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## **Eighth-Century Anglo-Latin Ecclesiastical Attitudes to Dreams and Visions<sup>1</sup>**

In Anglo-Saxon England, Christianised from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards by groups of Roman, Irish and Frankish missionaries, there was a flourishing monastic culture, which exerted its own missionary influence to the Continent by the early eighth-century.<sup>2</sup> The varied origins of their Christianity notwithstanding the eighth-century Anglo-Latin<sup>3</sup> writers saw their culture as the result of the Mediterranean effort initiated by Pope Gregory the Great in 597. Christianisation hardly takes place simply between two monoliths, a church and a people,<sup>4</sup> but can rather be understood as a layered process, the intra-ecclesiastical dimensions of which, due to the nature of our sources, are often the most visible to us. In this paper I will focus on Anglo-Latin attitudes to dreams and visions, a microscopic strand of the history of Christian thought in the early Middle Ages, to explore the ways in which the views of writers on this particular missionary frontier could be explained, and to briefly consider them in relation to our understanding of the formation and nature of early medieval Christendom.

In Hellenistic antiquity dreams were an acknowledged medium of divination. The Middle Ages also inherited the biblical stories of God communicating his will through dreams and visions. However, the bible also held warnings on the illusionary nature of some dreams. Already in classical philosophies the spirit world was invoked as one among the causes of dreams and visions,<sup>5</sup> and Christian theologians, especially those influenced by ascetic thought, above all SS. Augustine of Hippo († 430), Gregory the Great († 604) and Isidore of Seville († 636), pointed out that not all spirits were benign or sent by God: some were the agents of the Devil. Paraphrasing St. Paul<sup>6</sup> they remarked that Satan, to mislead the faithful, could appear in any disguise, even as an angel of light. Essentially the Fathers cautioned their audiences against trusting messages that *appeared* wanted or trustworthy. The suspicious nature of dreams necessitated care, sanctity and learning of their evaluators.<sup>7</sup>

However, judging by seventh-century Gallic practices,<sup>8</sup> such warnings may not have immediately been heeded. The control and handling of oneiric experience is curiously invisible in most Merovingian narrative sources, and when commentary or descriptions of interpretation appear, apparently for reasons similar to those behind – or as reactions to – the patristic concerns, they hardly reach the same depth.<sup>9</sup> While many patristic texts appear to stress the importance of the dreamer's sanctity as a

guarantee of the authenticity of a dream, the narrative sources as a whole do not observe such a rule with any consistency. Most texts simply depict acceptance of dreams at face value and rarely dwell on the authentication of individual dreams and visions.<sup>10</sup> Something distinctive, however, appears in the Anglo-Latin sources. While mine has been the first attempt at a comprehensive examination of attitudes to the validity and interpretation of oneiric experiences in both Continental as well as Insular narrative sources of this period,<sup>11</sup> some scholars have, comparing a limited selection of texts or examining individual items, noted the incidences of both descriptions of authentication as well as of ecclesiastical control of oneiric experience in Anglo-Latin narratives.

For example Lisa Bitel, in a brief sketch of early medieval oneirology, asserted that the reason writers in the non-Romanised north dwelt on the assessment and interpretation of dreams was that their audiences did not share Greco-Roman ideas about dreams.<sup>12</sup> However, it seems that a distinction between disbelief and learned scepticism,<sup>13</sup> the latter of which I feel is more appropriate in relation to the Anglo-Latin texts, is in order. The eminent Peter Brown, commenting on insular examples of control and criticism, offered that possibly the Anglo-Latin ecclesiasts were faced with a “vernacular visionary culture, stirred by Christianity but unamenable to ecclesiastical control”, making them wary of the problematic nature of the phenomena.<sup>14</sup> However, as very little, indeed nothing certain, can be known of Anglo-Saxon pagan or popular views on dreams,<sup>15</sup> both theories are incomplete, and might even lead us in the wrong direction. The present paper proposes to examine these Anglo-Latin texts – a number of saints’ lives and a historical narrative, all datable to the first half of the eighth century<sup>16</sup> – in their contexts, to reconsider their evidence about views on dreams, and propose alternative or additional explanations.

Peter Brown introduces his suggestion with a reference to a passage in the early eighth-century *Life* of St. Guthlac († possibly around 714), ostensibly indicating the peculiar problems the insular ecclesiasts had with out-of-control charismatics. We are told the saint’s source of power had been questioned, and bishop Hædda of Leicester’s secretary offered to try him, having witnessed many “pseudo-anachoritas diversarum religionum simulatores” among the Irish (in modern Scotland), and learned to recognise them.<sup>17</sup> But our continental sources, especially Gregory of Tours († 594),<sup>18</sup> likewise inform us of the existence of wayward ascetics and false prophets, effectively curing the sick and prophesising accurately through black magic. Despite this, while there is nothing to suggest that the majority of Frankish ecclesiasts could not have been critical, many do appear quite relaxed regarding oneiric experiences.<sup>19</sup> There is no reason to deny the possibility of an Anglo-Saxon – or Irish, for that matter – “visionary

culture” – most people dream, after all – but we do lack any specific evidence of its nature. Rather, one is forced to consider why, if problems precipitate care,<sup>20</sup> is this not evident in the continental sources?

