CHAPTER 1

Displaced Passions
Sympathy and Suffering in Poems on Christ and the Saints

At first, the Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood* seems to evince the scholarly commonplace that early English poetry was not interested in pity for the suffering of Christ. This early poem presents Christ as a *geong hæleð* (a young man or warrior; line 39a) who is *strang ond stiðmod* (strong and stern-minded; line 40a). Christ's own suffering occasions little comment, his wounds little description. But instead, it is the Cross itself that bleeds, God's creation that weeps, and the earth that shakes, while a corresponding affective response occurs in the Dreamer himself: "Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed / forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe" (I was completely afflicted with sorrows, I was afraid for that fair sight; lines 20b–21a). Because *The Dream of the Rood* presents suffering *only* as a sympathetic response, it is thereby a remarkably clear and early portrait of pious sympathy even if its features little resemble those that arise in later centuries. I use "sympathy" here as an imperfect term for the displacements of suffering inherent in the *Dream*'s portrayal of the crucifixion: not only does the Dreamer experience emotional suffering for the Cross's physical wounds, but the Cross's wounds are in turn a sympathetic embodiment of Christ's own suffering.

While scholarly narratives of medieval affective piety usually begin with sympathetic depictions of Christ's pitiable suffering that begin to appear around the twelfth century, the Dreamer's experience suggests that sympathy was not, in fact, the exclusive preserve of the eleventh century and after. Moreover, even the portrayal of impassive suffering and death in *The Dream of the Rood* offers a distinctive set of poetic conventions for evoking devotional sympathy. The poem combines the vernacular poetic topos of elegiac devotion to and mourning for a lord by one who serves that lord with the devotional topos of the suffering of a holy figure, mixing generic conventions to evoke the affective associations of each. Surviving

in partial fragments engraved the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross and in its most complete form in a tenth-century copy in the Vercelli Book, *The Dream of the Rood* in fact demonstrates the role that sympathy and, more broadly, poetic conventions for sympathy with holy figures did play in the devotion of early medieval England. The Old English poem *Guthlac B* will also provide a focal point for this inquiry, particularly in its portrayal of Guthlac's affection for his sister Pega, his suffering and death, and, along the lines of *The Dream of the Rood*, the loyalty of his servant, whom the Latin text names as Beccel. *Guthlac B* deploys the heroic-elegiac topoi of lord and retainer as well as the topoi of ecclesiastical and worldly *familia* to achieve its affective power. Understanding how *Guthlac B* models devotional affect through Guthlac's emotional ties to his worldly kindred requires us to consider how it employs vernacular poetic tropes of loyalty to one's lord and kin, combined with the concept of the monastic *familia*. These poetic conventions for the portrayal of deep affective bonds offer a model for, and allusively evoke, devotional responses to the suffering of Christ. The negotiation of feeling is subtle. This is not quite the compassionate "co-feeling" A. S. Lazikani identifies in the texts of the *Wooing Group*.[1] But as I argue, in these early poems we see feeling that has been displaced from the primary figure onto another with whom the reader may co-feel instead.

Sympathy for the suffering of Christ has appeared as the particular hallmark of the sort of affective piety said to arise only in later centuries. Sarah McNamer, for one, demonstrates the importance of women in bringing about the sensibility in which believers would "[wish] to see their God suffer and die."[2] McNamer's study demonstrates crucial shifts in devotion from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, including devotional texts written for women and at times about women, and indeed, the increased focus on pity for Christ's own suffering more than awe in his victory over death.[3] The very importance of these shifts at times overshadows the significance and the subtleties of affective response to the crucifixion and other devotional tropes in the earlier period, not least when these have taken forms less readily identified by scholars of England before the eleventh century themselves. For their part, when scholars of earlier medieval literature negotiate the historical narrative by which devotional empathy arises only after the Conquest, they often do so with some trepidation. When Daniel Anlezark, to take one example, compares the emotional strategies in *The Dream of the Rood* to those in the thirteenth-century *Luue Ron* found in Oxford, Jesus College, 29,[4] he argues of the later poem:

> [Its] blend of desire and asceticism is alien to the Anglo-Saxon elegy, which is suspicious not only of earthly goods, but the emotions which are drawn to them. The fusion of love-longing and asceticism in the *Luue-Ron* is possible not only because of the formal development of the love lyric, but also because of developments in the theory of the emotions.[5]

Anlezark rightly points out that *The Dream of the Rood* deals with proper control and direction of the emotions toward heavenly things and away from worldly ones. Yet he reads *The Dream of the Rood* here primarily in the context of Old English elegy, which it resembles,[6] rather than that of devotional poetry, with which it is contrasted in spite of its overtly devotional subject matter. This emphasis on an elegiac suspicion of emotion plays into the larger narrative in which emotional engagement with devotion does not yet adhere. Anlezark's reading contrasts with Paul Szarmach's approach to the *Dream* as a poem "where a living picture inspires the soul in tears to seek God."[7] As Szarmach writes, *The Dream of the Rood* focuses on the emotional response of the Dreamer to the vision he has witnessed: "The poet has thus gone beyond the art theory of his time, such as it was, to allow for human emotion."[8] Szarmach is absolutely right that the *Dream* does what scholars usually believe it should not be able to. I would suggest that if *The Dream of the Rood* may seem to exceed what the art theory of its time accounts for, it more certainly exceeds the historical narratives that the theories of our own time have constructed for it. Moreover, *The Dream of the Rood* does not stand alone in portraying pity and grief as integral components of early vernacular devotional response.

The Dream of the Rood's unabashed use of heroic poetic conventions in the depiction of a stoic, warrior Christ has attracted the lion's share of critical attention.[9] As Heather Maring has shown, the "lord–retainer theme" demands attention as part of the "conventions of verbal art."[10] Only in the connections of the lord–retainer convention to the broader associative web of formulaic Old English poetry may we understand the poetic resonances of this and interrelated poetic topoi. Thus in spite of the poem's portrayal of Christ's alacrity in the face of suffering, the affective dimensions of the poem are complex, as signaled early on when the Cross, shining with joy (*wynnum scinan*; line 15), immediately reveals its wounds through its gilded and jeweled surface (lines 18–19).[11] The Cross itself suffers and bleeds ("hit ærest ongan / swætan on þa swiðran healfe" [it first began to bleed on its right side; lines 19b–20a]) but the consequent affective response occurs not in the Cross but in the Dreamer who perceives (*ongytan*, line 18; *geseah ic*, line 21) the suffering: "Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed / forht ic wæs for þære fægran gesyhðe" (I was completely afflicted with sorrows,

