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Article

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# Perceiving the other: sensory phenomena and experience in the early medieval Other World

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During the opening decades of the seventh century a multi-volumed work began to appear in Visigothic Spain which was soon to be cherished by innumerable readers throughout the Middle Ages and over much of the Christian West. This work, the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (c.560-636), contains, in addition to a wealth of information on the seven liberal arts, an impressive storehouse of knowledge on such diverse subjects as agriculture, architecture, geography, medicine, theological matters and zoology. It was, and still is, an invaluable source both for, and of, Visigothic thought, a *summa* of early medieval learning.

In one of its twenty volumes, *De homine et portentis*, *On the human and the monster*, Isidore discusses the natures - both external and internal - of men and women. In examining the derivation of the word *'ανθρωπος* he quotes from the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (43 BC-AD 17/18) when the poet describes the human being, raised up from the soil and looking heavenwards to contemplate his Creator:

Whereas other animals hang their heads and look at the ground, he made humans stand erect, bidding them look up to heaven, and lift their heads to the stars.<sup>1</sup>

Isidore continues,

A human, therefore, standing upright, looks up to the sky in order that he may seek God, not upon the earth as beasts do, fashioned by nature with heads looking downward and dominated by their bellies.<sup>2</sup>

'A human, therefore, standing upright, looks up to the sky that he may seek God.' What will God look like? What will the sounds of praise be like? Will we all be the same gender in heaven? Will people have the same infirmities that they endured on earth? Will martyrs still bear signs of their mutilations? What will the odour of sanctity be like? Will we have to eat? Such questions had been theological hot potatoes in the early centuries of the Christian era, an age profoundly concerned with life after death. They had not only been the cause of much scholarly debate between those engaged in the agenda proposed by such writings as the *City of God*, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* and the *Enchiridion* of Augustine (354-430) but, judging by the comments which accompany the more popular descriptions of the Other World, had also been in the minds of many other thinking people.

The nature of the world beyond the grave was of the utmost importance to the medieval mind. It was, to all intents and purposes, the real world, compared to which this earthly one was but a pale likeness, a temporary dwelling-place for the soul on its journey towards its final and everlasting home. The Other World was the ordered and demonstrable one. It preceded and dominated the natural world and the patterns of behaviour of its celestial inhabitants were held to be ones worthy of emulation. By conforming to these patterns, men and women were promised a share in that heavenly life. On the other hand, accounts of torments and suffering endured in Hell must have struck terror in the hearts of the living. Death itself was regarded as a passing from one stage in the order of being to another. Not surprisingly, in addition to theological arguments there was a wealth of descriptions of the Other World in Christian writings throughout the Middle Ages. Together with pictorial representations and the creations of skilled craftsmen, literary depictions of Heaven and Hell frequently recur throughout the period. These accounts, which usually took the form of descriptions of journeys to the Other World, presented to both the learned and popular medieval imaginations visions of sensuous and sensual Heavens and Hells. Written down in Latin, Greek, or (less often) one of the Middle Eastern languages, accounts of dreams and visions enjoyed a wide circulation. Many of these narratives were translated into vernaculars, recopied for centuries and disseminated by word of mouth before being retold in a new form to an even wider audience.

In modern times, the fascination and importance of oneiric (dream) and visionary literature has long been recognized. Not only do we learn much about medieval attitudes to death, God, judgement and the Other World from such accounts but we can also appreciate a little more significantly how men and women understood their own lives for they transferred their beliefs and concepts to the Other World, carrying over into it a knowledge of time and space, human personalities and relationships, experienced in this. Now that we have so many surveys of dreams and visions, however, it is time we started to examine in detail the language of its literature. It is a major medieval source whose value has only recently begun to attract the serious attention it deserves. For a long time, previous studies have concentrated on the relationship between the *Divine Comedy* and earlier descriptions of the Other World and, all too often, the latter have been compared unfavourably, their writers regarded as mere predecessors of Dante (1265-1321), a point of view which ignores the essential characteristics of both types of writing. A work of literature, like a work of art, or music sets its own terms.

