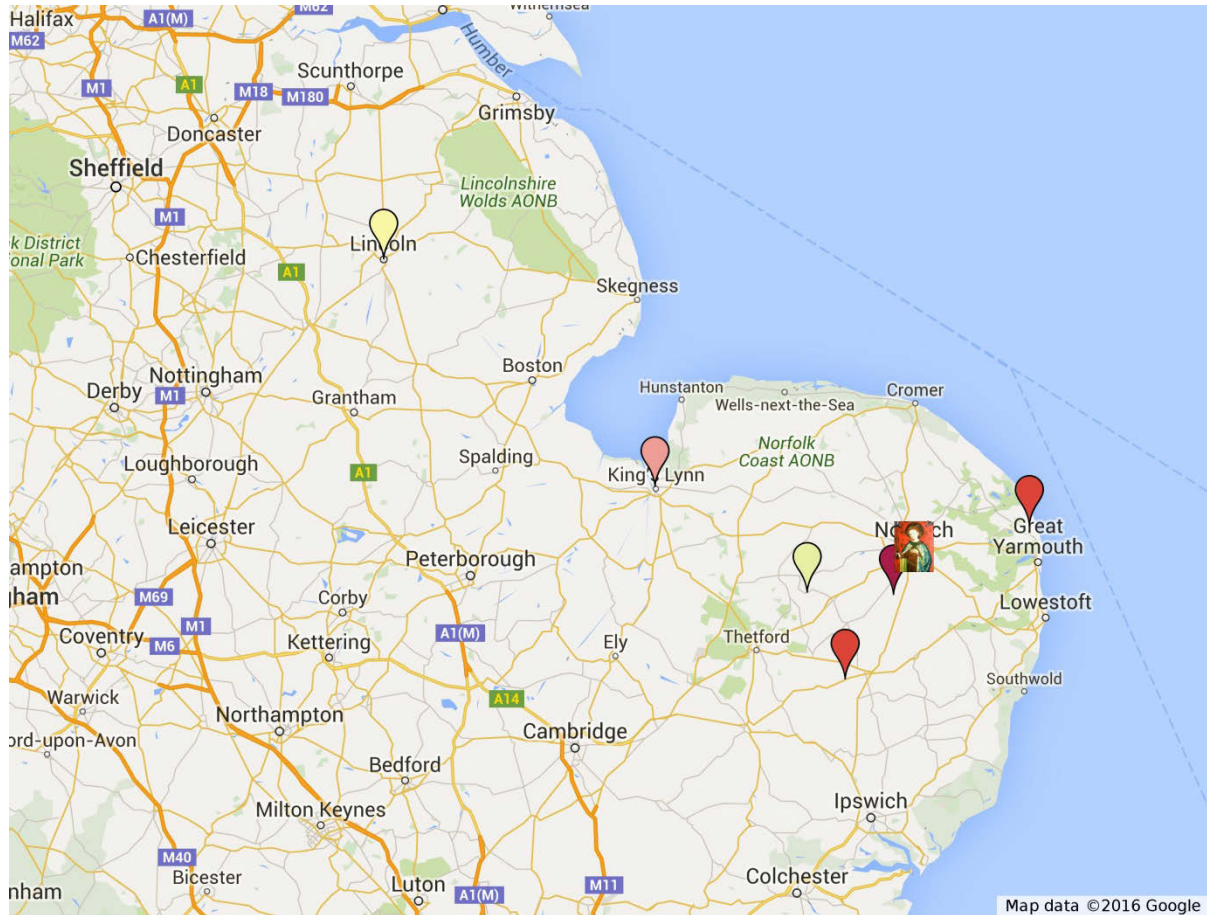
Map 3: Adult Pilgrims with Familial Support

Unlike child pilgrims, adult pilgrims did not always come to the shrine with their families. Out of the eighty miracles I analyze, twelve adult pilgrims came to Norwich with the support of their family.