I was afraid because of that fair sight; lines 20b–21a). These lines present a remarkably clear portrait of sympathy for suffering: Not only does the Dreamer experience emotional suffering for the Cross's physical wounds, but the Cross's wounds are in turn a sympathetic embodiment of Christ's own suffering. The image creates a complex affective texture: Since Christ, as we will see, does not speak or seem visibly to suffer, the Cross's response might be closer to what Lazikani identifies as pity merely "with the sense of 'what a pity!'"[12] But the shared physical wounds created by the nails that pierced Christ's hands and feet, and the blood that still soaks the cross's side, allow the Cross to suffer with even this rarefied depiction of a stoic Christ. As opposed to pity, sympathy or compassion requires the feeling *with* or "co-feeling" that Lazikani identifies.[13] The stark images blend: There is not only grief, for the wounds of Christ and the wounds on the Cross in turn (as the Cross was literally pierced by the same nails driven through Christ, its wounds and Christ's are in effect identical), but an awe for the beauty inhering in the sight of the Cross and its adornments, symbolic of the crucifixion of Christ and the resurrection it brings. Even in his sorrow and fear, the Dreamer perceives the Cross as a *fæger gesyhð* (a beautiful sight; line 21), and its beauty and horror alternate before his eyes: "hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed, / beswyled mid swates gange, | hwilum mid since gegyrwed" (At times it was wet with liquid, soiled with the stain of blood, at times it was adorned with treasure; lines 22b–23). The treasure that adorns the Cross at the same moment as the stain of blood does not simply assert the Cross as an item of material value – luxurious adornments may also function to evoke the delights of paradise in Old English poetry. As Seeta Chaganti has shown, the various versions of *The Dream of the Rood* invoke a complex relationship between the body and the material object as a version of the poem was inscribed upon the stone of the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross and the metal of the eleventh-century Brussels Cross.[14] That *The Dream of the Rood* uses imagery of treasure, and uses the same word as that used for treasure guarded by a greedy dragon in *Beowulf*,[15] before presenting an image of Christ as a *geong hæleð* (young warrior) who rushes over to mount his own cross,[16] has helped to lead scholars to read the poem as a dramatically Germanic heroic revision of the biblical story; a remaking of Christianity in Beowulf's own image.[17]

Reading *The Dream of the Rood* such that Christ figures simply as a Germanic heroic Lord and the Cross (and the Dreamer in turn) as a faithful if fearful servant would seem to concede narratives of literary history in which early English devotional poetry lacks sympathy and depth of feeling. Such a reading, however, misses critical features of the poem: namely,

it is the Cross and the Dreamer who speak, grieve, and express suffering, but this suffering is not directly their own. The expressions of their feelings occupy more space than those of Christ himself, not only because Christ possesses greater fortitude and knows the outcome of his endeavor, but because the sympathetic response – partly anticipated joy, and largely grief for suffering – embodied in the Cross and the Dreamer who sees the Cross and hears it speak in turn is precisely what the poem's audience are themselves meant to embody. Frances McCormack has importantly written about the bloody tears of the trees in the Old English *Christ* poem, and how the expression of compunction must model that which its audience must emulate all the more.[18] *The Dream of the Rood*, however, offers that emulation in the person of the Dreamer himself, and dramatizes his sympathetic response to the Cross's account of its suffering. Such devotional sympathy exists as an affective response to be evoked by the poem, but only functions as such within the context of Christian devotion that the Dreamer – and his audience – must already possess. Only in this context may the Dreamer model an affective response for the poem's audience. As Chaganti argues, the poem's echoes of liturgical performance "replicate the integration of individual and collective experience found in performance."[19] The poetic convention of the bold, heroic Christ should not obscure the emotional conventions of the grieving faithful servant – indeed, this poetic convention serves to evoke heightened associations of sympathy with and grief for the suffering of his lord.[20] Take, for example, the Cross's sense that it also receives the insults hurled at Christ: "Bysmeredon hie unc butu ætgædere" (They mocked us both together; line 48a). *Butu* reiterates the connection borne in the dual pronoun *unc*: The Cross receives the physical, emotional, and social suffering of Christ as they are physically and figuratively raised and derided together. The Cross affectively takes Christ's humiliation upon itself. Similarly, the passage describing the scene immediately after Christ's death depicts the Cross and all of creation suffering in sympathy with Christ:

> Geseah ic weruda god
> þearle þenian. Þystro hæfdon
> bewrigen mid wolcnum wealdendes hræw,
> scirne sciman, sceadu forðeode,
> wann under wolcnum. Weop eal gesceaft,
> cwiðdon cyninges fyll. Crist wæs on rode.
> Hwæðere þær fuse feorran cwoman
> to þam æðelinge. Ic þæt eall beheold.
> Sare ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed, hnag ic hwæðre þam secgum to handa,
> eaðmod elne mycle. (*Dream of the Rood*, lines 51b–60a)

> [I saw the God of hosts grievously stretched out. Darkness had surrounded with clouds the corpse of the Lord, bright with splendor, oppressed with shadow, dark under the clouds. All creation wept, told of the fall of the King. Christ was on the cross. However, there came readily those from afar to that prince. I beheld all that. Sorely I was afflicted with sorrows, however I bowed to those people's hands, humble-minded, with great valor.]

The sense of sight enables sympathetic suffering: As the Dreamer sees and is emotionally overcome by the vision of the Cross's alternating suffering and splendor in the poem's opening lines, the Cross grieves at the sight (*geseah ic*) of Christ's death.[21] Christ's physical suffering, the wounds of his body, are fully in evidence well after he is able to feel them. They are present in the Dreamer's memory and on the body of the Cross. The whole landscape offers a sympathetic response, as it covers Christ's splendor with clouds and darkness, and a noise of weeping fills all creation. This affective reaction models a devotional response to Christ's death, connected through the figure of the Dreamer to believers like him.[22] When his friends come to reclaim Christ's body, the Cross grieves all the more, and then, in a striking image, physically bends (as it had refused to before; lines 36, 42–44a) so that they may reach him. Moreover, the line that the Cross uses to express its grief – "Sare ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed" (I was sorely afflicted with sorrows; line 59a) – echoes the Dreamer's own expression of grief in the poem's opening: "Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed" (I was entirely afflicted with sorrows; line 20b). The Cross models a sympathetic reaction to the suffering of Christ, just as the Dreamer demonstrates a sympathetic reaction to the Cross that takes roughly similar affective contours. The Dreamer parallels the poem's audience in being confronted with the image of the Cross. Yet the sight of its glory and gore simultaneously evokes not simply heroic poetic associations but devotional associations he apparently already possesses: The Cross reminds him of his own human sin, and his sympathetic grief draws upon the connection between his sinfulness and Christ's suffering.

The salient theme of *The Dream of the Rood* is not the depiction of Christ as *hæleð* (warrior), as striking as its imagery may be to modern readers. The evocation of the fallen lord only signifies because the affective associations of that elegiac mode combines with the affective associations of the crucifixion. The theme of the poem is indeed its depiction of sympathy for the suffering Christ – the lord who died for his followers – even if, and perhaps *because*, the salient conventions are those of heroic literature. Sympathy for suffering, and the affection between believers and God and between believers and one another that makes such sympathy possible,

was as much a convention of the earliest English devotional poetry as any feature of heroic poetry ever was.

Affections in the World, and in the World to Come

Early English devotional poetry, in fact, often depicts extreme suffering to provoke a deeply felt devotional response, particularly through verses on Christ's saints, whose suffering emulated his. From the earliest centuries of Christianity, the saints offered a link between this world and the next that could be materially located in space and in time. As Peter Brown has written, devotion to the saints in the Late Antique period changed the landscape of the city, bringing the dead into the territory of the living and the living into the territory of the dead.[23] The cults of saints in England proliferated in the century before the Conquest, as the English church began increasingly to venerate their own English saints, as well as to foster devotion to those who had lived in foreign lands.[24] Yet universal and local saints had been celebrated both in prose and in verse from the earliest years of the English church.[25] These hagiographic writings complement and indeed draw upon continental Christian sources.[26] Early English hagiographical verse also offers uniquely English material, from English verse interpretations of saints' lives to Latin verse on more recently unearthed English saints. Bede's eighth-century *Historia ecclesiastica*, for example, includes homegrown saints such as Oswald and Æthelthryth in establishing a history for the nascent English church.[27] Bede offers a Latin verse encomium on Æthelthryth to accompany his prose narrative, yet vernacular poems on the saints would also appear, including those on foreign saints such as *Andreas* or Cynewulf's *Juliana* and *Elene*, and those on English saints such as Guthlac.[28] In contexts where royal authority appeared under threat and Viking incursions increased, saints with royal affiliations such as Edmund the Martyr embodied the penitential and eschatological warnings to be drawn from increasingly ominous contemporary events.[29] The category of hagiographic writing bridges generic divides, including the divide between liturgical and devotional literature.[30] Verse hagiography, for its part, brings the public celebration of the saints into a format less public, more portable, and more evocative than explanatory. As such, verse hagiographies do not so much teach their readers how to feel, but evoke an experience of devotional feeling already implanted in other contexts.