It seems to me that one vital area of knowledge offered by this writing has, so far, been neglected by the medievalist. And it is an area which, examined without modern day preconceptions, can offer, I think, invaluable insights into the medieval mind. This area is the role of the senses in perceiving the Other World. In this paper,<sup>3</sup> which has its foundation in my doctoral thesis in progress *Perceiving the Other*, I would like to discuss some aspects of the role played by the senses in visionary experiences of the Other World and consider the question 'how did men and women in the Middle Ages perceive 'the other'? The texts I have chosen to explore are from the sixth to eighth centuries. They are also, with one exception, from western Christendom. Even having narrowed these down, there still remain very many accounts of otherworldly visions and to choose from these is not easy. From among these I have decided to look at the otherworldly visions recorded by Gregory of Tours, Gregory the Great, Bede and John Moschos. They serve to illustrate ideas commonly held about Heaven and Hell in the early Middle Ages. There are also themes here which recur in later medieval narratives.

The medieval western sensorium, like classical and modern ones, generally recognized five senses. Whilst sight and hearing have traditionally been considered the 'distant senses', enabling the

individual to perceive a world which is beyond his immediate reach, taste, touch and smell are regarded as the 'intimate senses.' They are intimate in that they are bound up with the immediate location and that they establish bonds between the individual and his environment. These three senses are associated with the body and what is in reach of it. In this paper I want to restrict my comments to these last three senses. The sights and sounds of the medieval Other World - on one hand white robed choirs of angels, on the other wretched souls shrieking out in anguish - are well known. The pleasant and painful, the fragrant and the foul, and the sweet and bitter sensory phenomena and experiences are less well known and, for this reason at least, of considerable interest.

### Taste

We begin with that most intimate of senses, the sense of taste, the first and last enjoyment of man. Our taste-buds savour ingested objects, both solid and liquid, and monitor the mouth's intake of food and drink not only in the present world, but also, apparently, in the next. In his life of Benedict Gregory the Great (c.540-604) refers to the 'delicious food' of heaven (*suavem cibum caelestis patriae*):

On another occasion the deacon Servandus ... came on a visit to Benedict, as was his wont ... Although they could not yet enjoy it fully, they might at least, by sighing with longing, have a taste of the delicious food of the heavenly homeland.<sup>4</sup>

The promise of heavenly food must have filled the medieval spirit with an intense longing. According to Bede (673-735), it was possible for the holiest of men to enjoy such food on earth. On one occasion Cuthbert (c.636-87) entertained an angel and was rewarded with:

Three warm loaves, unusually white and fine with a wonderfully fragrant odour (*tanta nidoris suavitas*). Whiter than the lily, sweeter than roses, more delicious than honey (*Nam et lilia candore, et rosas odore, et mella praecellunt sapore*).<sup>5</sup>

'It is obvious' responded Cuthbert 'that such food comes not from this world of ours but from the paradise of joy' (*de paradiso voluptatis*).

What is not quite so obvious is that in his detailed description of paradisaical food Bede combines four of the five senses: the bread is unusually white - it is whiter than the lily - (sight); it has a wonderfully fragrant odour - it is sweeter than roses - (smell); it is warm and its texture is fine (touch); in addition to it tasting more delicious than honey. These are qualities which recur in descriptions of celestial nourishment throughout the Middle Ages.

So much for heavenly food on earth; what of food and drink in the Other World itself? The anonymous author(s) of the mid-seventh-century *Lives of the Fathers of Merida* describe(s) a banquet experienced by the youth Agustus in his vision of Heaven:

There were countless serving-boys, all well-dressed and handsome, preparing the tables and a glorious feast. The rich dishes were not of meat, but all of fowl and everything which was being prepared was white like snow and they were awaiting the coming of the Lord, their king. Then the dishes which had been prepared were set before them.<sup>6</sup>

What is significant here is again the reference to the whiteness of the food: 'everything which was being prepared was white like snow.' The banquet mirrors the ancient monastic tradition referred to in the *Rule of St Benedict* which was unanimously opposed to the eating of the meat of four-footed animals (*Carnium vero quadrupedum omnimodo ab omnibus abstineatur comestio praeter omnino debiles aegrotos*).<sup>7</sup>

Not only food but also drink of extraordinary quality is found in Heaven. The Benedictine abbot and ascetic Valerius of Bierzo (fl. second half seventh century) offers a picture of Paradise restored in his account of the vision of a Spanish monk named Maximus:

We came to the middle of that celestial Paradise, where a stream of wonderful beauty ran, its water reflecting the silvery sands beneath. Then the angel said to me, "Taste this water." The water had an extraordinary, indescribable taste and a fragrance like balsam. Then he continued, "Does your earth have such water?" I answered, "Earth has nothing so good."<sup>8</sup>

Again, sight (a stream of wonderful beauty) and smell (a fragrance like balsam) in addition to taste (the water had an indescribable taste) are combined to present a stream of outstanding sensuousness.

