



## Article

# Tearas Feollon: Tears and Weeping in Old English Literature

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**Abstract:** This contribution surveys the range of images of weeping in Old English literature, concentrating particularly on weeping due to suffering, grief and unhappiness, and on tears of compunction, but examining other types of weeping as well, including supplicatory and sympathetic weeping (these latter are found in prose but not in poetry). Taking account of contemporary theory, the study understands weeping to be a physical manifestation of distress, but also to function as a social gesture, as reflected in the circumstance that most weeping in Old English is public rather than private. It is noted that saints do not normally weep in the literature despite the suffering they typically endure, and also that in traditional Old English poetry weeping is seen as not appropriate for men, or at least for men in the prime of life. Some of the most interesting instances of weeping in Old English, however, are to be found in episodes that appear to contradict or problematize such expectations, as is illustrated by the examination of a number of relevant examples. The references to weeping cited in this study are in the majority of cases based on Latin models, and reflect the wider Christian literary tradition in the early Middle Ages, rather than being specific to Anglo-Saxon England; but, in both religious and secular works, Old English writers are shown to be thoughtful and imaginative in their treatment of weeping and to deploy images of it to forceful emotive effect.

**Keywords:** Anglo-Saxon culture; medieval Christian tradition; emotions; hagiography; Old English literature; Old English poetry; Old English prose; Latin literature



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## 1. Introduction

Old English literature abounds in images of people weeping (adults, that is, not children). Occasionally their tears are of joy, but much more typically they are of distress due to suffering, grief or unhappiness, which are themes of abiding concern to writers of the period. The themes of suffering, grief and unhappiness are often expressed, particularly in the poetry, without explicit reference to tears and weeping: there is no weeping as such in *The Wanderer* or *The Seafarer* or most other “elegiac” poems, for example.<sup>1</sup> In many texts, however, the imagery of weeping lends intensity to the feelings portrayed, as the vocabulary of tears—*wepan*, *bewepan* and *tear* (as well as rarer terms, including *greotan* and *hotorian*, and poetic ones, such as *gretan* and *reotan*)—is deployed to emotive effect. In addition to such terms, I understand the noun *wop* and its derived adjectives *wopig* and *woplic* to be expressive of weeping: *wop* is often translated as the abstract “lamentation”, which can indeed be appropriate, but the connotation of weeping was surely felt by Anglo-Saxon audiences.<sup>2</sup>

In some of the most powerful passages in Old English, tears signify raw personal emotion. Famously, for example, in *Beowulf* King Hrothgar weeps at the departure of Beowulf from Denmark knowing that he will never see him again: “hruron him tearas/blondenfeaxum” (Fulk et al. 2008, ll. 1872–73), “tears fell from him, the grey-haired one”.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere, tears are prompted by the experience of misfortune endured or being in an unhappy situation, such as that of the speaker in *Wulf and Eadwacer*, who is “reotugu” (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 179, l. 10), “tearful”, about her separation from Wulf, or of the speaker of *The Wife's Lament*, who laments that she must sit the summerlong day and weep in her place of enclosure:

þær ic sittan mot sumorlangne dæg;  
þær ic wepan mæg mine wræcsiþas. (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 211, ll. 37–38)

There I must sit the summerlong day; there I can weep for my journeys of exile.

In translated texts, Boethius/Mind, the speaker in the Old English *Boethius*, is among those who weep in the face of misfortune. In Meter 2, slightly expanding on the Latin original, he sings his sad lament “weighed down by weeping” (*wope gewæged*, Krapp 1932a, l. 3), and he is preoccupied by “this sobbing” (*ðes geocsa*, l. 5) (in the Latin, his verses water his face with true tears: *veris elegi fletibus ora rigant* [Stewart and Rand 1918, Meter 2, l. 4]).

Indeed, in what is overwhelmingly a literature of Christian teaching and understanding, the world itself is seen as a place of weeping, a *convallis lacrimarum*, “vale of tears” (Roman Psalter, Weber 1953, Psalms 83:7; Vulgate (Edgar and Kinney 2011–2013) *vallis lacrimarum*),<sup>4</sup> or as the verse *Paris Psalter* expresses the image, “ðisse sargan dene/þær hi teara teonan cnysað” (Krapp 1932b, 83:5, ll. 4–5), “this sorry valley, where the troubles of tears oppress [people]”. In this spirit, the author of Homily 5 of the *Blickling Homilies* declares that on earth one’s body must live in weeping, sadness and pain (*on wope & on unrotnesse & on sare his lichoma sceal her wunian*, 59, l. 36–61, l. 1) (Morris 1874/1876/1880, pp. 54–64).

Only in heaven, as *Blickling Homily 8* reminds its audience (Morris 1874/1876/1880, pp. 96–107), are sorrow and weeping absent—“ne [bið] sorg ne wop” (p. 103, l. 36)—and it is the purpose of life on earth to attain the salvation of eternal life in heaven, weepingly fearing God’s judgement and repenting one’s sins in order to do so. Homily 4 of the *Vercelli Homilies* preaches, “Men þa leofestan, ic eow bidde 7 eaðmodlice lære þæt ge wepen 7 forhtien on þysse medmiclan tide for eowrum synnum, for þan ne bioð eowre tearas 7 eowre hreowsunga for noht getealde on þære toweardan worulde” (ll. 1–4), “My dear people, I ask you and humbly teach that you weep and fear for your sins in this short time, because your tears and your sorrows will be reckoned as nothing in the world to come” (Scragg 1992, pp. 87–110).

In including references to weeping, Old English is hardly unique among medieval literary traditions (Gertsman 2011; Kottler 1996; Lutz 1999; Vingerhoets 2013). Indeed, a large proportion of mentions of weeping in Old English derives directly from Latin sources and reflects participation in the wider traditions of Latin Christendom, with the Bible in particular providing a foundational range of images of weeping (Hvidberg 1962; Lange 1996; McEntire 1990). In Old English prose in particular, references to weeping are in the large majority of cases translated or adapted from Latin sources; many Old English verse texts are also adapted from Latin sources, but these are freer in their treatment of weeping. Thus, though often interesting (as I would argue), most references to weeping in Old English are unexceptional, conforming as they do to inherited literary convention. Some examples, however, stand out as worthy of special note, as I highlight in the analysis below.

The treatment of weeping in Old English conforms to inherited literary convention, which is itself grounded in the cultural practice and expectation of what has been referred to as its “emotional community” (Jorgensen 2015, p. 8, following Rosenwein 2006). According to Darwin’s celebrated characterization, weeping is a physical response to pain or distress: “Weeping seems to be the primary and natural expression [...] of suffering of any kind, whether bodily pain short of extreme agony or mental distress” (Darwin 1998, pp. 157–58). But current researchers stress the social as well as “natural” aspect of weeping behavior in adults: weeping as performative and gestural. Vingerhoets emphasizes that, although weeping can take place in private as well as in public (Vingerhoets 2013, pp. 142–43), it is “a compelling social behavior”, which “signals the need for assistance when an individual is feeling alone, or helpless to meet their own needs” (ibid., p. 73). Collective weeping, widely found in Old English, is obviously social in nature, expressing communal solidarity and bonding; but even in scenes in Old English where it is individuals who weep, they usually have an audience.

Weeping in private does occur in Old English (rarely, and only in prose translations of Latin texts), but normally weeping is in public.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly true of hagiography, which provides the majority of instances of weeping in our corpus. Hagiography takes place in a public arena in which the saint interacts with others in word and deed, demonstrating his or her sanctity before witnesses. Similarly, in traditional Old English poetry emotions are played out in public, whether those are the joys of the hall or Hrothgar weeping at Beowulf's departure.

A further point about Darwin's characterization of weeping as the expression of suffering is that while it may be true enough for much weeping, including much of that in Old English, it manifestly does not account for all weeping, again including much in Old English. As outlined below, in addition to distressful weeping, we also find other types of weeping in our texts, such as supplicatory weeping, which is aimed at eliciting a specific response from an addressee, and sympathetic weeping, which occurs on behalf of others; and since weeping is a complex behavior, the tears portrayed can signify more than one emotion at once: mixed or conflicting emotions can trigger weeping.

Vingerhoets also points out that Darwin excludes "positive" weeping from his characterization (*ibid.*, pp. 80, 87–91), again as occasionally found in Old English; nor does the great man account for fervent religious weeping, a form of weeping particularly conspicuous in Anglo-Saxon texts in the expression of compunction, in which weeping is inspired by internal feeling rather than by an external stimulus; such weeping need not be private, but it does not seek to appeal to an audience.

Before focusing on tears of compunction, I turn in the next section of the essay to the most common tears portrayed in Old English writings, those of distress due to grief or suffering. Here it will be convenient to consider prose and poetry separately because of distinctive features of the poetry; it is also appropriate to consider poetry separately in a contribution in honor of Jack Niles.

## 2. Tears of Distress

### 2.1. Prose

Among the tears of distress most frequently mentioned in Old English prose texts are those of grief at the death or departure of a loved one. Such tears, which are often collective, are a familiar topos in saints' lives and, as reflected in the close Old English translation of *Apollonius of Tyre*, romance. In *Apollonius*, the protagonist's people weep at his sudden disappearance: "Ðar wearð ða micel morcning and ormæte wop" (Goolden 1958, p. 8, ll. 24–25), "Then there was much grief there and excessive weeping".<sup>6</sup> Among representative instances of collective tears of grief in Old English prose saints' lives are those portrayed in the translation of the legend of Saint Andrew's conversion of the cannibalistic Mermedonians, where the inhabitants of the city, newly converted, are distressed by the premature departure of Andrew. According to the *Acts of Matthew and Andrew in the City of the Cannibals* (closely following its Latin source: see Allen and Calder 1976, pp. 14–34), as Andrew prepares to depart, "him fylgede mycel manigo þæs folces wepende and hrymende", "a great crowd of the people followed him weeping and calling out" (Cassidy and Ringler 1971, p. 218, l. 313). Other instances of communal weeping in grief include, in the *Life of Saint Machutus*, the kinsmen of Machutus lamenting (*potorigende*, ll. 9, 22, "weeping") his departure from them (Yerkes 1984), and, in the *Old English Martyrology*, brethren weeping at the time of Saint Eostorwine's death (Rauer 2013, p. 62).