From the monastic context that produced many of these texts, and many of these saints, we can learn much about how affective devotion,

and indeed affective discipline, would have worked both for those who produced hagiographic poetry and for the figures they bring to life. Guthlac was also a monastic saint; the *vitae* that commemorate his life also venerate the monastic ideals by which he lived, and by which many of those who wrote and read about him (and those who would have copied Old English devotional poetry more generally) would have lived as well. Monastic sources produced or read in early England have much to say about how monks must feel about one another and the secular world. These texts extol the necessity of brotherly love set against the danger of worldly attachments and establish the ways in which the ecclesiastical family was modeled both in contrast with and according to the model of secular families. The *Regula Benedicti*, even while asserting the importance of welcoming guests in the name of Christ, carefully circumscribes which brothers may interact with guests and how they must do so:

> Idem et cellam hospitum habeat adsignatum frater, cuius animam timor dei possidet, ubi sint lecti strati sufficienter. Et domus dei a sapientibus et sapienter amministretur. Hospitibus autem, cui non praecipitur, ullatenus societur neque conloquatur; sed si obuiauerit aut uiderit, salutatis humiliter, ut diximus, et petita benedictione pertranseat dicens sibi non licere conloqui cum hospite.[31]
>
> [A brother, whose soul is possessed by the fear of God, should be assigned to the guest chamber, where there should be sufficient beds. And the house of God should be administered wisely by those who are wise. Moreover, he who is not so instructed must not in any way associate or speak with the guests; but if he meets or sees one, let him pass on humbly, as we said, with greetings and request for a blessing, saying to him that he is not permitted to speak with a guest.]

While guests must be greeted and ministered to, the brother in charge of these activities must be appointed for his fear of God rather than his warmth toward strangers – such connections might interfere with the social bonds within the monastery, within the *familia* in which he is made *frater* to begin with. The *Regularis concordia* follows the *Regula Benedicti* in explicitly warning against excessive contact between monks or nuns and the secular world, but also acknowledges the importance of that world:

> Ad regis uero obsequium et reginae patres monasteriorum matresque, quotiens expedierit ad sacri coenobii cui praesunt utilitatem, cum Dei timore et regulae obseruantia humiliter accedant; potentibus uero, non causa conuiuandi sed pro monasterii utilitate atque defensione quotiens expedierit, obuiandi intra infraue monasterium licentiam habeant.[32]

> [As often therefore as it shall be to their advantage the fathers and mothers of each house shall have humble access to the King and Queen in the fear of God and observance of the Rule. They shall not, however, be allowed to meet persons of importance, either within or just outside the monastery, for the purpose of feasting together, but only according as the well-being and defence of the monastery demand.]

These lines suggest several of the potential dangers of interaction with the secular world – recognizing worldly power threatens the monks' submission to God alone, and the practice of feasting and social interaction (*convivare*) might distract from the monks' devotion to God and their community alone. At the same time that problematic affiliations may be discouraged and necessary affiliations strictly controlled, however, Christian communities by necessity fostered ties of affinity and affection between their members.[33] The earliest exhortation to this, of course, appears in the Gospels, when Christ implores his followers to "love one another, as I have loved you."[34]

Thus even for ascetic monks (such as Guthlac) who resign all worldly affiliations, community retains the utmost importance. We might remember Sara Ahmed's observation that "the association between objects and affects is preserved through habit"[35] – in this case the monastic *habit* (in both senses) must displace, or overwrite, the habits of worldly affections. Indeed, the structures of biological families are mapped onto the monastic *familia*, ostensibly replacing but always recalling those worldly relationships in forming the monastic ones.[36] The first line of the prologue of the *Regula Benedicti* indeed addresses its audience "o fili" (Oh, son) naming its author as a *pius pater* – a loving father.[37] The rest of the Rule, in effect, outlines the means by which monks adhere to this familial community in humility and obedience, overwriting the individual's preexisting bonds of kinship and yet appealing to the filial piety associated with such bonds: "inclina aurem cordis tui" (incline the ear of your heart).[38] The danger of a monk's lingering ties to worldly family features in an episode in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* translated from Gregory's *Dialogi*, in which a young oblate attempts to run away, back to his biological parents. He dies upon reaching them. His parents bury him, but his grave continually rejects the corpse of the escapee. Only when St. Benedict instructs his relatives to bury him with the Eucharist on his breast, subsuming his identity under the sign of the church once again, does his grave hold him.[39] The exemplum, meant to show the dangers of failing to set aside worldly relationships, also illustrates their tendency to persist. Augustine also writes of limiting attachments to worldly relationships and properly directing interpersonal

affection when he writes: "Cum autem homine in deo frueris, deo potius quam homine frueris, illo enim frueris, quo efficeris beatus, et ad eum te peruenisse laetaberis, in quo spem ponis ut uenias" (Moreover, when you enjoy a person in God, you enjoy God rather than the person, indeed you enjoy him, by whom you are made happy, and you will rejoice to have come to him, in whom you place your hope that you may come).[40] In Augustine's formulation, the enjoyment of other humans becomes instrumental to the enjoyment of God. In the devotional texts that concern this chapter, however, such distinctions blur, as worldly affections between believers persist not only in this world but in the world to come. Indeed, such texts seem to celebrate their persistence.

The indelibility of worldly affiliations is on full display in Bede's story of Æthelthryth in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, later adapted by Ælfric.[41] Bede's account of her life explains that Æthelthryth's status compels her to marry, although her great piety causes her to disdain the worldly pleasures of marriage and family. Her piety is so great, in fact, that she becomes Abbess of Ely after two marriages with her virginity intact. Æthelthryth offers a particularly interesting counterpoint to Guthlac, as we will see later, because while Guthlac leaves the world generally and his sister specifically in favor of the holy community of heaven, Æthelthryth brings marks of her worldly identity with her, and reunites with her sister at Ely. And her worldly connections persist, inscribing themselves on her body when she develops a deadly growth at her throat. She remarks that this tumor recalls the fine things she wore on her neck when she lived outside of the abbey: "Scio certissime quia merito in collo pondus languoris porto, in quo iuuenculam me memini superuacua moniliorum pondera portare" (I know certainly that I deserve to bear the weight of this affliction on my neck, because I remember when I was young I used to wear an excessive weight of necklaces; iv.20). Her suffering is presented as a purgation from past indulgence in worldly life, and indeed, her otherwise incorrupt corpse would continue to bear this sign of her connection to the world, to worldly luxury, and to the social status that it represents (iv.19). While Æthelthryth's statement repudiates those worldly ties, we are also told: "Cui successit in ministerium abbatissae soror eius Sexburg, quam habuerat in coniugem Earconberct rex Cantuariorum" (Her sister Seaxburh succeeded her in her ministry as abbess, who had been the wife of Eorcenberht, king of Kent; iv.19). Even in death, Æthelthryth is known through her relationship to her biological sister, who is in turn known in terms of her royal marriage. Her sister, indeed, is the abbess who discovers Æthelthryth's miraculously incorrupt remains while transferring them to a more fitting burial place.