What is exceptional, however, is the reference in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours (539-94) to a nun in St Radegund's nunnery of the Holy Cross in Poitiers drinking from the well of 'living water':

As <the nun> walked along, she was filled with a great desire to find her way to a certain spring of living water (*ad fontem vivum*). She did not know the way. She saw a man coming to meet her. "If you want to visit the well of living water," said the man, "I will lead you there." She thanked him and he went on ahead, leaving her to follow. They walked a long distance and then they came to a great spring.

The description of the spring is strikingly similar to Maximus':

Its water shone like gold and the grass around it glowed as if with the sparkling light of myriad gems. The man said to her, "This is the well of living water, for which you have been looking so long and so hard. Drink your fill of its stream, so that it may become for you a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life" [Jn 4:14] She drank thirstily from the stream.<sup>9</sup>

It is perhaps surprising that whilst there are several records of angels appearing to priests at the eucharist in this world, there are few references made to the eucharistic feast in Heaven. It is also surprising to discover that rather than eating rotten food in Hell, or drinking its putrid water, its inhabitants do not eat anything. They are out of communion.

## Touch

We come next to the second of the three so-called 'intimate senses', the sense of touch, the haptic (Gk: *'απτο*: I touch) or tactile sense. Our body's main tactile organ is its skin, acting both actively and passively, as it responds to stimuli, not only of this world but also, it appears, of the other. Our skin is the largest sensory organ; we are



always 'in touch.' The skin also responds passively as, in addition to information regarding the body itself, it perceives the size, shape, weight, textures (both superficial and internal), temperature and movement of the environment's features as they impinge upon our consciousness. Knowledge of the body, gained through experience, enables us to identify a vast range of information regarding the environment. Size and shape are often perceived in proportion and location to our own body. The weight of objects supported by the whole body, or parts of it, and the nature of their mass, their relative plasticity, may be calculated in relation to the human body. Our skin judges the roughness or smoothness of an object's surface and, possibly, any variation in its internal structure. Through the haptic sense, our body also perceives both the temperature and relative humidity of objects and the environment. Through the haptic sense the body may also perceive vibration and locomotion in relation to itself and/or other objects in the environment.

Our skin responds actively as the body moves through the environment. In early medieval descriptions of otherworldly experiences global touch, representing the body's contact with the terrestrial environment, seems to have been enhanced, on occasion, by the movement of the body through space. Gregory of Tours provides a vivid picture of this extraterrestrial movement in his account of Bishop Salvius of Albi's out-of-body journey in the late 560s or early 570s:

Embraced (*adpraehensus*) by a couple of angels and lifted up (*sublatus sum*) from this gloomy earth, beyond the sun and the moon, the clouds and the stars, to the very height of Heaven, Salvius, with his two companions, passed through a gate which shone more brightly than our sunshine.<sup>10</sup>

Passive responses are also much in evidence in otherworldly experiences. Bede's account of the Northumbrian householder Drythelm's vision from the closing years of the seventh century, or the opening years of the eighth, is typical:

As we travelled onwards, we came to a very broad and deep valley of infinite length. The side to our left was dreadful with burning flames, while the opposite side was equally horrible

with raging hail and bitter snow blowing and driving in all directions. Both sides were filled with men's souls, which seemed to be hurled (*iactari*) from one side to the other by the fury of the tempest. For when the wretches could no longer endure the blast of the terrible heat, they leaped into the heart of the terrible cold; and finding no refuge there, they leaped back again to be burned in the middle of the unquenchable flames.

Drythelm comments on the everlasting nature of this punishment:

A countless host of deformed spirits were tormented far and wide in this wretched condition without any interval of respite as far as the eye could see.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to global touch, reach touch, through movement of the head, arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet and toes, enables us to gain much tactile information. The dreamer or visionary used this information to make more coherent sense of the Other World. One story recounted by John Moschos (c.550-619) in his *Λειμωνάριον*, or *Spiritual Meadow*, describes an unexpected discovery made in a river in Hell. An elder was deeply troubled after the death of a brother, knowing that the latter had left this world sadly lacking in faith and devotion, and so prayed for a revelation of the monk's soul:

He went into a trance and saw a river of fire with a multitude in the fire itself. Right in the middle was the brother, submerged up to his neck. The elder said to him, "Was it not because of this retribution that I called on you to look after your own soul, my child?" The brother answered and said to the elder, "I thank God, father, that there is relief for my head. Thanks to your prayers I am standing on the head of a bishop."<sup>12</sup>