Map 4: Adult Pilgrims with Familial Support and Technological Aid

Six pilgrims went to William's shrine at Norwich with both the support of family and some kind of technological aid. In this group, fifty percent were children.



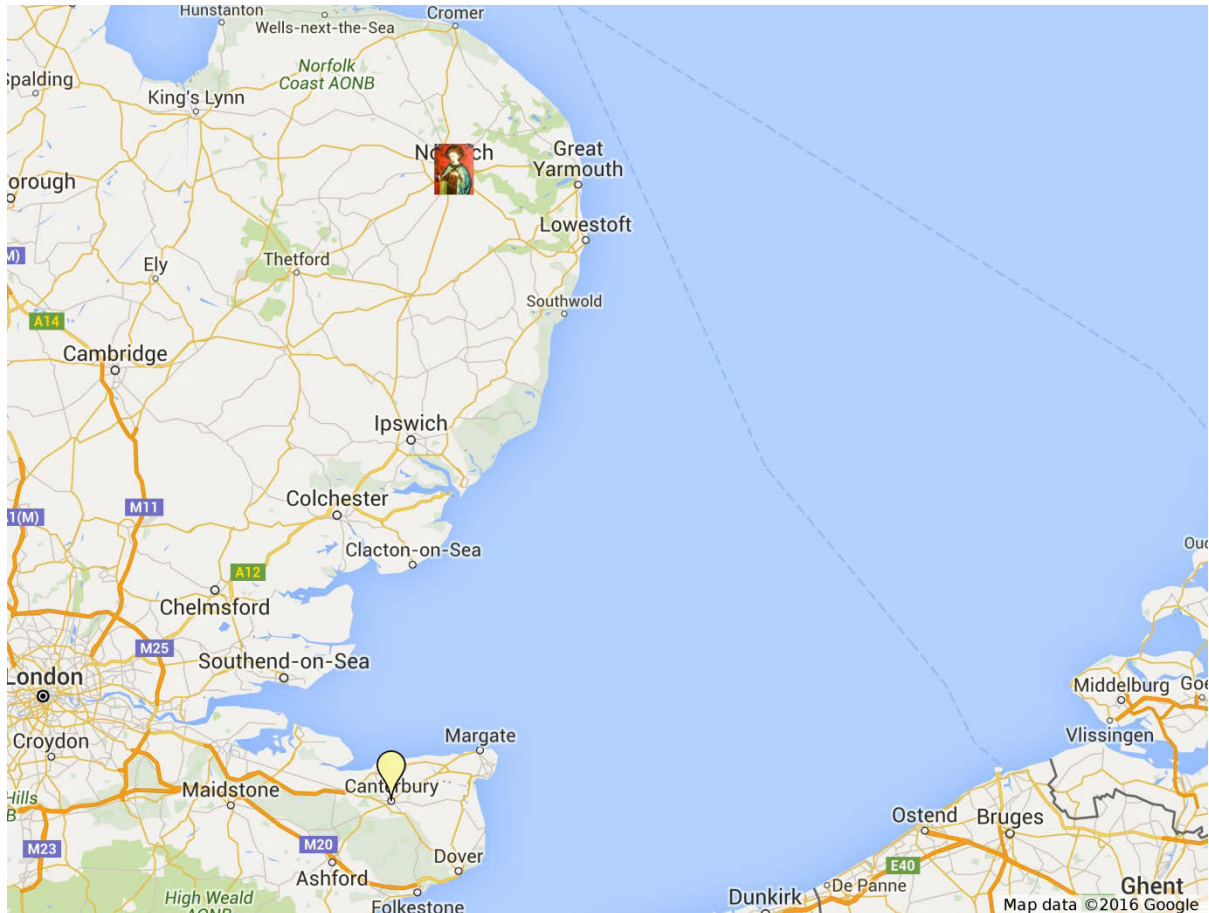
Map 5: Pilgrims Traveling Alone

Of the six pilgrims whom Thomas says traveled alone, he gives origins for five of them. All of them used some kind of technological aid.