That Æthelthryth lives in community not only with her monastic sisters, but with the sister who inherits her office and helps to bring her posthumous renown, points to the indelibility of worldly relationships in spite of the renunciations of monastic life.

Displaced Sympathies in *Guthlac B*

Of the five Old English poems relating lives of saints – *Guthlac A* and *B*, *Juliana*, *Elene*, and *Andreas* – only the *Guthlac* poems present the life of an English saint in vernacular verse. The two *Guthlac* poems appear early in the Exeter Book, following the three *Christ* poems that open the anthology. While the *Guthlac* poems are copied together in the manuscript,[42] the two parts focus on different devotional themes and employ different narrative strategies.[43] *Guthlac A* opens with the universalizing frame of heaven and the image of a single, unidentified soul ascending to glory. *Guthlac B*, by contrast, opens with Creation before narrowing the frame to Guthlac himself, his servant, and the sister Guthlac refuses to see as the end of his own life approaches. Both poems deal with the eremitic saint's management and direction of devotional affect, and with the establishment of appropriate order in human dealings with the fallen created world. *Guthlac B*, however, presents a poignant narrative concerned with human and familial affection, which may be controlled but not extinguished even among figures commended for their ascetic devotion. In commending Guthlac's ability to set aside his human ties, the poem simultaneously emphasizes the strength those bonds bear to begin with.

The bulk of *Guthlac B* concerns itself less with Guthlac's life and works than with the manner of his death, primarily translating Chapter 50 of Felix's eighth-century *Vita* while considerably expanding the dialogue and narrative details of the Latin.[44] *Guthlac B* also introduces new complexity to the themes of managing affect and imposing order upon engagement with worldly things. This complexity primarily arises in the importance *Guthlac B* places on Guthlac's attendant, deploying the tropes of the lord–retainer relationship in Beccel's elegiac mourning for his falling and fallen lord through carrying out Guthlac's instructions regarding Guthlac's sister, Pega. The fact that *Guthlac B*, at least in its extant form, focuses so closely upon Chapter 50 of Felix's *Vita* allows it to play upon some of the themes suggested by the *Vita*, while ignoring others. For example, *Guthlac B* features Guthlac's servant Beccel prominently, although it never calls him by name, and it never refers to Beccel's earlier role in Felix's Latin text. The omission of Beccel's name diverts attention from another fact

the poet has "chosen to ignore," namely Beccel's earlier attempt to murder Guthlac.[45] By omitting certain complicating and perhaps sensational features of Beccel's identity, *Guthlac B* offers an acute, prolonged meditation on affection, grief, and the nature of human relationships as they endure even into the world to come.

In its opening, *Guthlac B* evokes the fate of fallen humanity before considering those few in particular who follow the will of God, and more specifically the English saint, Guthlac (lines 876–81a). Before the fall of Adam and Eve, we are told that humans at death were to have proceeded with body and soul intact "to þam færestan / heofonrices gefean" (to the fairest joys of the heavenly kingdom; lines 836b–7a) if they held God's holy words "beorht in breostum" (brightly in [their] hearts; line 843a) and performed God's commands. Internalizing the will of God becomes identical with the experience of beauty and joy in God's kingdom thereby made possible.[46] When humanity instead accepted the *wyrmes lar* (the teaching of the serpent; line 846b), the first humans were cast from paradise: "scomum scudende, | scofene wurdon/ on gewinworld" (trembling with shame, they were shoved into a world of strife; lines 856–7a). Adam and Eve's failure to obey leads to the condemnation of all humanity after them:

> Nænig monna wæs
> of þam sigetudre siþþan æfre
> godes willan þæs georn, ne gynnwised,
> þæt he bibugan mæge þone bitran drync. (*Guthlac B*; lines 865b–8)
>
> [Nor was any of that progeny of men ever after so eager for the will of God, nor so wise, that he might avoid that bitter drink.]

No mere human virtue may again suffice to retain the joys of paradise lost with the Fall; the fruit "þone Eue fyrn | Adame geaf" (that Eve previously gave to Adam; line 869) transmogrifies into that bitter drink that is now shared with all humanity. *Guthlac B* reiterates the consequence of the fall again later in the poem, at the very moment when Guthlac begins facing his own death:

> Bryþen wæs ongunnen
> þætte Adame Eue gebyrmde
> æt fruman worulde. Feond byrlade
> ærest þære idese, ond heo Adame,
> hyre swæsum were, siþþan scencte
> bittor bædeweg. Þæs þa byre siþþan
> grimme onguldon gafulrædenne
> þurh ærgewyrht, þætte ænig ne wæs

fyra cynnes from fruman siððan
mon on moldan, þætte meahte him
gebeorgan ond bibugan þone bleatan drync,
deopan deaðweges. (*Guthlac B*, lines 980b–91a)

[The brew was prepared, that Eve had fermented for Adam at the beginning of the world. The enemy poured it out first for the woman, and she for Adam, for her own man, after the bitter cup was served. Then afterward their offspring paid severely for that, the tax for that former deed, that there was not any of the race of humanity, anyone on earth since from the beginning, that might defend and turn himself from that miserable drink of the cup of death.]

The image of the bitter drink passed from the devil to Eve, from Eve to Adam, and henceforward to all of their offspring, the human race that may not by any means avoid their portion of the bitter drink, reappears from just over a hundred lines earlier, now expanded.[47] The image takes on new resonance as its context has shifted to the death of Guthlac himself – he is the *mon* who, in spite of his devotion, cannot avoid the cup of death, but in this formulation, so are we. The specter of death and its ubiquity from the beginning of the world overshadows and defines *Guthlac B* in its entirety, and the saint's mental and emotional bearing in the face of death becomes a devotional model for the audience's own. But there is also a model for awe and indeed grief at the magnitude of Guthlac's suffering and the loss of his worldly ties. This model cannot be found in the saint himself, however; instead, just as it is in *The Dream of the Rood*, this model is displaced into another, more worldly, human witness.

Guthlac's glory is importantly found both within living memory and in the books that validate the glorious deeds that the poem will relate. Yet Guthlac's specific deeds are not immediately discussed. On the contrary, while the poem emphasizes Guthlac's status as a saint among the English and within *urra* […] *tida gemynd* (the memory of our times; lines 876–7), and "his wundra geweorc […] geond Bryten innan" (his deeds of wonders […] throughout Britain; lines 882–3), we hear only of the affective afflictions of those who come to Guthlac to be healed, who are *hygegeomor* (sad in spirit; line 885a), *sarig* (mournful; line 887a), or *freorigmod* (sad in mind; line 888a). No specific physical maladies are mentioned, and thus Guthlac's miracles are characterized by their affective value alone – he removes the negative affects of sadness and mourning from those who seek him: "Nænig forþum wæs, / þæt he æwiscmod | eft siðade, / hean, hyhta leas" (Nor was there any who went away again with a shamed mind, abject, without hope; lines 923b–5a). The affective state