The haptic sense may experience such contrasts as lightness and weight, smoothness and roughness, heat and cold in the environment which are beyond the geographical range of purely tactile experience. However, because it has no obvious organ, it is easily overlooked. In contrast to the other four senses, touch has no specialized organ located in the head; rather the nerves which give rise to the sensation of touch are distributed all over the body. Isidore of Seville writes:

'The sense of touch ... handles, feels and spreads the force of sensation throughout the members of the body.'<sup>13</sup>

This lack of a specific corporeal organ for touch allows for a greater ingenuity in representing it in a number of ways. Since touch is the most intensely engaged sense in love making it should not surprise us to find that hellish punishments are experienced most frequently, deeply and everlastingly through this sense. Until the flesh is scorched or bruised (as is recorded in some accounts of oneiric and visionary experiences both in this and the Other World), however, the sense is taken for granted. In one of two visions experienced by Fursey, the Irishman suffers burning from contact with a man from whom he had taken a garment:

As they approached the great fire, the angel divided the flames as before for him to pass. But when the man of God came to the passage opened among the flames, wicked spirits seized one of those whom they had been tormenting in the fire, and thrust him against Fursey, so that he was burned on his shoulder and jaw. He recognized this man, and remembered that he had received some of his clothing when he died ... When Fursey had been restored to his body, he found that the burn he had received in his soul had left a permanent and visible scar on his shoulder and jaw; and in this strange way his body afforded visible evidence of the inward sufferings of his soul.<sup>14</sup>

Bede's narrative serves as a salutary warning.

Being in touch with one's own body besides interpersonal relationships establish trust and belonging, in addition to developing knowledge and coordination. Accounts of dreams and visions frequently record an intimacy between humans and otherworld beings which is bonded through reach touch. Bede describes how Fursey is protected by his angelic guides from a vast conflagration:

Then <Fursey> saw one of the three angels who had been his guides in both his visions go forward and divide the flames, while the other two flew on each side of him to protect him from harm.<sup>15</sup>

Although there are many instances of tenderness between guide and dreamer or visionary in the Other World, other experiences of touch are rare in Heaven. It should not come as a surprise, however, that touch is conspicuous by its absence in Heaven. The Risen Christ invited the doubting Thomas to touch; there can be no doubters in Heaven.

On the other hand, there are narratives which refer to a definite lack of intimacy. Gregory of Tours describes an after-dinner conversation in which Guntram seems to be at pains to out do Gregory in telling anecdotes. 'I, too, saw a vision in which Chilperic's death was announced', declares the king. He continues:

Three bishops led him into my presence and he was bound with chains: the first was Tetricus, the second Agricola and the third Nicetius of Lyons. Two of them said, "Undo his fetters, we beseech you, give him a good beating and let him go." Bishop Tetricus, on the contrary, opposed them with great bitterness. "That is not what you must do!" he said. "For his sins, this man must be cast into the flames." They went on arguing among themselves like this for a long time.

An even worse punishment, however, awaited Chilperic:

Far off I perceived a cauldron which was boiling fiercely, for there was a fire lighted beneath it. Poor Chilperic was seized: they broke his limbs and they threw him into the cauldron. I wept to see what happened. He was dissolved away and quite melted in the steaming water, and soon no trace of him remained.<sup>16</sup>

Imagined touch, haptic experience which has its roots in memory and projections in expectation, pervades oneiric and visionary experience and literature. The dreamer or visionary, in relating his experience, either directly or indirectly, through an amanuensis, to his audience not only drew upon his own experience but used the common experiences of his audience in order that together they might perceive 'the other.' Bede records how, after his vision, Drythelm used to chastise his body by immersing himself in freezing water and then not removing his wet clothes to dry them. When asked how he could bear such intense cold Drythelm replied, 'I have known it colder.'<sup>17</sup>