Grief on the part of *individuals* is also portrayed in Old English prose writings. In Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, Saint Eugenia's mother weeps (*weop*) after the saint's death (Skeat 1881–1900, I, pp. 24–51, l. 415). In the *Life of Saint Guthlac* (Gonser 1909), following the Latin original (Colgrave 1956, chp. 50), Guthlac's attendant Beccel weeps as his master's death approaches: "he þa swyþe weop and geomrian ongan, and mid mycelre uneðnysse his eagospind mid tearum gelomlice leohte" (chp. 20, ll. 33–34), "he wept very much and began to lament, and with great anguish he caused his cheeks to shine with tears"; later,

King Æthelbald visits Guthlac's grave, "wepende mid tearum" (chp. 21, l. 9), "weeping with tears" (Colgrave 1956, chp. 52, reads "lacrimans").

Tears of grief are profusely shed by Paphnutius in the *Life of Saint Euphrosyne* (Skeat 1881–1900, II, pp. 334–55) at the disappearance of his daughter, who has disguised herself as a man and secretly joined a monastery, and by the protagonist in the *Life of Saint Eustace* (Skeat 1881–1900, II, 190–219)<sup>7</sup> when he loses his wife and sons, the sons being presumed dead and the wife believed to have endured a fate worse than death. In both of these cases, however, there is an element of selfishness in the distress of the weeper. Robin Norris has explored the "sinful sorrow" of Eustace, who sees himself as suffering more than even Job (Norris 2011, p. 97). Such excessive sorrow is the sin of *tristitia* much warned about by Anglo-Saxon homilists, as Norris explains. Ælfric, for example, defines *tristitia* as:

ðissere worulde unrotnyss  
 þæt is þonne se man geunrotsoð ealles to swyðe  
 for his æhta lyre þe he lufode to swyðe.  
 and cid þonne wið god. and his synna geeacnað. (Skeat 1881–1900, I, pp. 336–63,  
 ll. 289–92)

the sorrow of this world, that is when a person sorrows all too much for the loss  
 of his possessions and complains then against God, and increases his sins.

Eustace eventually accepts his lot, though not before contemplating suicide (l. 181) and voicing much self-centered lamentation. He begs God not to spurn his tears of distress (*mine teares ne for-seoh*, ll. 196–97), and travels on his way weeping (*wepende*, l. 213).

In the same volume as the Norris study, Stephen Stallcup draws attention to the motivation of materialism in Paphnutius's unhappiness at the loss of Euphrosyne (Stallcup 2011). He grieves for his daughter in terms that highlight the themes of ownership and commodity. One might add that Paphnutius's grief is self-pitying, thereby like that of Eustace straying into the area of *tristitia*. He even weepingly (*wepende*) rebukes his dead daughter for making him suffer (ll. 305–08).

Such excessive tears are worldly, and reflect, as Stallcup puts it, a "poor spiritual state" (p. 22). The same could be said about Boethius/Mind weeping, as mentioned above, whose grief was not about death or departure but rather the perceived worldly misfortunes that had come upon him. Wisdom reproaches him sternly: "Ac hwi tiolast þu þonne to wepanne butan andweorc?" (Prose 6, Section 6), "But why then do you give yourself up to weeping without reason"? This reworks Lady Philosophy's demand in the Latin original that Boethius cease his weeping, since fortune has not really turned against him: "Quare sicca iam lacrimas" [II, prose IV, l. 30], "Hence dry your tears now" (For the prose version of the Old English *Boethius*, see Godden and Irvine 2009).

Tears of distress arising from causes other than death and departure include those of the damned souls in hell, as highlighted, for example, in *Vercelli* Homily 9 (E), who "wepað heora synna swiðe bitterlicum tearum" (Scragg 1992, ll. 135–36), "weep for their sins with very bitter tears". The devils vanquished by the saint in the prose *Guthlac* are seen "to weep exceedingly and mourn" (*wepan swyðe and geomerian*, Gonser 1909, chp. 5, l. 274) that their powers have been shattered by Guthlac.

Assorted "good" distressed weepers are the mother who accidentally leaves her child at Saint Clement's sepulchre, which was soon to be flooded by sea water (Rauer 2013, p. 218; also Ælfric's life of Cuthbert in Clemoes 1997, pp. 497–506, ll. 134–35); the travelers terrified by a storm at sea in the *Life of Saint Giles* (Treharne 1997, pp. 131–47 (text), 148–62 (translation)), (ll. 69–71); and the Christian people of Ephesus persecuted by the emperor Decius in the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers*. Such instances are usually inherited from Latin sources; but it is notable that in the case of the *Seven Sleepers* the reference to weeping is added in the Old English version, intensifying the emphasis on distress: "ðonne weopon and geomredon þa þe on God belyfdon" (Magennis 1994, l. 36; Skeat 1881–1900, I, l. 40), "then those who believed in God wept and lamented"—the Latin has "luctus adprehendebat omnes fideles et miseria" (ll. 14–15), "grief and misery seized all the faithful".<sup>8</sup>



## 2.2. Saints

There is one category of individuals in Old English prose, however, who normally do not weep in distress no matter how sorely afflicted: God's saints. The saints celebrated in Old English hagiography, as more widely in medieval tradition, are typically awe-inspiring figures of perfection, who have risen above ordinary human limitations to reflect the radiance of heaven in their life on earth. They are serene and composed in the face of their own suffering, super-human in their fortitude and unwavering in their piety: admirable, though not easy to identify with. Ælfric, the most prolific vernacular Anglo-Saxon hagiographer, is particularly assiduous in accommodating his saints within this template, smoothing out perceived departures from it in his sources, and erasing inherited signs of frailty or weakness in the saints (see [Whatley 1997](#); [Whatley 2002](#); [DeGregorio 2001](#)).

If saints weep, it is mostly in sympathy for the distress of others, as when Saint Giles is moved by entreaties on behalf of an ill man—"dyde his gebede mid gelomlicen tearan agotennesse" ([Treharne 1997](#), ll. 223–24), "he said his prayers with frequent pouring forth of tears"—or Saint Martin in the *Blickling Homilies*, who in weeps as he raises an unbaptized man from the dead: "weop he & eode into him. & him wæs þæt swiþe mycclre weorce þæt he swa ungefulwad forðferan sceolde" ([Morris 1874/1876/1880](#), p. 216, ll. 21–22), "he wept and went in to him, and that was painful to him that he should pass over unbaptized"; in Ælfric's version of the life of Saint Martin in *Lives of Saints* it is said that Martin was "very sad" (*micclum dreorig*, [Skeat 1881–1900](#), II, l. 213) about this untimely death, but weeping is not mentioned.

Rather than weep in distress, Saint Laurence famously jokes with his persecutor on his hot grill, asking him to turn him over since he is done on one side (see [Clemoes 1997](#), pp. 418–28, ll. 217–19); upon having her breast cut off, Saint Agatha sternly rebukes her oppressor, telling him, "ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle . ansunde", "I have my breast in my soul, uninjured" ([Skeat 1881–1900](#), I, pp. 194–209, l. 126); Saint Cuthbert serenely stands in the cold sea all night in self-mortification (see [Godden 1979](#), pp. 247–48, l. 126). These saints, like a host of others, are superhuman in their heroism.

There are some exceptions to the rule that saints do not weep in distress. In the *Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* the repentant Mary weeps much at the time of her conversion from a life of debauchery and during her first years in the desert ([Magennis 2002](#); [Skeat 1881–1900](#), I, pp. 2–53).<sup>9</sup> But she is not yet a saint at that stage: unusually, Mary is a saint who develops into sanctity. By the time she meets the monk Zosimus, the narrator of her story, she has achieved a state of transcendent holiness, having moved beyond tears to become a sublime figure of otherworldly serenity. Zosimus weeps much in her presence as he strives to advance spiritually: Mary is the saint, humble but resplendent, while Zosimus is the seeker after enlightenment.

Saint Andrew weeps in distress in the Old English *Acts of Matthew and Andrew*. Andrew weeps as he is being tortured by the townspeople; his co-apostle Matthias has also wept earlier in the story, blinded, imprisoned and condemned to death: "he wæs simle to Drihtne biddende mid myclum wope" ([Cassidy and Ringler 1971](#), ll. 13–14), "he was continually praying to God with much weeping". Andrew is dragged through the streets, his blood flowing over the ground like water (ll. 209–10), and he weeps (*weop*, l. 213) in his agony. In an un-saintlike outburst, he even complains to God about his extreme suffering, resigned to his own human weakness:

And he cigde mid mycle wope to Drihtne and cwæp: "Min Drihten Hælend(e) Crist, me genihtsumiað þas tintrega, for þon ic eom geteorod. Min Drihten Hælend(e) Crist, ane tid on rode þu þrowodest, and þu cwæde: "Fæder, for hwon forlæte þu me"? Nu iii dagas syndon syððan ic wæs getogen þurh þisse ceastre lanum. Þu wast, Drihten, þa menniscan tyddernysse". (ll. 240–44)

And he called out to the Lord with much weeping and said, "My Lord Savior Christ, these torments are enough for me, for I am exhausted. My Lord Savior

Christ, once you suffered on the cross, and you said, “Father, why have you forsaken me”? Now for three days I have been dragged through the lanes of this town. You know human weakness, Lord”.

The Andrew text (along with the poem *Andreas* to be discussed below) is a translation of one of a distinctive, and early, type of hagiographical narrative, the apocryphal acts of the apostles, in which the protagonist is a developing figure rather than the usual paragon of perfection. Some of these acts were closely translated into Old English, though it is notable that Ælfric in particular had qualms about how saints were portrayed in them. Michael Lapidge characterizes the Andrew story as “non-hagiographical” (Lapidge [1991] 2013, p. 260), and Ivan Herbison explores the genre of apocryphal acts in more detail, noting, for example, the influence of Greek romance on it (Herbison 2000, pp. 190–91). From the perspective of idealizing medieval hagiography, Andrew is a highly untypical saint.