Map 6: Pilgrims with Spiritual Support

One pilgrim came to Norwich with the aid of the spirits of Thomas Becket and King Edmund. This is the last miracle story found in the *Life*.



Appendix B

Original Translations from the *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*

Book III.iv

Concerning a certain clerk freed from toothache

Divine mercy began to glorify his blessed martyr on the very same day when bold malice presumed to attack him; and with a divine sign God revealed him to be worthy of much veneration, whereby he judged him unworthy of reckless malice. For on that Easter day a certain cleric of William the viscount, Godfrey by name, plagued with the most painful toothache, came to the tomb of the blessed martyr with love of devotion drawing and leading him. He took a small piece of cement by inspiration of faith, his teacher, and he touched his teeth by rubbing and with the pain lessened immediately as if he had nothing wrong, he returned hale and hearty from the tomb.

Book III.v

Concerning a monk cured of a similar pain

About the same time, Edmund the younger, a monk of Norwich, was beset with such violent toothache that his gums, swelling greatly, gave clear signs of the pain. Calling to mind the aforementioned clerk, he immediately fled to the same refuge as it were to be healed in the same way through the merits of the blessed martyr, so that he might beg for a remedy from his pain. But what he sought with good faith he was worthy to obtain without delay. For when he touched the stone of the tomb with his throbbing face, the pain was immediately soothed and he felt all the swelling dissipate.

Book IV.ii:

Concerning the son of a certain Gurwan cured and a certain blind man restored to sight

About the same time a certain woman from London was forewarned three times by the blessed William through a vision before she had wished to accomplish the work enjoined upon her by him. At last she took care to come to Norwich as she had been commanded. She searched for Gurwan the furrier, and having found him, said: "Behold! I, who before this day never knew Norwich, have come from London to Norwich to you, Gurwan, and to your wife, sent as a messenger. Indeed, the glorious martyr of God, William, commands you through me that because you have lost five children to death, he, overflowing with feelings of tenderness, also has great pity on you, doubtlessly grieving over so great a misfortune. Therefore, so that you may rejoice in the sixth, who has barely survived for you and has now been sick for eighteen weeks, the same most blessed martyr invites you to his tomb and advises you, for the health of your boy, to bring a candle and offer it to him. Moreover, he commands that for as many years as the boy will live, he is to pay the tribute owed to William on the day of the Virgin Mary's Nativity." And so Gurwan and his wife, exhilarated by this news, immediately hurry to carry out the command, and they rejoice at the quick recovery of their son.

Nor is it to be passed over in silence what I learned from the same Gurwan, who related that he himself had had a certain blind man in his house with other poor people in the days of great famine and death. This man was warned by the blessed William through a vision soon after his martyrdom that he should have three masses of the Holy Spirit sung, and during the third he would without a doubt recover his sight. When the same Gurwan learned this from the blind man's story, he, having summoned a priest, had three masses sung on three days in which the blind man offered three pennies in honor of the Holy Spirit. And

during the third offering he (it is wonderful to say) recovered his sight just as it had been promised to him.

Book IV.iii:

Concerning Ralph, a moneyer of Norwich who was cured of a sickness, and of his mad servant who was cured

About the same time Ralph the moneyer of Norwich was burdened by the most serious illness. He, encouraged by the examples of many, pledged a vow to the blessed William, fulfilled it, and recovered immediately. When he had recovered his full health, the glorious martyr of God appeared to him through a vision, saying: "I am the boy William who by God's will have cured you. Give thanks to me and be devout. I also enjoin this upon you: you should visit the monk Thomas, my custodian and secretary, and you should tell him that he is to take comfort and not wilt. Let him persevere zealously and diligently in my service because I hold welcome the service which his devotion shows to me." I, Thomas, have been zealous to heed with the highest diligence the things ordered through the vision and related to me by the same Ralph. It also happened at the same time while the moneyers of Norwich were pursuing their work, that suddenly under their eyes one of the servants was seized by a demon. He was in such a bad state that it was necessary that he immediately be restrained with strong chains. Wherefore the others, healthy of head, poured forth prayers and vows to the sacred martyr for the health of their companion, and immediately upon their vow the youth was freed without delay.