of the stoic saint himself contrasts with that of the devils who torment him, who are emotionally effusive, loud, and uncontrolled.[48] Guthlac becomes only more single-minded as he approaches his death, eager for its arrival. We are told that his "hreþer innan born, / afysed on forðsið" (his breast burned within, intent upon the journey hence; lines 938b–9a), that "wæs se bliþa gæst / fus on forðweg" (the blithe spirit was eager on its way hence; lines 944b–5a), that he bears a "mod swiþe heard, / elnes anhydig" (mind very stern, steadfast in its strength; lines 977b–8a), and that "hyht wæs geniwad, / blis in breostum" (hope was renewed, joy in his breast; lines 953b–4a) as "him dryhtnes lof / born in breostum, | brondhat lufu / sigorfæst in sefan" (praise of the Lord burned in his breast, a brand-hot love triumphant in his heart; lines 963b–5a). The clearest statements of Guthlac's affective state occur only as he faces death, and the affect he experiences could hardly be further from the fear and terror and dread of shame that characterizes the soul's approach to death in, for example, Old English poems on the Final Judgment. Guthlac, we are told, is *leahtra leas* (free from sins), and approaches death with enthusiasm and even joy (line 947a). This joy and strength flourishes in him in spite of the very real pain of his bodily illness: "Wæs seo adl þearl, / hat ond hearogrim. | Hreþer innan weol, / born banloca" (The affliction was severe, hot, and very cruel. His breast surged within, his body burned; lines 978b–80a). The close repetition of words such as *hreþer* and *byrnan*, just used to describe the location and motion of his eagerness for death, emphasizes the comparable distance between his pious zeal for his own death and the physical pain that accompanies it. It is at this moment that the poem reintroduces the imagery of the bitter drink of death,[49] the concrete metaphor of the theological framework in which Guthlac's drama unfolds.

At this moment, just when Guthlac's own devotion is most clear, *Guthlac B* introduces Beccel, the *ombehtþegn* (attendant) who attends Guthlac and seeks his wisdom day by day (line 1000).[50] The dialogue between Guthlac and Beccel comprises most of *Guthlac B*; consequently, most of the poem's exploration of devotional affect, human affection, and the means of managing each, occurs through their conversation. Soon-Ai Low has compellingly argued that "[t]he relationship between Guthlac and his servant is […] most tellingly expressed by comparing their respective mental attainments."[51] The poem certainly uses the comparison between master and acolyte to illustrate the surpassing piety and single-minded devotion of the saint, the affection that Beccel bears for Guthlac, and Guthlac for his sister Pega, and it introduces complications to their respective affective attainments that bear devotional implications.

For Beccel, Guthlac is the *leofest lareow* (dearest teacher; line 1004), and he is devastated to find his teacher afflicted with a severe illness:

> Fonde þa his mondryhten
> adlwerigne; him ðæt in gefeol
> hefig æt heortan. Hygesorge wæg,
> micle modceare. Ongan ða his magu frignan:
> Hu gewearð þe þus, winedryhten min,
> fæder, freonda hleo, ferð gebysgad,
> nearwe genæged? […]
> Þæt me sorgna is
> hatost on hreþre, ær þu hyge minne
> ferð afrefre. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1007b–12a, 1019b–21a)
>
> [Then he found his lord weary with illness, that fell heavily on his heart. He bore a sorrowful spirit, a great grief of mind. Then his young man began to ask him: "How did it come to be for you thus, my lord, father, refuge of friends, your life weakened, closely assailed? […] That is the hottest of sorrows in my heart, until you comfort my mind, my spirit."]

Beccel's affective response to Guthlac's death could hardly be further from Guthlac's own. While Guthlac's heart is ready and eager for the journey, Beccel's is *hefig* with sorrow.[52] Interestingly, while Guthlac has, to this point in *Guthlac B*, had no apparent worldly attachments, the arrival of his *ombehtþegn* introduces a multitude of terms for worldly relations. Guthlac is not only Beccel's *leofast lareow* but his lord (*mondryhten*, *winedryhten*) – their relationship bears the conventional overtones of both ecclesiastical communities and, crucially, of the lord–retainer relationship.[53] The poem refers to Beccel as *his magu*, a term that could mean simply "young man" or "servant" but at least metaphorically suggests Beccel's role as that of a son;[54] an association affirmed two lines later when Beccel addresses Guthlac as *fæder* (line 1012a). Beccel's epithets of affinity continue with *freonda hleo*, *þeoden leofest* (refuge of his friends; line 1012a, dearest chief; line 1014a) – Beccel's terms of address acknowledge Guthlac's authority, but also deep affinity and affection in the terms of kinship, loyalty, and even filial piety. The descriptions and expressions of his sorrow in terms of its physical qualities (heat, weight, magnitude) and locations – within the *mod* (mind or spirit), *hyge* (spirit), *hreþer* (breast), and *ferð* (soul, spirit, or mind) – all emphasize how deeply affected Beccel is at the perception of Guthlac's mortal illness. Fittingly, then, it is from Guthlac that Beccel seeks comfort. The extent to which Beccel receives comfort, or to which his affection continues to present an occasion for grief, defines his character for the remainder of the poem.

Guthlac replies by affirming the fact of his impending death and painting an image of his body in the grave that awaits him (lines 1030–3), and by pointing out that death is in fact not a cause for sorrow but the end of sorrow. While Beccel may mourn, Guthlac will stand before God to receive new gifts and everlasting joys (*in sindreamum*; line 1043a). Guthlac reiterates that his spirit "is nu fus ðider / gæst siþes georn" (is now ready [to go] thence, the spirit eager for the journey; lines 1044b–5a). The language of mind, spirit, and body pervades the dialogue that follows, as the state of Guthlac's mind stands in polar opposition to that of his servant:[55]

> Ða wæs wop ond heaf,
> geongum geocor *sefa*, geomrende *hyge*,
> siþþan he gehyrde þæt se halga wæs
> forðsiþes *fus*. He þæs færspelles
> fore his mondryhtne *mod*sorge wæg,
> hefige æt *heortan*. *Hreþer* innan swearc,
> *hyge* hreowcearig, þæs þe his hlaford geseah
> ellor*fus*ne. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1047b–54a; emphasis added)
>
> [Then was there weeping and wailing, a dire *heart* in the young man, a mourning *spirit*, after he heard that the holy one was *ready* for the journey hence. He, heavy at *heart*, bore a sorrowful *mind* before his lord because of that sudden news. His *heart* weakened within him, his troubled *spirit*, because he saw his lord *eager* to be elsewhere.]

The repetition of *fus* (ready, eager) emphasizes Guthlac's eagerness to partake in the joys of heaven and to depart from the sorrows of the earth – his affective state directs his attention entirely toward the world to come. Yet Guthlac's speech has no immediate effect whatsoever on Beccel's affective state. On the contrary, many of the ensuing half-lines describing Beccel's response closely parallel or repeat those that describe his state before Guthlac says anything at all: "Hygesorge wæg" (weight of sorrow in spirit; line 1009b) / "modsorge wæg" (weight of sorrow in mind; line 1051b); as well as "hefig æt heortan" / "hefige æt heortan" (heavy at heart; lines 1009a and 1052a). Far from having improved his mental state, the relative *þæs þe* in line 1053 asserts that it is *because* Beccel perceives Guthlac's being so ready for death (*forðsiþes fus*, *ellorfus*) that his heart and spirit now weaken further. For Low, "[t]here is even a certain jealousy of Guthlac's eagerness to be elsewhere" in these lines.[56] Yet Beccel's grief crucially appears throughout as sympathetic, even if Guthlac's mental state is superior.