Another apostle who weeps in distress is the great Saint Paul in the apocryphal *Passion of Saints Peter and Paul*, a narrative about the contest between the apostles and the magician Simon. As the *Blickling Homilies* version of this has it, as Simon flies in the air in a demonstration of his powers: “Pa ahof Paulus up his heafod. Pa wæron his eagan gefyllede mid tearum, & he geseah Simon fleogende” (Morris 1874/1876/1880, pp. 189, ll. 36–190, 1), “Then Paul raised up his head. Then his eyes became filled with tears, and he saw Simon flying”. Here the Old English corresponds to the Latin source, which reads, “Cumque eleuasset caput Paulus lacrimis plenus oculos [variant reading: oculis lacrimis plenis] et uidisset Simonem uolantem” (Lipsius and Bonnet 1891, p. 165, ll. 19–20), “And when Paul raised his head, his eyes full of tears, he saw Simon flying”. In this instance, Paul shows that he is not yet the perfected saint. Scott DeGregorio writes that the episode of Simon flying “is of interest for its humanized depiction of the apostles”. He continues, “Their feelings and emotions are laid bare, exposing them as human, fallible creatures. They appear weak and uncertain of themselves” (DeGregorio 2001, p. 87). DeGregorio’s article demonstrates that Peter and Paul display such signs of weakness throughout the narrative.

Other weeping protagonists in hagiography are also confined to untypical saints’ lives, such as that of Mary of Egypt, mentioned above, and we have seen that Eustace weeps in his time of loss and misfortune, complaining to God in the same manner as Andrew. But the part of the Eustace legend in which the weeping occurs is really a romance narrative with a happy outcome, Eustace and his family reunited in the end. After this happy outcome, the story morphs into a conventional *passio*, in which Eustace and his family go to their deaths serenely glorifying God: no sign of weeping here.

In the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers*, in which we have noted the communal weeping of the persecuted community in Ephesus, the seven saints themselves weep profusely. These saints are essentially passive figures in what is a tale of wonder rather than a regular saint’s life; they function as unknowing instruments in a larger divine plan to confirm to the faithful the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. They are unlikely heroes in their all-too-human fearfulness and anxiety to avoid being captured. Faced with the prospect of arrest, “hi þonne ða seofon geomredon and weopon” (Magennis 1994, l. 111; Skeat 1881–1900, II, l. 125), “the seven then lamented and wept”. Later they hide from the emperor in a cave outside the city, where “ða wurdon heora eagan afyllede mid tearum” (Magennis 1994, l. 222; Skeat 1881–1900, l. 244), “then were their eyes filled with tears;” “hi on woþe wæron and hi on uneaðnysse spræcon” (Magennis 1994, l. 225; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 246–47) “they were in tears and spoke anxiously”; and “Ealle him wæron gehefode ða eagan of ðam menigfealdum biterlicum tearum þe hi ðær aleton” (Magennis 1994, ll. 227–228; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 249–50), “Their eyes were all made heavy by the copious bitter tears that they let fall there”.

Malchus, one of the seven who sneaks into Ephesus upon waking from the miraculous sleep not realizing that 365 years have passed since they fell asleep, is bewildered at the changes that he sees in the city and terrified at the hostile reception he receives. Rather than a powerful saint, he is a fearful youth, all alone, who wilts under the threats that oppress him. As he is led through the city and abused by the inhabitants, “him eall þa

eagan floterodon and bitere teares aleton" (Magennis 1994, ll. 599–600; Skeat 1881–1900, II, l. 655), "his eyes all fluttered and let bitter tears fall"; and, being cross-examined by the city official, "he ofdræd sloh adun þærrihte and hine sylfne astræhte ætforan eallum þam folce, and cwæð to heom eallum mid wependre stefne" (Magennis 1994, ll. 660–61; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 718–20), "he threw himself down at once, terrified, and prostrated himself before all the people, and he addressed them all with a weeping voice".

What is particularly notable about the treatment of tears in the *Seven Sleepers* is that, uniquely among vernacular Anglo-Saxon hagiographers, the Old English writer adds to the Latin source in reporting them. Some of the weeping is there in the source, but overall the reference to distress is more generalized in the Latin. We have already noted (pp. 4–5, above) that the mention of the distress of the Christian community in Ephesus is intensified in the Old English by the specific mention of weeping (not present in the original). Similarly, reference to weeping is added in the account of the misery of the seven sleepers themselves at the time of persecution in Ephesus (Magennis 1994, l. 111; Skeat 1881–1900, l. 125): the corresponding Latin reads "gemebant" (l. 44), "they groaned". The mentions of the seven weeping in the cave (Magennis 1994, l. 222; Skeat 1881–1900; Magennis 1994, l. 244, 227–28; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 249–50) are taken directly from the Latin (ll. 111, 113), but the Old English adds a further reference to weeping in the cave when it declares, as mentioned above, that "hi on wope wæron and hi on uneaðnysse spræcon" (Magennis 1994, l. 225; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 246–47), "they were in tears and spoke anxiously"; the Latin reads, less specifically, "sedentibus ipsis in luctu et loquentibus ipsis ad invicem" (ll. 112–13), "sitting in grief and talking to each other".

The focus on the weeping of the unhappy Malchus during his travails in Ephesus is also increased. The reference to him weeping as he is dragged through the city—"him eall þa eagan floterodon and bitere teares aleton" (Magennis 1994, ll. 599–600; Skeat 1881–1900, II, l. 655)—is inherited from the Latin, which reads "oculi eius lacrimabantur" (l. 285), "his eyes wept", but the Old English presents a sharper image. In addition, the account of Malchus weeping under the harsh questioning of the city official—"and cwæð to heom eallum mid wependre stefne" (Magennis 1994, ll. 660–61; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 718–20)—is the contribution of the Old English writer; there is nothing corresponding to this in the Latin, which simply has "et dixit eis" (l. 309), "and said to them".

The expansion of weeping references in the Old English version of the Seven Sleepers legend is consonant with the translator's general approach of humanizing the story and presenting Malchus and company as ordinary people in an extraordinary situation; but this approach is completely at odds with the model of idealizing hagiography typical of medieval saints' lives, certainly those of the kind favored by Ælfric. Interestingly, Ælfric has a (much abbreviated) version of the story of the Seven Sleepers in his second series of *Catholic Homilies* (Godden 1979, pp. 247–48), in which he removes all elements of human interest and does not even mention the hapless Malchus. Ælfric highlights the glory of the miracle of the saints' resurrection but has no interest in their experience or feelings (see further Magennis 1996).

Ælfric also has a version of the contest between Saints Peter and Paul and the magician Simon in his first series of *Catholic Homilies*. Here, unlike in the *Blickling* version, there is no mention of Paul weeping as Simon flies in the air. Paul addresses Peter with words of encouragement and bends his knees in prayer, but shows no sign of despondency (Clemoes 1997, pp. 388–99, ll. 236–38). As shown by Malcolm Godden, Ælfric used the same source as the *Blickling* translation for his version of the Peter and Paul legend, though supplemented by other material, but he treats that source with considerable freedom (Godden 1996, p. 210; Godden, 2000, pp. 269–71). In his detailed analysis comparing the *Blickling* and Ælfric versions, DeGregorio explains the purpose of Ælfric's revisions of the Latin source as to accommodate the saints within his required model of sanctity:

Consistently he tones down the humanizing—and from his point of view potentially unsettling—details manifest in the inherited story; his apostles thus emerge as powerful iconic presences who easily triumph over evil, serenely en-

dure persecution, and whose faith in God never once wavers (DeGregorio 2001, p. 89).

In the episode of Simon flying, Ælfric, unlike the *Blickling* homilist, is at pains to present Paul (and also Peter) as a flawless saint. The non-appearance of weeping on the part of Paul is very much in line with Ælfric's overall handling of the legend.

It is no surprise that Ælfric steers clear completely of the other anomalous lives discussed here, that is, those of Mary of Egypt, Andrew and the Mermedonians, and Eustace (even though the lives of Mary of Egypt and Eustace, along with the Acts of Peter and Paul and the Seven Sleepers, were in the Cotton Corpus Legendary, the major source for his saints' lives [Jackson and Lapidge 1996]). Like the vast majority of saints celebrated in medieval hagiography, Ælfric's saints do not weep in distress.

### 2.3. Poetry

Many of the same kinds of images of weeping found in Old English prose also occur in poetry. However, Old English poetry has few depictions of men weeping, since the poetry inherited from the "heroic" value-system of Germanic secular tradition an understanding that weeping is not appropriate for men, at least men in the prime of life (see Pàroli 1990; O'Brien O'Keeffe 1991). This understanding is also reflected in the eddic verse of Old Norse, which has no images of men weeping. As I show below, there are (rare) examples of tears of compunction shed by men in religious poetry; but as a general rule it is women who weep in the poetry, not men, or at least not individual men. Communities, including men, may be portrayed as weeping collectively in grief or fear, but rarely do we encounter a weeping male individual. Even the speaker in the Exeter Book "inkhorn" riddle 93 (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 241–42), portrayed as a wounded warrior when severed from its animal's head, does not weep from its injury:

No ic þa stunde bemearn,  
ne for wunde weop, ne wrecan meahte  
on wigan feore wonnscaft mine. (ll. 20–22)

Not at all did I mourn the time, weep from the wound, nor could I avenge my  
misfortune on the fighter's life.

Women weep. The female speakers in *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* do so, of course (see above, pp. 1–2). So too does Sarah's Egyptian maidservant Hagar in *Genesis A* in an addition to the biblical text:<sup>10</sup> as she flees to the wilderness, having been cast out by Abraham and Sarah, Hagar exclaims elegiacally,

Nu sceal tearighleor  
on westenne witodes bidan,  
hwonne of heortan hunger oððe wulf  
sawle and sorge somed abregde. (Krapp 1931, pp. 1–87, ll. 2276–79)

Now with tear-stained cheek I must await my fate in the wilderness, until hunger  
or wolf seize soul and sorrow together from my heart.

*The Fortunes of Men* has an image of a woman weeping as her child dies in a fire:

reoteð meowle,  
seo hyre bearn gesihð brondas þeccan. (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 155, ll. 46–47)  
the woman weeps, who sees flames covering her child.

Also, the warrior queen Elene weeps in her urgent desire to find the nails from Christ's cross in Cynewulf's poem on her:

A min hige sorgað,  
reonig reoteð, ond geresteð no  
ærþan me gefylle fæder ælmihtig,  
wereda wealdend, willan minne. (*Elene*, Krapp 1932a, pp. 66–102, ll. 1081–84)



My mind will always sorrow, mournful it will wail and get no rest at all until the almighty father, ruler of hosts, fulfil my desire.