Book IV.iv:

Concerning Agnes, wife of Reginald the cowherd, freed from a flux of blood

On a certain day, Agnes, wife of Reginald, who was known in Norwich as the cowherd, came to the tomb of the holy William to seek a cure for her most serious and long-standing illness. This woman toiled for five years under a menstrual flux and she spent not a little money on doctors who accomplished nothing or very little for her. Therefore coming with devotion and anguish of mind, she stood in prayer for a long time and merited to obtain effectually and without delay the help which she asked for. For as soon as she pressed her lips to the tomb on bended knee after offering a candle, at that moment she found the affliction of flux to be stagnated by a certain secret power of God. And departing from there, she proclaimed that she had experienced the manifest power of God by the merits of St. William.

Book IV.v:

Concerning a certain Botilda, who, being sick, was cured

Also a certain Botilda, wife of Toche, a baker at Norwich, had been ill for a long time and was in the grip of such great pain of the feet that by no means was she able to set her foot on the ground. Therefore, because she wasn't able to leave home and go to the tomb of holy William as she wished, her husband hastened to go in her place. And so, coming and persisting in prayer for a long time, he asked for the health of his wife with devout prayers, and after offering a candle he went back home not doubting that he had been heard. Arriving there, he discovered his wife sound and healthy and discovered the hour of her healing was the same in which he placed the candle on the tomb of the holy martyr.

Book IV.vi

Concerning the cure of the sick daughter of a smith of Postwick

Also, there was in the village called Postwick, a smith who had a daughter who was in a bad state and lying sick for many days with a most painful ailment. She, hearing the rumor of the great powers of the healing martyr by the report of many, touched by the inspiration of faith, hurried to the holy tomb of saint William as well as she was able. Arriving there and holding a candle in her right hand, she prayed with all the devotion of her mind. And with tearful prayers she begged for a remedy from her illness. And finally, having completed her prayer, on bended knee she offered a candle, and at the very moment at which she imprinted kisses upon the stone, she discovered herself suddenly restored to her original state of health.

Book IV.vii:

That the saint, through a vision, warned that his tomb should be handled most cleanly and guarded

In those days the glorious boy and martyr William appeared to a certain good and indeed trustworthy man and said to him: “Be my messenger and go to my tomb next Sunday and proclaim to those present there that greater reverence than normal is to be shown to me. For indeed, some don’t fear to touch and pollute the stone or the covering of my tomb with their muddy feet, and the pavement around me is dirty with the shameful spit of many. Also, take care to announce to my Thomas that he should more closely watch my tomb and announce to those arriving with what reverent modesty they ought to attend upon me.” When

these things were announced to me by the man, I strove with the greatest diligence to observe them and thereafter I continued much more devoutly in his service.

Book IV.xii:

Concerning a certain priest and his household, and the cure of a woman

At the same time, Walter, a priest from Tivetshall, and many of his household, endangered by a serious sickness, were restored to their original health as soon as they made vows asking for Saint William's help, as we learned from the account of the same priest. And also the wife of Richard of Bedingeham, whom we have mentioned before, as we have learned from the report of the same priest, burdened down with a serious ailment of the belly and kidneys, deserved to be healed by an antidote of heavenly medicine by the merits of blessed William.

Book IV.xiii:

Concerning the cure of a mad girl, and many others

Around the same time we also saw a little girl, the daughter of Eustace the minter, being led to the tomb of the holy martyr, insane, and returning sane after the space of one hour. Moreover, we observed very many others coming to him, in a bad state and sick, whom we afterwards learned by the report of the same people to have received remedies of health in that same place. Their names, or even the sequence of the thing done, I have not inserted in the present little book for the sake of avoiding long-windedness because it is agreed that very often the favor of readers is harmed by excessive long-windedness. Here ends the fourth book.