Guthlac does, however, upon perceiving Beccel's sinking spirit, urge him to improve his mental state, being himself "glædmod gode leof" (glad in mind, dear to God; line 1062a). The poem uses very mild language to

describe Guthlac's reply; Guthlac seeks to comfort (*retan*) his *wine leofest* (dearest friend; lines 1062b–3a). He commands Beccel not to be sad ("Ne beo þu unrot"; line 1064), by virtue of the fact that he himself is not sad: "ne ic þæs deaðes hafu / on þas seocnan tid | sorge on mode" (nor do I have sorrow in my mind in this time of illness because of death; lines 1067b–8). Beccel's grief, however, arises from the very sympathy for Guthlac that Guthlac appeals to in his exhortation. But Beccel's only comfort, as presented by Guthlac, is not that Beccel's loss is not one but that it will be temporary. Guthlac himself, on the other hand, is eager (*fus*, *georn*) for his journey to the next world because his joy there will be eternal (*ece gefea*). As Low observes that "Guthlac's saintliness expresses itself by his ability to *trymman* and to *staþolian* his *mod*,"[57] we see that Guthlac, indeed, urges such affective control upon his young servant. The drama of the poem, however, unfolds in the very difficulty of exercising such control. The affection for Guthlac that makes Beccel's mental state so unstable matches the affection that Guthlac returns in his exhortation to affective control. In both his pain and its remedy, we see that Beccel's suffering is borne of rightly placed, if less fully cultivated, human affection and sympathy.

Nor are the joys that Beccel laments of the wrong sort – indeed, Guthlac rejoices that his death will bring "sib ond blis, / domfæstra dream, | dryhten ondweard" (peace and bliss, the joy of the righteous ones, the present Lord; lines 1082b–3), *long gefea* (lasting joy; line 1090b), and "æfter lices hryre | lean unhwilen" (after the decay of the body, eternal reward; line 1093). In a sense, Guthlac and Beccel are in agreement: What Guthlac rejoices in is the end of the transitory state that characterizes worldly attachment (most significantly realized in an eternity in the presence of the *dryhten ondweard*) and Beccel's attachment is after all not to the idle things of the world but to his saintly teacher. What Beccel lacks is the spiritual perspective that would reveal the heavenly fulfillment of desire and affection as a permanent state, and the worldly loss of his affection the temporary one. At the same time, the affirmation of human bonds between believers on earth makes Guthlac's resolutely joyous perspective all the more remarkable and Beccel's grief all the more poignant.

Although *Guthlac B* sets forth its protagonist's fortitude in no uncertain terms, it does not shrink from the fact of his suffering. As Guthlac finishes his speech to his servant, we are told of his need for rest (lines 1094–8a) – Guthlac stops speaking because of physical weariness, not because his persuasive speech has yet attained its goal. The image of night darkening, and the numbering of nights rather than days passing, metonymically suggests an aura of gloominess upon earth over Guthlac's impending

death in spite of the saint's own resolutely hopeful outlook. Grief is not alien to *Guthlac B*, even if it scarcely touches Guthlac. The poem invokes Christ's own death and resurrection *in þa eastortid* (at Easter; line 1102b) at this moment, juxtaposing Guthlac's suffering and hope for resurrection with Christ's own, sympathetically associating the web of affects around Guthlac's death – grief, hope, sympathy for suffering, joy and the expectation of joy – with Christ's (lines 1098b–108a).

Even the portrayal of Guthlac's strength, however, hints at the persistence of his suffering and provokes sympathy. As he rises to perform his worship to God, the fact that he is described as a *heard hygesnottor* (the brave one wise in mind), that he rises "swa he hraþost meahte, / meðe for ðam miclan bysgum" (the most quickly as he was able, weary for that great labor; lines 1109–10a), that he must *staþelian* his *mod* (fortify his mind; line 1110b), simply to get up in the morning and preach the gospel, underscores the difficulty of doing so, and the knowledge that his *bysegu* (occupation, duty) is not simply his daily worship but his faithfulness in the face of suffering and death: "adle gebysgad, / sarum geswenced" (afflicted with disease, troubled with pains; lines 1136b–7a). When Beccel comes to see Guthlac for the last time, Guthlac appeals to Beccel's affection for him in the conventional terms of a lord and retainer: "Læst ealle well / wære ond winescype, | word þa wit spræcon, / leofast manna" (Perform well all our compact and friendship, those words that we spoke, dearest of men; lines 1171b–3a). At the point of his righteous death, Guthlac does not evoke Beccel's devotion to God, but to himself, and to their friendship. Beccel's reply acknowledges the importance and strength of that bond: "Næfre ic lufan sibbe, / þeoden, æt þearfe | þine forlæte / asanian!" (Never, master, shall I allow the kinship of love to diminish at your time of need!; lines 1173b–5a). Guthlac's exhortation to perform deeds according to the words of a prior compact borrows heavily from the elegiac and heroic conventions of Old English poetry.[58] The deed to be performed, however, accords with that in Felix's *Life*, in which Beccel must go to Guthlac's sister Pega and give her instructions for the burial of Guthlac's body. There are no conventionally heroic deeds, but only conventions dealing with affection, loyalty, mourning, and grief for one's kin, employed to give affective depth to the much briefer account in Felix's *Vita*.

Felix offers a simple, if ambiguous, explanation to be given to Pega for Guthlac's treatment of her in life and at his death: "perge ad sororem meam Pegam, et dicas illi, quia ideo aspectum ipsius in hoc saeculo vitavi, ut in aeternum coram Patre nostro in gaudio sempiterno ad invicem videamur" (hurry to my sister Pega and tell her that I avoided

her sight in this time, so that we may see one another in everlasting joy in the eternal presence of our Father).[59] Avoiding one another in life does not negate their bond, but ensures their perpetual communion in heaven. The emphasis upon sight (*aspectus*, *videre*) provides little clue to the reason their separation has been necessary. The Old English offers no further explanation, but elaborates considerably upon the affective experience of their celestial reunion:

> Fys æfter þon
> þæt þu gesecge sweostor minre,
> þære leofestan, on longne weg
> to þam fægran gefean forðsið minne,
> on ecne eard, ond hyre eac gecyð
> wordum minum, þæt ic me warnade
> hyre onsyne ealle þrage
> in woruldlife, for ðy ic wilnode
> þæt wit unc eft in þam ecan gefean
> on sweglwuldre geseon mostun
> fore onsyne eces deman
> leahtra lease. Þær sceal lufu uncer
> wærfæst wunian, þær wit wilna a
> in ðære beorhtan byrig brucan motun,
> eades mid englum. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1178b–92a)
>
> [Make haste after that [i.e., after Guthlac's death], that you tell my sister, the dearest one, of my journey on the long way to that beautiful joy in the eternal home, and also make known to her according to my words, that I kept myself from her sight entirely for the period of worldly life, because I desired that we might see each other again in the eternal joy in heavenly glory, before the sight of the eternal judge, free from sins. There shall our love dwell faithful, where we may always enjoy our desires in that bright city, happiness among the angels.]