The vivid word *reoteð* provides an intensity not paralleled in the Latin original.<sup>11</sup>

Collective weeping is also familiar in the poetry. There are several instances in *Beowulf*, as well as portrayals of lamentation in which weeping is not specifically referred to. The inhabitants of Heorot weep as a result of Grendel's first attack: "þa wæs æfter wiste wop up ahofen,/micel morgensweg" (Fulk et al., ll. 128–129), "then after the feasting weeping arose, great clamour in the morning" (or might *wop* be translated as "lamentation" here?). Elsewhere, Hrothgar tells Beowulf that, in the face of the vengeance enacted by Grendel's fearsome mother, many a thegn weeps in his spirit (Fulk et al. 2008, on *sefan greoteþ*, l. 1342), and, after the death of Beowulf, his followers mourn his body "with gushing tears" (*wollenteare*, l. 3032) and the smoke from his pyre is "wope bewunden" (l. 3146), "mingled with weeping/lamentation", as it rises up in the sky. In a striking personification in the course of Hrothgar's description of the sinister approaches to Grendel's mere, *Beowulf* also has an image of the skies weeping (*roderas reotað*, l. 1376).

In *Andreas* (Krapp 1932a, pp. 3–51), in a parallel to a scene in the prose *Acts of Matthew and Andrew* alluded to above (p. 3), the Lord tells the saint as he prepares to leave the city prematurely that the weeping and mourning minds of the people of Mermedonia have come before him (*Hira wop becom/murnende mod*, ll. 1666–67); the Lord instructs Andreas to stay on and complete his mission. The *Andreas* poet also relates that, when Andreas eventually does leave Mermedonia, the people weep again at his departure: "Stodon him ða on ofre æfter reotan" (l. 1712), "They stood on the shore then weeping after him". This second mention of weeping in *Andreas* is an emotive addition on the part of the Old English poet with no equivalent in the prose version or Latin analogues (see North and Bintley 2016, pp. 4–6); as suggested by Francis Leneghan, it draws upon a traditional motif of Old English narrative poetry, that of the departure of the hero (Leneghan 2019).

Other collective weepers in Old English poetry are Christ's followers overcome by grief in *Christ II* (*The Ascension*) as their Lord ascends to heaven,<sup>12</sup> the sinful people awaiting God's judgement on the Last Day in *Christ II*,<sup>13</sup> *Christ III* (*The Judgement*)<sup>14</sup> and *Judgement Day II*,<sup>15</sup> and the souls in hell enduring their torment. In *Judgement Day II*, the eyes of the damned weep in the eternal fires—"Hwilum þær eagan ungemetum wepað/for þæs ofnes bryne" (ll. 194–95), "There at times eyes weep exceedingly from the burning of that oven". Hell, according to *Christ and Satan* (recalling Matthew 8:12 etc.), is a place

þær is wom and wop wide gehered,  
and gristbitungc and gnornungc mecga (Krapp 1931, pp. 135–58, ll. 332–33)

Where noise and weeping are widely heard, and the gnashing of teeth and the lamentation of men.

In *Guthlac B*, thought by some to be authored by Cynewulf (see Bjork 2013, p. 11), the devils will not have long to wait before raising up weeping (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 75, *wop ahofun*, l. 905) after they have been defeated by the saint. In *Christ and Satan* (Krapp 1931), the devils lament their life in hell, without mention of tears, however, while in *Genesis B*, far from weeping, Satan, shackled in hell after his downfall, expresses fierce defiance of God. He casts himself not as a cowed figure of weakness but as an active heroic leader who will exact vengeance on his enemy (Krapp 1931). There is also reference to collective weeping in the *Paris Psalter*, following the Book of Psalms.<sup>16</sup>

But some individual males *do* weep in the poetry. Most notable among these is Hrothgar in *Beowulf*, who weeps at the departure of Beowulf from Denmark:

Gecyste þa cyning æpelum god,  
þeoden Scyldinga ðegn bet[e]stan  
ond be healse genam; hruron him tearas  
blondenfeaxum. Him wæs bega wen  
ealdum infrodum, opres swiðor,

þæt h[i] seoðða(n no) geseon moston,  
modige on meþle. (Fulk et al. 2008, ll. 1870–876)

Then the king, noble by lineage, the prince of the Scyldings, kissed the best thegn and took hold of him around the neck; tears fell from the grey-haired one. To him, old and wise, there was the expectation of two things, one the stronger likelihood, that they would not at all be permitted to see each other afterwards, noble-spirited ones speaking together.

Some critics have taken a straightforwardly sympathetic view of Hrothgar's behavior here, and the tears are indeed deeply affecting (see Irving 1987, pp. 263–64; Chickering 1977, p. 37; Wright 1967). By contrast, Mary Dockray-Miller argues that the king's weeping is reflective of his weakness and "fading masculinity" (Dockray-Miller [1998] 2006, p. 445).<sup>17</sup> Drawing upon the theory of the one-sex model of gender difference (see Laqueur 1992) as discerned by Carol Clover in her analysis of Old Norse literature (Clover [1993] 2006), Dockray-Miller compares the reactions of Beowulf and Hrothgar as they part. Beowulf, at the pinnacle of his manhood, does not reciprocate Hrothgar's outpouring of emotion—"he þone breostwylm forberan ne mehte" (Fulk et al. 2008, l. 1877), "he could not restrain the welling emotion"—but instead remains silent after Hrothgar's display, his mind being on other things (Dockray-Miller [1998] 2006, p. 458). In Clover's terms, Hrothgar's tears reflect "the disabled masculinity" of the old (Clover [1993] 2006, p. 414, n. 68). His weeping defines him as no longer an active warrior and is seen by Dockray-Miller in a negative light: Hrothgar is unmanly.

I would argue, however, that the image of Hrothgar weeping is one intended to elicit sadness rather than criticism. His weeping is a poignant reflection of the reality that he is now an old man who no longer has the vigor of youth. As such, it is not unexpected for him to weep, and he makes no attempt to conceal his tears: in the heroic world, weeping is allowable in the elderly. In weeping, Hrothgar acknowledges his own fading masculinity but also his awareness of the sadness of things, an awareness lacking in the young hero. Later in the poem, Beowulf speaks of Hrothgar lamenting his lost youth: "gioguðe cwiðan" (l. 2112).

As brought out by Kirsten Mills, the emotions of Hrothgar are complex in this scene: the interplay of his feelings "indicates an appreciation on the part of the poet and audience for the intricacies of emotional states" (Mills 2016, p. 175). Mills views Hrothgar's tears in a positive light, arguing indeed that they indicate his authority: "He is in control, publicly performing the emotions he wishes to display, while hiding the emotions he prefers not to reveal" (an allusion to the "dyrne langað", "secret longing", of Hrothgar mentioned a few lines later (l. 1879)). It seems to me that Beowulf is the one in control in the farewell scene, but Hrothgar's tears, while not positive, are not to be disparaged. They should be understood as acceptable behavior in an old man, bearing out the fact that he is an old man.

There is much other lamentation in *Beowulf*, including that of the "last survivor" (ll. 2244–70) and the old man whose son has died on the gallows (ll. 2444–62), but in none of these is weeping specifically mentioned. The only other possible individual male weeper in *Beowulf* (if we take *wop* to denote weeping in the relevant verse) is the unheroic Grendel—hardly a role model for a warrior seeking renown—who is heard by the Danes to raise up *wop* (l. 785) in his fight with Beowulf.

Another inglorious warrior is the gold-adorned enemy of the inanimate speaker in Exeter Riddle 71 ("sword"? ) (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 232), who weeps under the speaker's attack:

Wepeð hwilum  
for minum gripe se þe gold wigeð. (ll. 5–6)

At times he weeps because of my attack, he who wears gold.

This enemy lacks the self-control shown by the wounded speaker in the inkhorn riddle.

A weeping male in religious poetry is the attendant of Saint Guthlac in *Guthlac B*. As in the Old English prose *Life of Saint Guthlac* (see above, 3–4), though with more elaboration, he weeps at the news that Guthlac is soon to die:

Pa wæs wop and heaf,  
geongum geocer sefa, geomrende hyge  
[...], He þæs onbæru  
habban ne meahte, ac he hate let  
torn þoliende tearas geotan,  
weallan wægdropan. (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 79, ll. 1047–48, 1054–57)

Then there was weeping/lamentation and mourning, a sad mood for the young man, a grieving mind ... He could not keep his feelings in check but, enduring his grief, he let his hot tears pour forth, welling drops.

The *Guthlac B* poet also contributes an emotive description of the attendant's weeping on his journey to inform Guthlac's sister of his death:

Him þæs wopes hring  
torne gemonade. Teagor yðum weol,  
hate hleordropan, ond on hreþre wæg  
micle modceare. (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, p. 87, ll. 1339–42)

An outpouring of weeping distressingly reminded him of [Guthlac's death]. His tears welled in waves, hot drops on his cheeks, and in his breast, he bore great grief of spirit.<sup>18</sup>

This added detail (it is not in the Latin) enhances the sense of the attendant's love for his master. We have seen similar displays of grief in prose saints' lives, but it is significant, in a poetic context, that the weeper in *Guthlac B* is a servant rather than someone from the elite class that Old English poetry normally focuses on. In *Guthlac B* the attendant does not even merit a name (he is Beccel in the prose version and its source). Earlier he had been portrayed as lacking in courage—"ða afyrht wearð/ar elnes beloren" (ll. 1326–27), "then he became frightened, the messenger, dispossessed of courage"—and as "unhyðig" (l. 1138), "unhappy", rather than displaying heroic resolution.

In *The Dream of the Rood* (Krapp 1932a, pp. 61–65), the speaking cross relates that it and the two other crosses on Calvary stood weeping (*greotende*, l. 70) after the death of Jesus. The cross portrays itself as a wretched figure in the first part of the poem, abject and passive, while Christ is presented as an active warrior, a young hero, strong and resolute (*strang ond stiðmod*, l. 40). Christ the heroic figure does not weep, but the cross and his companions, lesser beings, express their grief through tears. Of course, if any event in world history was deserving of the tears in Anglo-Saxon England it was the death of Christ. Indeed, the cross exclaims that all creation wept at the time of his death (*weop eal gesceaft*, l. 55).

The two other male figures who weep in distress in Old English hagiographical poetry are more problematic: Matheus and Andreas in *Andreas* (Krapp 1932a, pp. 3–51). Not only are Matheus and Andreas saints (and we have seen in a previous section that saints normally do not weep in distress); they are also presented in *Andreas* in the language of Germanic heroism—they are mighty warriors, and as such should not weep. But they do: a double incongruity.