## Smell

Lastly, smell. Isidore of Seville considered smell and touch to be closely connected. 'Smell', he wrote, is perceived by the air's touch; it is, so to speak, the touch of odour-bearing air' (*Odoratus quasi aeris odoris adtactus. Tacto enim aere sentitur. Sic et olfactus, quod odoribus adficiatur*).<sup>18</sup> The sense of smell aids an understanding of our location and orientation in space, the organisation of space and spatial relationships, and offers qualitative information about the character of the environment and people in that environment. It is interesting to note, however, the absence of references to odours in the Biblical descriptions of both Paradise [Genesis] and the New Jerusalem [Apocalypse]. Neither the Garden of Eden nor the celestial city is redolent, as one might have assumed, with fragrant scents. The idea of the odour of sanctity finds its origins in the belief that the bodies of deeply spiritual humans emit a sweet smell signifying the presence of the Holy Spirit as many narratives of Gregory of Tours and Bede relate. Behind the Christian tradition lies the even older traditions of Classical Greece and Ancient Egypt in which perfumes were associated with particular gods and goddesses. Aphrodite, for example, was believed to have exhaled a delicious odour. Osiris gave off a scent which was inhaled by his followers. Jewish culture also added to the development of the tradition: the *Song of Solomon*, that most sensuous book of the Old Testament, for instance, was to have a profound influence not only on early Christian mysticism but on much of later Christian spirituality.

In describing smells, both fragrant and foul, writers of oneiric and visionary accounts use an ordinary and familiar vocabulary, which bypasses certain difficulties of expression experienced by contemporary writers. Unlike his medieval counterpart, the twentieth-century writer is frequently presented with the problem of describing this directly experienced sense by equally direct means. The word 'odour' itself nearly always connotes bad odour. In our age of political correctness the positive associations of the word aroma compared with the negative connotations of the word smell and odour may prove a stumbling block for the modern day translator.

Association and identification seem to have been as much in evidence while perceiving 'the other' during the early Middle Ages as it

is whilst perceiving the smellscapes, both artistically organized and haphazardly overlaid, of the present world. Gregory the Great's description of the natural scents of Heaven is typical:

On its farther side there were pleasant green meadows full of sweet flowers. Here there were also different companies of men and women dressed in white. There was such a delicate odor that the fragrant smell gave wonderful pleasure to all who dwelled and walked in that place.

It is significant that the heavenly smells were a source of pleasure to those who lived there. Similarly typical is the same writer's description of the stench of Hell:

Under <the bridge> a black and smokey river ran that had a filthy and intolerable smell.<sup>19</sup>

There is an important temporal dimension to smells on earth. Smells infiltrate, linger, and fade, rather than being present in any continuous degree of intensity. There is, therefore, a complex and dynamic relationship between current olfactory experience, odour memories and associations. The same, however, does not seem to hold true in the Other World.

I saw the earth open up and I fell down into it. There I saw rotting corpses, badly decayed and burst open, filling the place with an unspeakably foul stench ... I was overcome by the appalling stench.<sup>20</sup>

The sense of smell is excited by novelty but dulled by familiarity or habituation, although the particular smell of an everyday odour can be excited with recall after a period of absence, whilst familiarity can also make us responsive and receptive to newly encountered smells. Although the vocabulary used in describing smells experienced during dreams or visions is by no means extraordinary, we find that the novelty of the experience itself makes the ordinary all the more extraordinary by its context. In this regard, any study of the use of the olfactory sense in perceiving 'the other' in early medieval dreams and visions is made all the more vivid since smells tend to be described in

ways in which they affect the individual. The reference to scent in Gregory of Tours' account of Salvius' vision is thus exceptional:

As I stood in the spot where I was ordered to stand there me a perfume of such sweetness that, nourished by its delectable essence, I have felt the need of no food or drink until this very moment.

As soon as Salvius relates his vision to his brothers, however, the scent leaves him:

Woe is me that I have dared to reveal such a mystery! The perfumed essence which I breathed in from that holy place, and by which I have been sustained for three whole days without taking food or drink, has already left me.<sup>21</sup>

Odour memory is especially important in that it is remarkably acute and of great longevity. The olfactory sense is also strongly associated with the emotions. It has the power to evoke vivid, emotionally-charged memories of past events and scenes. We know that smells can be overwhelmingly nostalgic. Particular emotional responses are excited by specific smells. In the area of oneiric and visionary experience and record these emotional responses are frequently heightened still further by an aesthetic contemplation which may be part of a spiritual dimension.

### Closing comments

We have found that accounts of otherworldly journeys revealed various aspects of the world beyond the grave to men and women living in the Middle Ages and show us today different ways in which the medieval mind perceived Heaven and Hell. They recreate a rich tapestry, offering a wealth of insights into the medieval consciousness.