The Old English follows the Latin in its emphasis on sight: Guthlac avoids his sister's sight (*hyre onsyne*) in life so that they might see (*geseon mostun*) one another in the sight of God (*fore onsyne eces deman*). The repetition of *onsyne* creates a parallel that is less explicit in the Latin, that their sight of one another must also take place within the sight of God. Guthlac's words to his sister emphasize, again, that the joys of heaven are beautiful and eternal and surpass the fleeting joys of this world. Guthlac avoided the sight of his sister (*ic me warnade*) when he was preaching the gospel and receiving visits from Beccel and not avoiding the sight of all other humans in spite of his relative isolation; this separation however speaks to the durability of their bond and the significance of their eventual reunion.[60] The abstaining

from one another's presence is juxtaposed with the eternal, fully realized enjoyment (*brucan*) of one another's presence in heaven. *Guthlac B* signals the importance of this self-denial for Guthlac in that his sister is the *leofast*, and in the fact of Guthlac's special if enigmatic message sent through Beccel to her. The phrase *leahtra lease* raises further ambiguities: Does Guthlac imply only that when he and his sister see one another in heaven, they will be cleansed from the sin of humanity, the sin that ensures death as the end of all human life as it foreshadows the end of *Guthlac B* from its beginning? Or does he imply that seeing one another in life would have prevented their seeing one another without sin in heaven? In either case, the importance of Guthlac's affection for his sister, and vice versa, is so great that their love (*lufu uncer*) characterizes the happiness and eternal joy (*ead*, *ece gefea*) that they experience in heaven. That the fulfillment of their desires (*wil*) shall be mutual is heightened through the use of dual pronouns and possessives throughout the passage. The affective dynamics of Guthlac's promise suggest that he has taken these measures to avoid the sort of excess of affection for a human being, in the mortal rather than the eternal realm, that he urges Beccel to control. But in neither Beccel's case nor his own does he suggest that such affection is itself to be avoided, but only that its excess in worldly life be controlled and directed toward a more lasting manifestation. That Guthlac's and his sister's sight of one another will be greater in the sight of God emphasizes that community, affection, and indeed love (*lufu*) are ultimately indispensable even for this eremitic saint.

Guthlac's final secret reiterates the importance of properly orienting affect in the face of suffering. While Beccel still mourns, *miclum gebisgad* (greatly troubled; line 1197b), at receiving Guthlac's final instructions, he asks a final question of his lord:

> Ic þec halsige, hæleþa leofost
> gumena cynnes, þurg gæsta weard,
> þæt þu hygesorge heortan minre
> geeþe, eorla wyn. […]
> Oft mec geomor sefa gehþa gemanode,
> hat æt heortan, hyge gnornende
> nihtes nearwe, ond ic næfre þe,
> fæder, frofor min, frignan dorste. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1203–6a, 1208–11)
>
> [I beg you, dearest of men, of the kindred of humanity, through the protector of spirits, that you lighten the sorrowful spirit of my heart, friend of men. Often a heart sad with cares reminded me, hot at heart, with a mourning spirit, closely at night, and I never dared to ask you, father, my comfort.]

Beccel signals the importance of his request for relief from his sadness, and its potential risk, saying he had never dared (*durran*) to ask before. In justifying himself, he appeals to both Guthlac's affection for him and his own affective state, now weighed down by suffering. He calls Guthlac *hælepa leofast*, emphasizing his importance to the human community that he is rapidly leaving, and *fæder* and *frofor min*, emphasizing his particular importance to Beccel and to Beccel's affective state. Beccel's fear stems from his perception of what he apprehends he should not have perceived:

> Symle ic gehyrde, þonne heofones gim,
> wyncondel wera, west onhylde,
> sweglbeorht sunne setlgonges fus
> on æfentid, oþerne mid þec,
> […] ond on morgne swa,
> ongeat geomormod, gæstes spræce. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1212–15, 1219b–20)
>
> [Always I heard another with you, when the gem of heaven, the joyful candle of men, held to the west, the heaven-bright sun eager for its setting, in the evening hour, and in the morning likewise, I perceived sad in mind the speech of a spirit.]

Beccel had awakened at night and stayed with Guthlac because of his immense sadness; in the midst of this, he perceived (*ongietan*) the presence of another, and had heard the speech of a *gæst*. When Guthlac answers, he declares that he has never spoken to anyone else about this, and suggests that it would have been dangerous to do so:

> Huru, ic nolde sylf
> þurh gielpcwide gæstes mines
> frofre gelettan, ne fæder mines
> æfre geæfnan, æbylg godes. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1234–7)
>
> [Indeed, I myself would never hinder the comfort of my spirit through boasting speech, nor ever bring about the anger of God.]

The "comfort of [his] spirit" speaks to the affective mastery that defines and propels Guthlac's regimented life as does Guthlac's silence about the nature of his consolation. Yet both his eagerness to receive comfort from God and the form that this comfort takes speak once again to the primacy of community in directing and motivating the forms of Guthlac's self-control. As he explains:

> Symle me onsende sigedryhten min,
> folca feorhgiefa, siþþan ic furþum ongon

on þone æfteran anseld bugan
geargemearces, gæst haligne,
[…] me sara gehwylc
gehælde hygesorge, ond me in hreþre bileac
wuldres wilboda wisdomes giefe
[…]
þæt me ne meahte monna ænig
bideaglian hwæt he dearninga
on hyge hogde heortan geþoncum,
siþþan he me fore eagum onsyne wearð. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1238–41, 1244b–6, 1251–4)

[Always my glorious Lord, the giver of life to men, sends to me a holy spirit, since a year's space after I had begun to dwell in this hermitage, […] who healed me from the sorrow of my spirit, from each of my pains, and the messenger of glory locked in my heart by the gift of wisdom, […] that no one might hide what he secretly thought in his spirit, in the thoughts of his heart, after he came to be visible before my eyes.]

The spirit heals Guthlac's pains and alleviates his sorrows, and its company comes about only through Guthlac's radical renunciation of the rest of human society. And yet, among the other gifts of comfort and company that this spirit provides, it enables him to know the hearts and thoughts of other humans in a miraculous way, enabling him to provide comfort to them as he now admonishes Beccel:

Leofast monna, nu ic for lufan þinre,
ond geferscype þæt wit fyrn mid unc
longe læstan, nelle ic lætan þe
æfre unrotne æfter ealdorlege
meðne modseocne minre geweorðan
soden sorgwælmum. A ic sibbe wiþ þe
healdan wille. Nu of hreþerlocan
to þam soþan gefean sawel fundað. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1257–64)

[Dearest of men, now I, for the sake of your love and companionship that we formerly among ourselves long practiced, will not allow you to become ever sad, weary, and sick at heart, after the course of my life, boiled in surges of sorrow. Always I will hold friendship with you. Now establish your soul from your heart to the true joy.]

Guthlac's message is personal, a fact emphasized by the use of the first-person dual and second-person singular, and through his repeated appeals to the friendship and companionship he has formerly (*fyrn*) enjoyed with Beccel. Guthlac promises the antidote to what Beccel has most grieved: Their companionship will not end with Guthlac's death, but will continue

always (*a*), and Guthlac will ensure that Beccel's affective state remain positive, comforted from sorrow. Yet in the turn his speech takes toward Beccel's grounding his soul in eternal joys, he suggests that their affection will properly be of the kind that Guthlac promises his sister – to be continued in the eternal realm, where the true and lasting joy (*soþ gefea*) may be found exclusively.

As Guthlac dies, telling his companion that the time has come to carry out his prior instructions, the poem continues its contrast between Guthlac's joy and Beccel's sorrow. Guthlac is *glædmod* (glad in mind), sending his spirit into the *wuldres dream* (joy of glory; lines 1303–4). Guthlac ends his speech to his retainer, declaring that he is now exhausted, and the temporal markers *Nu* and *Ða* emphasize how immediately he declines (lines 1268b–71a). In spite of the great strength he bears in his heart, the physical suffering he endures is written on his body, rendering the effects of the metaphorical *biter drync* in literal, material form.[61] Guthlac sags against the wall, head drooping, as he begins to breathe his last:

> Oroð stundum teah
> mægne modig, him of muðe cwom
> swecca swetast. Swylce on sumeres tid
> stincað on stowum staþelum fæste
> wynnum æfter wongum wyrta geblowene,
> hunigflowende, swa þæs halgan wæs
> ondlongne dæg oþ æfen forð
> oroð up hlæden. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1271b–8a)
>
> [The brave one drew breath by might laboriously, from his mouth came the sweetest of smells. As it smells in the time of summer in places firmly established with joys, after the plains blown with herbs, flowing with honey, so was the breath of the holy one drawn forth through the day until the evening.]