Influenced by secular traditional poetry, and particularly by *Beowulf* (see Riedinger 1993; Powell 2002; Orchard 2016; North and Bintley 2016, pp. 62–81), *Andreas* begins by describing the twelve apostles in Germanic terms as heroic figures: they are valiant in war (Krapp 1932a, *fyrðhwate*, l. 8), strong warriors (*rofe rincas*, l. 9). Then the poet focuses in on Matheus:

Eadig ond onmod, he mid elne forð  
wyrðode wordum wuldres aldor. (ll. 54–55)

Blessed and resolute, with courage he continued to show honor in his words towards the Lord of glory.

In the very next sentence after this expression of praise for the saint's *ellen*, "courage", however, Matheus is presented as weeping with miserable tears (*wepende weregum tearum*, l. 59) due to his torments at the hands of the Mermedonians. He vows to God that he is willing to endure death (ll. 72–75), but the tears are incongruous in their poetic context.

The tears of Matheus might be viewed as excusable, in that he is not the protagonist of the legend but a passive figure in need of rescue by the powerful Andreas, but the idea of a passive saint is in itself an incongruity: Matheus is still an apostle, and he is portrayed as heroic. In addition, the powerful Andreas himself succumbs to weeping in his time of torment in Mermedonia. The narrative is replete with references to Andreas's prowess, for example, as he prepares to set out on his mission: he is "bold in thought" (*briste on gebance*, 237), "a brave-spirited warrior" (*cempa collenferhð*, l. 538), "hard in battle" (*wiges heard*, l. 839) and so on. But in his time of trial Andreas weeps as he recounts the extent of his suffering: "weop werigferð" (l. 1400), "he wept weary in his spirit", taking heart eventually when God promises to protect him and tells him not to weep: "Ne wep þone wræcsið" (l. 1431), "Do not weep for your wretched experience".

The *Andreas* poet clearly wishes to adhere to the details of the story as they were inherited from the Latin source (North and Bintley 2016, pp. 4–6), and so faithfully transmits the references to Andreas and Matheus weeping during their torment. The saints express emotion in a human way: they are flawed individuals from the genre of apocryphal acts of the apostles, as discussed above (p. 8), rather than figures of perfection. God has to rebuke the "sinful" Andreas (*synnig*, l. 921) for showing reluctance about undertaking his mission to Mermedonia (ll. 926–32) and again when he ends his ministry there prematurely (ll. 1669–74). As suggested by Herbison, the *Andreas* poet gets himself into something of a generic bind in converting intractable source material into "regular" hagiography (Herbison 2000). The incongruity of *Andreas* is that, while including inherited humanizing details typical of the apocryphal acts, the poet also follows the idealizing approach of hagiography as adapted to the mode of traditional Old English poetry, in which heroes are beyond human frailty and negativity. This incongruity is apparent in the inclusion of apostolic tears as well as in the wider range of features noted by Herbison.

### 3. Tears of Compunction

The emotion of compunction is the cause of some of the most copious tears in Old English writings. Compunction is a special kind of distress: it is that "pricking" or "stinging" (Greek *katanyxis*, Latin *compunctio*, Old English *inbryrdness* [on the Old English vocabulary of compunction, see Izdebska 2020, pp. 85–86; Thornbury 2007; McEntire 1990, pp. 81–88]) of the heart that "may strengthen [one's] relationship with God and effect [one's] own salvation" (McCormack 2015, p. 145). Developed originally in the Eastern church (see Mellas 2020, pp. 1–24; Hunt 2004; Chrysavgis 2004; Hausherr and Hufstader 1982), the idea of compunction became a central feature of Christian spirituality in the early medieval West, where its principles were most influentially propounded by Gregory the Great (see Williams and Steenbrugge 2020; McEntire 1986, 1990). Gregory discusses compunction in his *Dialogues* (de Vogüé 1978–1980, II, pp. 398–402), which were widely known in Anglo-Saxon England and indeed translated into Old English (Hecht; see Lapidge 2006, p. 304). Among thinkers who took up Gregory's understanding of compunction was Alcuin of York in a passage in his *De virtutibus et vitiis* (PL 101, 613–38D), a work also widely known in Anglo-Saxon England and also translated into Old English (Warner 1917, pp. 99–100; see Szarmach 1990; Lapidge 2006, p. 251; Clayton 2013).<sup>19</sup>

Gregory recognizes two kinds of compunction, as transmitted in the Old English version of the *Dialogues*:

soðlice ealdorlice syndon tu cyn þære inbryrdnesse, þæt is, þonne seo sawl  
þyrsteð 7 lysteþ 3odes rices, ærest heo byþ inbryrdeð mid ege 7 æfter þon mid  
lufan. Ærest heo swænceð hi sylfe mid tearum, þonne heo zemynað þa zyltas  
hire yfelra dæda 7 ondrædeþ, þæt heo scyle for þam þrowian þa ecan cwicsusla;  
7 þonne heo byð mid lanðre nearonesse þære 3nornunze forht 7 zeswænced 7



fornæmed, þonne æt nehstan byþ acænned of bældre forðifnesse sorhreasnes, 7 þæt mod byþ inæled in þære lufan heofonlicra Ʒefeara, 7 seo sawl, þe ær weop, þæt heo ne sceolde beon Ʒelæded to þam ecan wite, heo onƷinneð æfter þan weopan biterlice, forþon þe hire þynceð lang seo ylding 7 seo uferung, hwænne heo cume to Ʒode. (Hecht 1900, pp. 244–45, ii. 34)

In truth there are principally two kinds of compunction, that is, when the soul thirsts for and desires the kingdom of God, first it is stimulated with fear and after that with love. First it oppresses itself with tears when it remembers the sins of its evil deeds and fears that it must suffer eternal hell-torment for them; and when it is afraid and oppressed and worn out with the long-lasting distress of lamentation, then finally the security of having been boldly forgiven will be born, and the mind will be inspired in the love of heavenly joy, and the soul, which previously wept that it should not be led to eternal torment, will begin after that to weep bitterly because the wait and the delay seem long to it until it may come to God.<sup>20</sup>

Compunction is an emotion particularly associated with monastic spirituality as affirmed by the Rule of St. Benedict (White 2008, chp 4, p. 18),<sup>21</sup> but in Anglo-Saxon England (as elsewhere) it is also widely urged upon the faithful more generally. McEntire stresses the importance of sermons in transmitting the doctrine to laypeople (McEntire 1990, pp. 92–108).

Ælfric adopts Gregory's distinction when he writes in Homily 9 of the first series of his *Catholic Homilies*,

On twa wisan byð se mann onbryrd ærest he him ondræt hellewite 7 bewæpð his synna syððan he nimð eft lufe to gode; þonne onginð he to murncienne 7 þincð him to lang hwænne he beo genumen of þyses lifes earfoðnyssum. 7 gebroht to ecere reste.<sup>22</sup> (Clemoes 1997, ll. 89–92)

In two ways is a person stimulated to compunction: first he fears the torment of hell and weeps for his sins; afterwards he again feels love for God; then he begins to grieve and it seems to him too long until he be taken from the afflictions of this life and brought to eternal rest.

Most references to tears of compunction in Old English prose texts are to the former kind, those of penitence and remorse for past sins. Thus, to give a few instances from a range of literature, *Blickling* Homily 5 speaks of overcoming the threat of hell with “fasts and prayers and the shedding of tears” (*mid fæstenum & mid gebædum & mid teara gytum*, 61, ll. 19–20) (Morris 1874/1876/1880, pp. 54–65). In Homily 3 of his second series of *Catholic Homilies*, Ælfric directs that each member of the faithful should “weep for their sins and atone for them with true repentance according to the direction of wise teachers” (*he sceal his synna bewepan. and mid soðre behreowsunge gebetan æfter wisra lareowa tæcunge*, ll. 226–27) (Godden 1979, pp. 19–28). I have already referred to the beginning of *Vercelli* Homily 4, which urges people to weep and fear for their sins (p. 2, above).

Among narrative texts, tears of compunction are shed, for example, in the *Old English Martyrology*, where the penitent sinner Saint Pelagia weeps profusely: “weop heo sona swa ðæt hyre fleowon þa tearas of ðam eagam swa swa flod” (Rauer 2013, p. 202), “she wept at once so that her tears streamed from her eyes like rivers”; Saint Mary Magdelene does likewise (Rauer 2013, p. 133). Particularly copious are the tears of compunction of another penitent sinner, Saint Mary of Egypt, whose moment of conversion comes at the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. According to the account of her conversion that Mary gives in the *Old English Life*,

Þa onhran soðlice min mod and þa eagan minre heortan hælo andgit, mid me sylfre þendende þæt me þone ingang belucen þa unfeormeganda minra misdæda. Ða ongan ic biterlice wepan and swiðe gedrefed mine breost cnyssan and of

inweardre heortan heofende forðbrigan þa geomorlican siccetunga. (Magennis 2002, ll. 484–89; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 424–29)

Then knowledge of salvation truly touched my mind and the eyes of my heart, when I reflected that the inexpressible circumstances of my misdeeds had closed the entrance against me. Then I began to weep bitterly and to beat my breast in great tribulation and, from deep in my heart, to bring forth sorrowful sighs.

Mary recounts how she ran weeping on her journey to the River Jordan (*wepende be þam siðfæte arn*, Magennis 2002, l. 570; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 494–95) and how she wept continually as she began her solitary life of repentance in the desert, strengthened by her devotion to the Virgin Mary (Magennis 2002, ll. 629–30, 735–38; Skeat 1881–1900, II, ll. 541–42, 546–49).

The *Life of Saint Mary of Egypt* also has what may be seen as tears of compunction of the second kind, tears of desire for heaven. These occur in the response of the monk Zosimus to his encounter with Mary. To Zosimus, as to the reader of her *Life*, Mary is a superior being, a manifestation of heavenly perfection in the world, and he continuously weeps in her presence. Some of Zosimus's tears arise from self-pity and misplaced grief, but he also weeps in awe and desire for the transcendence that Mary represents. She walks on water, can recite the *Credo* and *Pater noster* even though she has never been taught them, and somehow she knows Zosimus's name and details about his monastery; at the time of her death she leaves a written message for Zosimus, despite having told him that she had never learned to read or write. In the face of such supernatural powers, Zosimus is overcome with weeping: he weeps as she begins the salutary story of her life—"Se ealda mid tearum ofergoten ongan biterlice wepan" (Magennis 2002, l. 359; Skeat 1881–1900, II, l. 322), "The old man suffused with tears began to weep bitterly"—and as she continues it—"soðlice þa eorðan mid tearum ofergeotende" (Magennis 2002, l. 408; Skeat 1881–1900, II, l. 363), "truly soaking the ground with his tears".