I think we may draw three points from this short look at the role of the senses in dreams and visions of the Other World all of which are interrelated. First, dreams and visions themselves were considered an integral part of medieval life. Without appreciating this fact we lose, or worse misinterpret, much of our understanding of the Middle Ages. Whilst there was no question of lies or deceit in these narratives,

however, the fact that such men as Gregory of Tours, Gregory the Great, Bede and John Moschos recorded what they believed to have taken place is, of course, no guarantee that it actually did. It is particularly difficult to verify the interiorized, personal, one might almost say private experience of a dream or vision (in contrast, say, to the more public experience of miracles). What one can say is that such experiences caused these writers to wonder at God's intervention in the lives of the dreamers and visionaries they describe. Certainly, something significant must have happened to cause these writers to record and comment upon it.

Second, these accounts of otherworldly journeys are remarkable for their wealth of detail. Rather than stressing the extraordinary, however, the writers emphasize the significant. For the Christian man or woman living in the Middle Ages death itself was regarded as the gateway to life through the resurrection of Christ. The dead are invisible to the living but, judging from the literature we have been considering, to share in the community of saints in Heaven or to suffer with individuals in Hell is to be more fully alive or vulnerable than ever on earth. All the writers plainly show that a holy life here on earth is as nothing compared with the holy life lived out in Heaven and, further, the person who, on account of his earthly behaviour, is rewarded by seeing God in His glory in Heaven, is happy indeed. Also, a sinful life here on earth reaps punishments which are as nothing compared with the life of torments suffered in Hell and, moreover, the person who is described enduring these torments is a powerful image in the hands of the Church. It is hardly surprising that the Christian Church celebrated the death of the saints rather than their birth.

Third, by examining the sensuous language of oneiric and visionary writing we may come to a deeper understanding of the medieval world itself. I have pointed out how writers combine references to all the senses in the dreamers' and visionaries' perceptions of the Other World. Just as there is a continuum in encountering the environment from active involvement to total detachment, there is, of course, a wide-ranging interaction between each of the three intimate senses and the other senses. Through contact with the knowable and the known, the individual investigates his environment, both organic and non-organic, and creates some kind of communication with it. This, we have found, is as true of the dreamer or visionary perceiving 'the other' as it is of the individual coming into contact with his own world. Without being



aware of these references we not only miss the whole field of medieval sensory perception but, worse, we fail to notice both its powerful aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual importance for the writers' audiences and also its implications for the modern historian.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1:84 quoted in Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive originum*, ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1911, repr. 1957 (hereafter referred to as *Etymologies*), 11:1. The translations from the *Etymologies* are my own.

<sup>2</sup> *Etymologies* 11:1.

<sup>3</sup> This paper was read at The Senses in the Middle Ages Symposium held in the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Reading, 30 June 1999. I am grateful to my supervisor, Professor Edward James, for his comments on the draft of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory the Great, *Life of Benedict*, in Carolinne White, *Early Christian Lives*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1998, 35:1.

<sup>5</sup> Bede, *Life of Cuthbert*, in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and transl. B. Colgrave, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1940, c.7.

<sup>6</sup> Paul the Deacon, *The Lives of the Fathers of Merida*, in *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*, ed. and transl. A.T. Fear, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1997, 1:8.

<sup>7</sup> *RB 1980, The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and transl. Timothy Fry, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1981, c.39.

<sup>8</sup> Valerius, *Item dicta beati Valeri ad beatum Donadeum scripta*, in Manuel C. Diaz Y Diaz, *Visiones del mas alla en Galicia durante la alta edad media*, Santiago de Compostela, Bibliofilos Gallegos, 1985. My translation of all three visions recorded by Valerius of Bierzo is in progress.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, transl. Lewis Thorpe, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1974 (hereafter referred to as *Histories*), 6:29.

<sup>10</sup> *Histories* 7:1.

<sup>11</sup> Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, transl. Leo Sherley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968 (hereafter referred to as *HE*), 5:12.

<sup>12</sup> John Moschos, *Spiritual Meadow*, transl. John Wortley, Kalamazoo, Cistercian Publications, 1992, c.44.

<sup>13</sup> *Etymologies* 11:1.

<sup>14</sup> *HE* 3:19.

<sup>15</sup> *HE* 3:19.

<sup>16</sup> *Histories* 8:5.

<sup>17</sup> *HE* 5:13.

<sup>18</sup> *Etymologies* 11:1.

<sup>19</sup> Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, transl. O.J. Zimmerman, New York, Fathers of the Church, 1959, 4:37.

<sup>20</sup> John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow*, c.19.

<sup>21</sup> *Histories* 7:1.