Just as in life Guthlac perceives joy according to the heavenly reward to come rather than according to the fact of his temporal suffering, so at the time of his death he brings the sensuous qualities of Paradise into the world, that they may be perceived by others. Like the saved at the end of *The Phoenix* who are "fægre gefrætwad […] / in eadwelum æþelum stencum" (fairly adorned […] in blessed noble scents; *The Phoenix* lines 585–6) and like other saints whose dead or dying bodies produce miraculous pleasing odors,[62] Guthlac produces pleasant sensations that affirm his sanctity. The images of lands filled with joys and with fragrant herbs also recalls the imagery of Old English paradise poetry, including the *wyrta wynsume* (joyful plants; line 529a) of *The Phoenix*. As night falls,

a "leohta glæm" (bright light) surrounds the house, marking Guthlac's connection to the divine (*Guthlac B*; lines 1289–90). Guthlac is *glædmod* (glad in mind; line 1303a), sending his spirit into the *wuldres dream* (joy of glory; line 1304b). As Guthlac dies in *Guthlac B*, we see in effect a version of the scene that opens *Guthlac A*: angels carry his soul into joy ("Englas feredun / to þam longan gefean" [angels carried him to that lasting joy; lines 1306b–7a]), and produce joyful song in response to his victory that reaches even to earth:

> Engla þreatas
> sigeleoð sungon, sweg wæs on lyfte
> gehyred under heofonum, haligra dream.
> Swa se burgstede wæs blissum gefylled,
> swetum stencum ond sweglwundrum,
> […] Þær wæs ænlicra
> ond wynsumra þonne hit in worulde mæge
> stefn areccan, hu se stenc on se sweg,
> heofonlic hleoþor ond se halga song,
> gehyred wæs, heahþrym godes,
> breahtem æfter breahtme. (*Guthlac B*, lines 1314–18, 1320b–5a)
>
> [Troops of angels sang a victory song, the sound was in the sky heard under the heavens, the joy of the holy ones. So that place was filled with joys, with sweet odors and heavenly wonders. It was there more excellent and more joyful than voice may tell in this world, how the odor and the sound, the heavenly voice and the holy song was heard, the high host of God, clamor after clamor.]

There are conventional sights, smells, sounds, and abundant sweetness to mark the passing of the saint. In spite of all this perceptible wonder, after the loss of his lord Beccel departs on his errand afraid (*afyrhted*; line 1326b) and sorrowful (*under sorgum*; line 1330a, "[g]nornsorge wæg / hate æt heortan, | hyge geomurne" [he bore a heavy grief, hot at his heart, a sad spirit; lines 1335b–6], "[h]im þæs wopes hring / torne gemonade. | Teagor yðum weol, / hate hleordropan" [the ring of that grief frequently recurred to him. The tears surged in waves, hot droplets; lines 1339b–41a]). Although Beccel's sorrow hardly lessens as he finds Guthlac's sister and tells her what he has been instructed, we see from his speech that he intellectually understands Guthlac's message in full, even if his affective state has not aligned with it just yet. He tells Pega that Guthlac has gone to seek *ece gefea* (eternal joy; line 1371b), and that Guthlac and Pega (signified by the dual pronoun *git*) will receive a common home and renew their kinship there: "mid þa sibge-dryht | somudeard niman, / weorca wuldorlean, | willum neotan / blædes

ond blissa" (take up a common home amid your kinsmen, the glorious reward for your deeds, enjoy eagerly glory and bliss; lines 1372–4a). There is no question, in the speech he offers her, that Guthlac enjoys the affective delights of paradise, joys that will be reserved, too, for Pega herself. And yet these joys offer little comfort or relief from sorrow, still, for Beccel. The end of *Guthlac B* has been lost, but the last line of what remains offers a bleak prediction for the future: "Ic sceal sarigferð," Beccel declares, "heanmod hweorfan, | hyge drusendne" (I shall turn, sorrowful at heart, with a downcast mind, a drooping spirit; lines 1378b–9). The end of the text is lost, leaving us in doubt, and Felix's life contains none of Beccel's speech or his continuing grief, and no further mention of Beccel himself after Pega learns of her brother's death.[63] Regardless, in expanding their dialogue and deploying the conventions of heroic and elegiac poetry, the Old English text has offered further dimensions to the complex affective states of grief and devotion that are alluded to in Felix's more concise *Vita*. It further emphasizes the importance of human affection, not just of the servant for his saint, but of the saint for both his companion and the sister he never sees.

Because of the damage to the text, we, like Guthlac, never see Pega's response to his death. In Felix's text, she falls to the ground as if dead upon hearing the news, but says nothing before carrying out her brother's commands regarding his burial.[64] Nevertheless, what remains in both of these texts, but particularly in *Guthlac B*, of Guthlac's suffering, the knowledge of his impending death, the suffering that the lord's suffering causes to his devoted servant, and the sympathetic portrayal of all of this suffering, would seem to exceed the capacity for feeling often attributed to early English art. If Guthlac seeks to teach Beccel "how to feel,"[65] it is not because his servant lacks the ability to feel at all, nor because he lacks the ability to feel pity for suffering, but that his pity is here misdirected because Guthlac's suffering is only temporary, his joy guaranteed by the suffering of Christ after whom his own is modeled. Low argues that while "the poem remains sympathetic to his plight," Beccel's grief nevertheless represents his "undeveloped mind" in contrast to Guthlac's.[66] Yet the poem has more to tell us than the difference between master and pupil, between the saint and the dedicated but still immature disciple. The poem shows us Guthlac's affection for Beccel and Beccel's for him in heroic and elegiac poetic terms, and his enduring affection for the sister he refuses to see at the end of his life. These bonds of loyalty between kin, and between thane and lord, are not only conventions applied to Beccel, and so are not fully subordinated by, but included in, the depiction of Guthlac's sanctity.

The Forms of History

Historians, literary historians, and historians of emotion have argued that the twelfth century witnessed a dramatic change in Christian religious practice, namely the rise of affective piety. This argument focuses on changes in visual representations, in literature exhorting love and pity for Christ and the Virgin Mary, and in new emphases on penitential literature after the institution of mandatory confession in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. But this account has often been oversimplified, its conclusions taken so broadly that emotions before this period are considered flat or primal by comparison.

The role of affect in pre-Conquest devotion, and consequently pre-Conquest devotional art and literature, is consequently often downplayed or overlooked, if not denied entirely. Scholars of the early Middle Ages in England carefully qualify their statements about pre-Conquest affect even when going so far as to note its existence. But poems such as *The Dream of the Rood* and *Guthlac B* are not isolated examples nor ahead of their time; they exist firmly within and rely upon the web of cultural conventions – and particularly the poetic topoi – of their age. Those conventions – particularly the elegiac model of grief for a fallen lord most associated with Old English poetic elegy and the heroic ethos – comprise their forms, and it is from the complex web of affective associations bound up with these conventions that these poems take their meaning. Even granting changes to devotional practice as well as literary and artistic forms from the early to late Middle Ages, the shift to the affective piety of the later period is subtler than is often thought. The earlier medieval period may emphasize stoicism in juxtaposition with sympathy. Yet sympathy for suffering saints, and indeed for the suffering of Christ, is not alien to devotional literature in which it is evocatively portrayed, even if its occasionally elegiac and heroic conventions seem unfamiliar to us.