Tears of desire for heaven are also shed by Ælfric's Saint Agatha in his *Lives of Saints*, fervent in her wish for martyrdom—"Ðis heo cwæð mid woþe" (l. 22), "she spoke this with weeping" (Skeat 1881–1900, I, pp. 194–209, l. 22)—while in Ælfric's life of Saint Cuthbert in the second series of his *Catholic Homilies* the hermit Herebert prays "with eyes fluttering with tears" (*mid floteriendum tearum*) that he may travel to heaven at the same time as Cuthbert (Godden 1979, pp. 81–92, ll. 314–15). Elsewhere, Ælfric preaches that we should long for heaven "mid modes geomerunge 7 mid manegum tearum", "with lamentation of the mind and with many tears" (Pope 1967/1968, II, pp. 567–83, l. 146). In the *Old English Martyrology* it is reported that Saint Lupus was accustomed to praying in tears (*on wependum gebedum*, Rauert 2013, p. 146), and in the anonymous *Life of the Seven Sleepers* there may be an element of compunction in the tears that the emperor Theodosius sheds over the risen saints, figures of heavenly transfiguration: "he þa beclypte hi ealle, and for þære micelan blysse synderlice he weop ofer ælcne" (Magennis 1994, ll. 756–57; Skeat 1881–1900, ll. 823–24), "then he embraced them all, and because of his joy he wept over each of them separately". As he weeps over them, it seems to Theodosius that he is standing before God himself in his majesty: "and nu me þincð eac swilce ic stande gesewenlice æt his wuldorfullan mægenþrymme foran and his agene stefne gehyre" (Magennis 2002, ll. 761–62; Skeat 1881–1900, ll. 827–30), "and now it seems to me also as though I stand visibly before his glorious majesty and hear his own voice".

The theme of compunction has also been discerned in Old English poetry, specifically *The Wanderer* (see Palmer 2004), and one might also suggest that this theme provides the motivating emotion in *The Dream of the Rood*; in neither of these poems, however, is compunction mentioned specifically.<sup>23</sup> Frances McCormack interprets the "bloody tears" (*blodigum tearum*, l. 1174) of Christ III (Kraupp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 27–49) shed by personified trees at the time of Christ's crucifixion, as tears of compunction (McCormack 2015),<sup>24</sup> though these might also be taken to be tears of sympathy and grief: a few lines later it is stated that the trees "became sorrowful" (*unrot gewearð*, l. 1182) as they perceived the suffering of the Lord. Clearer-cut examples of tears of compunction come in the homiletic

piece *Judgement Day II* (Dobbie 1942, pp. 58–67) and the epilogue to Cynewulf's *Juliana* (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 113–133). In *Judgement Day II* the penitent speaker calls upon his eyes to send forth tears:

Ic bidde eow benum nu ða  
 þæt ge ne wandian wiht for tearum,  
 ac dreorige hleor dreccað mid wope  
 and sealtum dropum sona ofergeotaþ,  
 and geopeniað man ecum drihtne. (ll. 33–37)

I ask you now then with supplications that you do not at all turn aside from tears but that you drench my sorrowing cheeks with weeping and at once flood them with salty drops and that you reveal my guilt to the eternal Lord.

*Judgement Day II* mentions tears of compunction again as it preaches the necessity for repentance while there is still time:

Nu þu scealt greotan, tearas geotan,  
 þa hwile tima sy and tid wopes;  
 nu is halwende þæt man her wepe  
 and dædbote do drihtne to willan. (Dobbie 1942, ll. 82–85)

Now you must weep, pour forth tears, while there is time and tide for weeping; now it is salutary that one weep here and make repentance according to the Lord's will.

The reference to compunction at the end of *Juliana* comes in a strikingly personal passage, in which the speaker declares,

Sar eal gemon,  
 synna wunde, þe ic siþ opþe ær  
 geworhte in worulde. Þæt ic wopig sceal  
 tearum mænan. (ll. 709–12)

I remember all the pains, the wounds of sin, that I did in the world, recently or in the past. Weeping I must sorrow for that with tears.

He laments that he has felt shame too late for his sinful deeds (*Wæs an tid to læt/þæt ic yfeldæda ær gescomede*, ll. 712–13). In this epilogue, as he contemplates his own death, the speaker imaginatively applies the image of tears of compunction as part of an emotional recognition of his own unworthiness and his need for intercession from Saint Juliana and from anyone who recites his poem (*þe þis gied wræce*, l. 719).

The *Juliana* image is also notable as an original contribution by Cynewulf rather than being translated or adapted from a Latin source, as is the case with most of the instances referred to in this section. Even *Judgement Day II* very much takes its lead in the portrayal of tears from images in its source, Bede's poem *De die iudicii* (Fraipont 1955, pp. 439–44; Allen and Calder 1976, pp. 208–12).<sup>25</sup>

Tears in Old English are almost invariably the result of external factors and are usually shed in some kind of social context. The tears of compunction, on the other hand, spring from personal introspection, and lack a social dimension. They may be shed in the presence of others (Mary of Egypt asking the Virgin Mary for aid, for example, or Theodosius weeping before the Seven Sleepers), but they are not aimed at anyone other than the self in the recognition of its relationship to God. Nor are tears of compunction gendered, even in Old English poetry: "Cynewulf" sheds tears of compunction in *Juliana*, thereby rejecting the values of the secular heroic world with its disapproval of male weeping, while the preaching in *Judgement Day II* may be seen as directed at both men and women.

#### 4. Other Tears

Tears of *supplication* are a fairly familiar theme in religious prose (but not in extant verse<sup>26</sup>). Such tears can accompany fervent entreaty of the Almighty, as in *Blickling Homily*

7 (Morris 1874/1876/1880, pp. 82–97), in which the holy souls in hell beg Christ “mid wependre halsunga” (ibid., 87, l. 8), “with weeping supplication”, for release as he harrows hell. According to *Vercelli Homily 15*, the Virgin Mary will weepingly ask her son to have mercy on the host of sinners at the Last Judgement: “þonne ariseð heo mid wependre stefne 7 gefealleð to Cristes cneowum 7 to his fotum” (Scragg 1992, ll. 143–144), “then she will arise with weeping voice and fall to Christ’s knees and to his feet”. The *Old English Martyrology* reports that Saint Gregory interceded with his tears and with his prayers (*mid his tearum ond mid his gebedan*, Rauer 2013, p. 64) for the soul of the pagan emperor Trajan (see O’Loughlin and Conrad-O’Brian 1993).<sup>27</sup>

Examples of tears in supplication to saints are those of the *wylf*, “female servant”, in Ælfric’s *Life of Saint Swithun* (Skeat 1881–1900, II, pp. 440–71), who, condemned to be flogged, begs Swithun to help her: “mid wope clypode to ðam halgan swyðune þæt he gehulpe hire earmre” (ll. 169–170), “she called out with weeping to the holy Swithun that he help her in her wretchedness”. In the prose *Life of Saint Guthlac* (the episode is not included in the *Guthlac* poems), relatives of the nobleman Hwætred ask the saint, “wepende” (Gonser 1909, chp. 12, l. 37), “weeping”, to exorcize the evil spirit that possesses him; interestingly, there is no mention of weeping at the corresponding point in the Latin original (compare chp. 41 of Felix’s *Vita*, Colgrave 1956).

The tears of supplication mentioned so far are “genuine” tears addressed sincerely to an authority figure. There is one example in Old English of feigned or manipulative tears (though it could be argued that to some extent all tears of supplication have an element of manipulation).<sup>28</sup> This comes in the Old English translation of chapters from the *Vitae Patrum*, where a monk is deceived by the fake weeping of a woman who wishes to seduce him: she approaches him “with a weeping voice” (*woplicre stefne*, l. 29) and “crying, lamenting” (*woperiende*, l. 32) (Assmann 1889, pp. 109–207, l. 32).<sup>29</sup> The monk has a narrow escape.

Tears of *sympathy* or *compassion* also occur occasionally in Old English hagiographical prose: tears of sympathy or compassion are one kind of weeping regarded as unproblematically appropriate for holy men and women. We noticed in an earlier section a couple of instances of saints weeping in sympathy, including one involving Saint Martin (p. 5, above). Martin also weeps in Ælfric’s *Life of Saint Martin* in *Lives of Saints* when he has pity on his fellow monks who are distressed that he is soon to die: “þa wearð se halga wer mid þysum wordum astyrod. and clypode mid wope” (Skeat 1881–1900, l. 1341–1342), “then the holy man became moved at these words and called out with weeping”; the episode is also in the *Blickling* version of the life of Martin (Morris 1874/1876/1880, p. 225, ll. 24–26). The transvestite Saint Euphrosyne weeps for her distraught father when he visits her in her monastery and does not recognize her in her monkly garb: “þa wearð heo eall mid tearum geond-goten” (*Life of Saint Euphrosyne*, Skeat 1881–1900, l. 234), “then she was all suffused with tears”. In one of the Old English lives of Saint Margaret it is the saint who is the object of pity, when women weep at the torment she must endure: “And ealle þa fæmnan þe þe þær stoden weopen bitterlice for þæm blode” (p. 118), “And all the women who stood there wept bitterly because of the blood” (Clayton and Magennis 1994, pp. 112–39, ll. 4–5).

Images of weeping in supplication and weeping in sympathy in Old English prose have invariably been transmitted from Latin sources. There is one occurrence of sympathetic weeping in the poetry, and it is an occurrence that is the contribution of the Old English poet rather than being inherited. In the free adaptation of Genesis in *Genesis A*, the narrator pauses in the account of the killing of Abel to comment that it is not in vain that we weep at this baleful story:

We þæt spell magon,  
wælgimme wyrd, wope cwiðan,  
nales holunga. (Krapp 1931, ll. 995–997)

Not at all without cause can we lament that story with tears, that slaughter-grim fate.



The evoking of communal tears in response to the story of Cain and Abel, which brought violence to humanity, heightens the emotion of the narration. Such a touch, involving narrator and audience, is not paralleled elsewhere in the poem, however, or indeed elsewhere in Old English poetry.

Other kinds of weeping appear sporadically in the corpus. In the prose *Life of Saint Guthlac*, Beccel is deceived by the devil into wanting to kill the saint: regretting his sin, he confesses to Guthlac: “and þa sona mid tearum him his synne andette” (Gonser 1909, chp. 7, l. 32), “and then at once with tears he confessed his sin to him”. Beccel’s tears may be seen as denoting *shame*. Tears of shame are shed too in Ælfric’s account of the emperor Theodosius’s response to the rebuke of Saint Ambrose after an infamous massacre in Thessalonica: “He sæt þa on hys bure biterlice wepende” (l. 80), “He sat in his room weeping bitterly”; “he beot hys breost, biterlice wepende” (l. 131), “he beat his breast, weeping bitterly” (Homily 26 in Pope 1967/1968, II, pp. 762–69).<sup>30</sup>

Tears of *reverence* or *awe* are portrayed in the *Life of Saint Euphrosyne*, where a one-eyed man weeps as he kisses the saint’s body and is healed by touching it (Skeat 1881–1900, l. 321). In the *Old English Martyrology*, Saint Eadberht weeps to learn of the uncorrupted state of Saint Cuthbert’s body (Rauer 2013, p. 98). The tears of Zosimus before Saint Mary of Egypt, mentioned above, express awe and reverence for her, an aspect of the compunction he experiences.

The other “positive” tears in Old English are those of *joy* or *relief*. Joy is expressed through weeping at the reuniting of families in the romance tales of Eustace and Apollonius of Tyre. Eustace weeps with great joy (*for micelre blisse weop*, *Life of Saint Eustace*, Skeat 1881–1900, l. 364) on being reunited with his wife, and the whole family weeps (l. 382), giving thanks to God, when the sons are also found. In *Apollonius of Tyre* Arcestrate weeps on being reunited with Apollonius (Goolden 1958, p. 38, l. 7), and all the local people join in: “And hig weopon ða ealle and eac blissodon” (p. 38, l. 12), “And they all wept and also rejoiced”.<sup>31</sup> There is much weeping for joy in the *Life of Saint Nicholas* (Treharne 1997, pp. 83–100 (text), 101–117 (translation)): for example, a poor man weeps each time when Nicholas leaves gifts of gold for him on three nights (ll. 93, 102, 114–15).<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in the *Life of Saint Giles* sailors weep when the saint calms a storm (Treharne 1997, l. 78); Giles himself weeps when the Lord shows him a place to live (l. 174) and again when he finds a water spring (l. 240). In the Old English translation of chapters from the *Vitae Patrum* a monk weeps for joy having been spared from sexual sin (Assmann 1889, l. 121).<sup>33</sup> In *Saint Mary of Egypt* Zosimus expresses joy (*wynsumigende*, Magennis 2002, l. 902; Skeat 1881–1900, l. 756) to find out Mary’s name after she has passed away, and he goes on to weep glorifying God at her miraculous journey (Magennis 2002, ll. 908–09; Skeat 1881–1900, ll. 761–62); this weeping may be seen as combining joy with reverence at such wonders, as well as sorrow at Mary’s passing.

In the romance-like (see further Anlezark 2006) biblical story of Joseph and his brothers transmitted in the Old English *Heptateuch*, Joseph sheds tears of joy at being united with his brothers: “And he weop and clypode hludre stemne” (Genesis 45:2, Marsden 2008, p. 79), “And he wept and called out with a loud voice”; and again, “And he clypte hira ælcne and cyste hig and weop” (45:15, Marsden 2008, p. 80), “and he embraced each of them and kissed them and wept”. As Jonathan Wilcox points out, however, the mention of Joseph’s tears is reduced in the Old English: verses 2 (“And he lifted up his voice with weeping”) and 15 of Genesis (“And Joseph kissed all his brethren and wept upon every one of them”) are translated, but not verse 14 (“And falling upon the neck of his brother Benjamin he embraced him and wept, and Benjamin in like manner wept also on his neck”). Wilcox sees in this omission a “downplaying” of weeping in a male authority figure, and wonders, “Is the biblical account too ready to show its lead protagonist in tears for the comfort of an Anglo-Saxon audience?” (Wilcox 2012, p. 29).

Joseph has also wept upon first seeing Benjamin, concealing this weeping from his brothers: “And he wearþ swa swiþe astirod, þæt him feollon tearas for his broþor þingon and he eode into his beddclyfan and weop” (43:30, Marsden 2008, p. 77), “And he was so

severely afflicted that tears fell from him on account of his brother's experiences and he went into his bedchamber and wept" (Wilcox 2012, p. 23), closely paraphrasing the Vulgate original. Here Joseph's emotions are more conflicted—he experiences joy, yes, but he has also deceived his brothers (who have tried to murder him) and continues to deceive them, and his feelings towards them are distinctly mixed.<sup>34</sup>

Also mixed are the feelings of the protagonist in the *Life of Saint Eustace* when tracked down by former acquaintances in his place of seclusion. As noted above, Eustace weeps when eventually reunited with his family, but he also weeps earlier in the narrative in this scene in which he is visited by old companions who do not recognize him at first. Eustace is joyful at seeing them, but they also remind him of the successful life he once had but lost, and he is also anxious to keep his identity from them. As he serves them a meal, he "gemunde hu hi him ær þenod[on]. and ne mihte forberan þæt he ne weope. ac eode ut and þwoh his eagan" (Skeat 1881–1900, ll. 262–64), "remembered how they had served him and could not forbear to weep but went out and washed his eyes".<sup>35</sup> In this affecting scene, reminiscent of Joseph meeting Benjamin, Eustace is overcome by emotion but manages to conceal that emotion from his guests.

These scenes in the *Hexateuch* and the *Life of Saint Eustace* of individuals retreating to a private room to weep are instances of a trope that occurs elsewhere in hagiography/romance texts, including one translated into Old English: we noticed, above, the private weeping of Theodosius (I) when rebuked about a massacre he had been responsible for. Withdrawal from public view indicates a turbulence of the mind that the affected person, who is someone in authority, wishes to conceal from others. An analogous scene occurs in the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers* when Theodosius (II) is grieved and confused about a heresy that has sprung up in his time, though this scene does not specifically mention weeping among its signs of distress (Magennis 1992, ll. 359–60; Skeat 1881–1900, ll. 391–96).<sup>36</sup> Privacy to express emotion is not otherwise sought by people in Old English writings.

There is one instance of tears of joy in Old English poetry: in *Elene*. Elene weeps for joy at the recovery of the nails from Christ's cross:

Pa wæs wopes hring,  
hat heafodwylm ofer hleor goten,  
(nalles for torne tearas feollon  
ofer wira gespon), wuldres gefylled  
cwena willa. (Krapp 1932a, ll. 1131–35)

Then there was the sound of weeping, a hot surge from her head poured over her cheeks (not at all for grief did tears fall upon her filigree clasp), the desire of the queen was fulfilled with glory.

Unlike the prose instances of tears of joy, this striking image is an emotive addition on the part of Cynewulf to the inherited text.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

*Tearas feollon* widely in Old English prose and poetry, and most of them presented as appropriate and worthy; but some as inappropriate, including tears of *tristitia* and tears of distress shed by active males. Tears in Old English express individual or communal sorrow and pain (as well as other emotions), but, whether individual or communal, they do so almost invariably in a social setting, functioning gesturally in the presence of others. Only the practice of tears of compunction and the motif of tears shed in a private room lack this social dimension; in the latter case privacy is sought by a figure in authority who conceals his weeping, while in the former the person weeping looks inward, the presence of others being irrelevant.

The references to weeping cited in this study are mostly representative of the wider literary tradition in the early Middle Ages, with Old English texts, especially prose texts, passing on to vernacular audiences images inherited from Latin writings; in doing so, they

focus particularly on tears of compunction and tears of distress, familiar themes in early medieval Christendom. Yet close dependence on Latin originals can lead to incongruities, such as those that arise in the transmission of apocryphal acts and other untypical saints' lives, in which protagonists are shown not as perfected figures of sanctity in accordance with hagiographical convention but as flawed human beings who learn from experience. They shed unsaintly tears of distress. Some Old English translators seem unconcerned about such incongruity, and indeed the *Legend of the Seven Sleepers* (uniquely in Old English prose) actively embraces the humanity of its saints; but such portrayals are not acceptable to a purist like Ælfric.

Old English Christian poetry is freer in its treatment of sources, and has a number of images of weeping original to the vernacular works, not least in the poetry of Cynewulf (even more so if *Guthlac B* is accepted as Cynewulfian). Old English poetry also inherited from Germanic secular tradition an understanding that weeping is inappropriate in active men, an understanding that can be seen reflected in *Beowulf* but also in religious narrative, in which weeping is largely confined to women and groups. The idea of weeping as inappropriate for a hero leads to incongruity in *Andreas*, however, in which both Matheus and Andreas shed tears of distress in their times of torment. The Old English poet is faithful to the source in transmitting the weeping of the two saints, but thereby contradicts not only the idea of active men not weeping but also the principle that saints don't weep: a compound discrepancy. The compunctive weeping of "Cynewulf" signals his repudiation of the values of the heroic world.

The understanding that active men should not weep may be seen as operative in the culture more widely than traditional poetry, as Wilcox's argument that the *Hexateuch* translator deliberately reduces the male weeping in the Joseph story suggests. The idea that grown men should not weep also gives resonance to the weeping of the Seven Sleepers (heightened in the Old English), who come across as little more than children in their unheroic response to persecution.

We have also noted other kinds of tears in the Old English corpus, including those of supplication, sympathy and joy. Tears of these kinds are confined to specifically Christian literature, and, as with other weeping in Old English—with the exception of the motif of an authority figure withdrawing to an inner room—they are public. There are no tears of supplication in secular poetry, as sympathy is in short supply there, while joy (as noted by Pàroli 1990, pp. 243–44; Magennis 1992) is associated with laughter, not tears.

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## Abbreviations

ASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> . Edited by J. Bollandus et al. 68 vols. Antwerp and Brussels: Johannes Meursium et al., 1643–1940.
ASPR	The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records. Edited by George Philip Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie. 6 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–1953.
DOE	<i>Dictionary of Old English in Electronic Form, A-I</i> . 2018. Ed. Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2018. <a href="http://www.doe.utoronto.ca">www.doe.utoronto.ca</a> (accessed on 3 May 2021).
EETS	Early English Text Society:
OS	Original Series,
SS	Supplementary Series.
LS	<i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints</i> , ed. and trans. Skeat.
PL	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> . Edited by J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris: Garnier and J.-P. Migne, 1844–1864.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> With the exception of *Beowulf*, all references to Old English poetry are to the six-volume Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (ASPR) edition; references to *Beowulf* are to (Fulk et al. 2008).
- <sup>2</sup> *Wop*, which is of course etymologically related to *wepan*, translates Latin words for weeping, as in “wop and toþa gristbitung”, “weeping and gnashing of teeth”, for “fletus et stridor dentium” (Matthew 13:42) (Liuzza 1994 and 2000, p. 28), and “wopes tid [...] hleahtres tid”, “a time of weeping and a time of laughter”, for “tempus flendi and tempus ridendi” (Ecclesiastes 3:4) (Scragg 1992, p. 222: Homily 11, ll. 28–29); we find rhetorical phrases such as *wop and hrop* and *heaf and wop*, indicating different aspects of distress, but not *wop and tearas* or the like; and *wop* is directly linked to tears in Old English poetry, as in *Elene*, where the saint experiences “wopes hring” (l. 1131) “the sound of weeping” as her tears flow, while in *Judgement Day II* the speaker’s sorrowing cheeks are drenched with weeping—“dreorige hleor . . . dreccað mid wope” (l. 35)—and the speaker in *Cynewulf’s Juliana* declares that he “must sorrow weeping (*wopig*) with tears” (*ic wopig sceal/tearum mænan*, ll. 711–12). *Elene* is ed. (Krapp 1932a, pp. 66–102; *Judgement Day II*, ed. Dobbie 1942, pp. 58–67; *Juliana*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 113–133).
- <sup>3</sup> Unattributed translations are my own.
- <sup>4</sup> References to the Latin psalms are to the Roman Psalter (Weber 1953), the version used for the *Paris Psalter*; other than for the psalms, Latin biblical references and quotations and their English translations below follow (Edgar and Kinney 2011–2013).
- <sup>5</sup> Even the weeping of the speaker in *The Wife’s Lament* is not private, since she tells the poem’s audience about it; and in a scene in *Guthlac B* highlighted below Guthlac’s attendant is alone when he weeps in grief at the saint’s death; but he would have wept anyway had someone been with him.
- <sup>6</sup> Goolden includes a text of the Latin original printed parallel to the Old English translation.
- <sup>7</sup> Although both *Euphrosyne* and *Eustace* are included in the main manuscript of Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints*, neither is by Ælfric; the same is true of *Seven Sleepers* and *Mary of Egypt*, both of which are discussed below.
- <sup>8</sup> *Passio septem dormientium*, (Magennis 1994, pp. 74–91; also Skeat 1881–1900, I, pp. 488–541). See also ll. 57–58, 91 (Skeat 1881–1900, ll. 65–66, 102–3).
- <sup>9</sup> On *Saint Mary of Egypt*, see further, p. 14, below.
- <sup>10</sup> See Genesis 21:14; Hagar weeps at 21:16 (“she lifted up her voice and wept”), but her elegiac speech is contributed by the Old English poet. The Old English prose *Genesis* closely follows the Latin, reading “sarlice wepende”, “wept bitterly” (Marsden 2008, pp. 8–88, l. 46).
- <sup>11</sup> *The Acts of Saint Cyriacus*, ed. ASS, *Maius* I, 445–48; Allen and Calder 1976, pp. 60–68: compare chp. 12, “I shall not rest in this matter until the Lord grants my desire”.
- <sup>12</sup> (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 15–27): “þær wæs wopes hring” (l. 537), “there was the sound of weeping”.
- <sup>13</sup> (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 15–27), “[C]erge reotað/fore onsyn eces deman” (ll. 835–36), “the sorrowful ones will weep before the face of the eternal Judge”.
- <sup>14</sup> (Krapp and Dobbie 1936, pp. 27–49), “Beornas gretað,/wepað wanende wergum stefnum” (ll. 991–992), “Men will cry, lamenting with weary voices”; “þær hy arasade reotað ond beofiað/fore frean forhte” (ll. 1229–1230), “There, having been found out, they will weep and tremble, terrified before the Lord”; etc.
- <sup>15</sup> (Dobbie 1942, pp. 58–67): “Hwæt miht þu on þa tid . . . þearfe gewepan”? (l. 177), “What can you gain by weeping at that time?”
- <sup>16</sup> (Krapp 1932b, pp. 177–5–150). For example, at 79:5, l. 3: “Tyhttest us and fedest teara hlaf”, “You will instruct and feed us with the bread of tears”; following “cibabis nos pane lacrimarum” (Psalms 79:6); 136:1, l. 2: “þær we sittað and sare wepað”, “there we sit and weep sorrowfully”, following “illic sedimus et flevimus” (Psalms 136:1). In a couple of instances the *Paris Psalter* expands slightly on the Latin original: see mention of “ðisse sargan dene”, “this sorry valley”, above, p. 2; note also the “deorcum tearum”, “dark tears”, of 79:5, l. 4, where the adjective has been contributed by the translator (compare Psalms 79:6: “potum dabis nobis in lacrimis”).
- <sup>17</sup> Dockray-Miller also refers to Hrothgar’s “waning masculinity” (p. 452) and “faltering masculinity” (p. 458).
- <sup>18</sup> Although the attendant is alone in his weeping on this journey, his tears are not deliberately private: he would weep just as much if other people were present.
- <sup>19</sup> Clayton identifies the Old English translation of part of Alcuin’s *De virtutibus et vitiis* as the work of Ælfric (Ælfric’s translation does not include Alcuin’s account of *compunctio*).
- <sup>20</sup> As Old English *Alcuin* puts it, following Gregory’s distinction, “Of twifealden onbrerdnyse aspringeð 7 gewunigeð teares flowen; hwilon þone se mann, swa swa ic ær cwæð, gemuneð his yfele weorc 7 for þan wepeð; hwilon eac, þone se gode mann for his gode weorcan wilneð, þæt he heonan mote, and he for þan wepeð, þe him lysteð Godes andweardnyse, 7 þæs gefean, þe he ær æfter swanc” (Warner 1917, p. 99), “The flowing of tears arises and continues from two kinds of compunction; sometimes when the person, as I said earlier, remembers their evil acts and weeps for that reason; sometimes also when the good person wishes because of their good works that they may travel hence and they weep for that reason, that they desire the presence of God and the joy that they have toiled for”.



- <sup>21</sup> In the cited passage Saint Benedict counsels his monks, “Confess your past sins to God each day in prayer with tears and sighs”. See also (Chrysavgis 2004).
- <sup>22</sup> McEntire notes that among Old English homilists, Ælfric is particularly “orthodox” in his understanding of the doctrine (McEntire 1990, pp. 99–108).
- <sup>23</sup> In *The Dream of the Rood* (Krapp 1932a, pp. 61–65) it is mentioned that at the death of Christ “all creation wept” (*Weop eal gesceaft*, l. 55); see also discussion of the three crosses weeping at the death of Christ, above, p. 11.
- <sup>24</sup> McCormack also draws attention to the “bloody tears of compunction” of Peter in the Old Saxon poem the *Heliand* after his denial of Christ (*ibid.*, pp. 152–53).
- <sup>25</sup> On the importance of compunction in the writings of Bede, see (McEntire 1990, pp. 100–102).
- <sup>26</sup> There is perhaps an element of supplication in the tears of Andreas, however, as he complains to God about the extent of his suffering at the hands of the Mermedonians (see above, p. 12).
- <sup>27</sup> O’Loughlin and Conrad-O’Brian discuss the origin of the theologically suspect idea of baptism by tears. Baptism by tears also appears in the *Old English Martyrology* entry for the Holy Innocents: the mothers of the Innocents “were baptised by tears (*mid tearum gefyllode*) for the suffering they saw” (Rauer 2013, pp. 40–41).
- <sup>28</sup> On genuine and feigned/fake tears, see (Vingerhoets 2013, pp. 32–33; Lutz 1999, pp. 55–58).
- <sup>29</sup> Translating *Vitae Patrum*, 5.5.37, ed. PL 73, 884A (“plorans”).
- <sup>30</sup> Similarly, in Ælfric’s *Letter to Sigeward* (*On the Old and New Testament*) a young man repents his sinful ways, falling at the feet of Saint John: “[he] weop swiðe bitterlice, and he bifiende feoll to Iohannes fotum mid geomerunge and þoterunge, mid tearum ofergoten” (Marsden 2008, ll. 793–795), “he wept bitterly, and he fell trembling at the feet of John with groaning and wailing, suffused with tears”.
- <sup>31</sup> (Mills 2016, pp. 171–72), draws attention to one instance of men weeping at a reunion in a text with Anglo-Saxon connections, though not in Old English. This is in the eleventh-century *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, in which, with no suggestion of inappropriateness, the royal brothers Knútr and Haraldr weep, kiss and embrace on being reunited in Denmark. The *Encomiast* is perhaps drawing upon associations of refined weeping in the classical tradition (as reflected also in romance and hagiography), to which he was evidently indebted.
- <sup>32</sup> In addition, sailors weep at the feet of Nicholas, having been rescued at sea through his help (l. 209); other sailors weep at a miracle of an increase of grain (l. 264).
- <sup>33</sup> Weeping is not mentioned at the corresponding point in the PL edition: see *Vitae patrum*, 5.5.38, ed. PL 37, 885B.
- <sup>34</sup> In order to conceal his emotions from his brothers, Joseph retreats to a private room, or, as one variant of the Old English has it, a beer store, *beorclyfa*. It is likely that *beorclyfa* is a mistake for *burchlyfa*, “inner room” (as suggested by DOE, s.v. *cleofa*); but, in a sensitive reading of the passage, Wilcox picks up on the *beorclyfa* reading, which would have made perfect (ironic) sense to an Anglo-Saxon audience: “The very idea of a beer-room, even if it was simply a place for storing the fermented drink, ought presumably to conjure up conviviality and happiness in an Anglo-Saxon audience, and those associations are appropriately inverted in the present scene of tension, when the leader who is orchestrating a scene of happiness finds himself in need of a place to go and weep” (Wilcox 2012, p. 25). As Wilcox notes, this variant also intensifies the image of weeping, reading “7 weop swiðe sar” (*ibid.*, p. 23).
- <sup>35</sup> Closely following the Latin original: see ASS, *Sept.* VI, 131 (chp. 2.14).
- <sup>36</sup> “[H]e his lic for ðære sarignysse mid wacan hreafe scrydde, and wæs him ana cnihtleas on his inran bure, and hyne sylfne ðærinne beclysde”, “Because of his sorrow he put ragged clothing on his body and was on his own without a servant in his inner room, closing himself in there”.

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