On the contrary, our Anglo-Latin sources still seem to exhibit a heightened sensitivity to the critique and control of visionary experience. Brown’s sole other example of Anglo-Saxon sensitivity is the famous story of Caedmon by Bede the Venerable († 735). Caedmon, a layman, received in a dream the gift of musical composition, and was sent by the reeve to St. Hild, abbess of Whitby († 680), whose panel of ecclesiastical experts tried his talent, finally deeming it valid.<sup>21</sup> While images of voluntary consultation occasionally appear,<sup>22</sup> this kind of clerical *control*, depicted explicitly as determining the distinction between vision and illusion, cannot be found in the Merovingian sources.

This can also be seen when comparing the longer Anglo-Latin accounts of visions of the Christian afterlife to those recorded in the Continent. Whereas Continental visionaries such as the monk Barontus or St. Fursey († 650),<sup>23</sup> are portrayed autonomously interpreting and openly sharing their experiences without consulting any superior clergy, both St. Boniface of Mainz († 754) and Bede, recounting the visions of their countrymen, an anonymous monk of Wenlock and the *paterfamilias* Drythelm, respectively, mention a stage of control after the reception of the vision. According to Bede, Drythelm shared his vision first with king Aldfrith of Northumbria (685–705), who, realising its value, arranged for the seer to enter a monastery.<sup>24</sup> The monk of Wenlock, on the other hand, was admonished by the very vision itself to narrate it first to a certain priest, and “afterwards, insofar as advised by him, recount it to the general public”.<sup>25</sup> Likewise Bede, in his retelling of the story of St. Fursey, departs from the original in specifying that Fursey only shared his visions with those considering a monastic conversion.<sup>26</sup>

Are we here, then, faced with care arising in response to some uncontrollable popular culture of dreams? While a rampant vernacular visionary culture is as impossible to rule out as it is to prove, I am inclined to elaborate on the remark of Patrick Sims-Williams, who, regarding the vision of the monk of Wenlock, points out that not only is the rhetoric of reticence in respect to the extra-monastic community in keeping with the oldest of ascetic traditions, but that the care in the text might reflect the higher sophistication of the Anglo-Latin society.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, where reasons for such care are referred to, the allusions are always to biblical and patristic scepticism. A depiction of learned care appears in Bede’s story of the monk Ecgbert’s preparations for a mission to the Frisians. Godly ambitions notwithstanding, one morning a young brother approached

Ecgbert and told that Boisil, his teacher, had appeared to him in the night and warned that the mission was not in God's plan for Ecgbert. The young brother himself was quite convinced of the dream, had he not recognised the looks of his own teacher? Ecgbert, however, told him to keep the dream to himself, lest it be an illusion. Privately he meditated on the dream, and when the younger monk returned, telling the dream had recurred and that he had been more severely admonished by Boisil, Bede notes Ecgbert was already inclined to consider it truthful. However, not knowing how to convince his enthusiastic companions, he still went on with his plans, calling off the expedition only when a storm capsized his ship at dock.<sup>28</sup>

That such views were current in Anglo-Latin learned culture is also suggested by a passage in the *Whitby Life of St. Gregory the Great*.<sup>29</sup> In an anecdote concerning the recovery of the relics of king Eadwine of Northumbria, we are presented with Trimma, a priest admonished in a series of dreams to reclaim the remains. Unlike in the continental instances of this *topos*,<sup>30</sup> however, Trimma's reluctance to act is not attributed to his disbelief, but to his learned distrust towards dreams, as well as the advice of a fellow monk to the same effect. Only when he is physically abused in a third dream, does he comply, and recover the relics. In fact, in its inter-textual context, the story appears almost as a cautionary tale *against* too dogmatic a distrust towards dreams, which it implies might be current in some quarters.<sup>31</sup> Generally ecclesiasts closely concerned with a particular cult could be readier to consider the truthfulness of useful dreams and visions – and conversely for a writer such as Bede, concerned with the bigger picture, a critical stance would be understandable. Such a difference in authorial perspective might well explain some of the differences apparent between Continental and Anglo-Latin hagiography. That these views are visible only in Anglo-Latin texts does not automatically rule such views out from Continental thought.

This should alert us to question the extent to which our sources reflect a unified Anglo-Latin attitude. What seems common to most of our texts is a new acknowledgement of the problematic nature of dreams; disagree as they might on its implications. However, the passages indicating this, as they do not represent quite the totality of Anglo-Latin narratives on dreams, hardly amount to a conclusive show of a peculiarly Anglo-Latin ecclesiastical attitude.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, there are the pragmatic contexts of our narrative sources to consider. Received wisdom states that the Merovingian hagiographies were often intended for a wide audience of laymen. Conversely, in Anglo-Saxon and Germanic territories the language barrier would have made the extant Latin texts incomprehensible to lay audiences and thus the domain of ecclesiasts, any possible

vernacular paraphrases notwithstanding.<sup>33</sup> Bypassing problems of identifying the pragmatic contexts of individual texts and assuming a fundamental unity in the public aims of both Continental and Insular hagiography, one might argue that there was in fact a real difference, not simply in narratives, but in thought itself, in attitude to dreams and visions. However, seizing on these generalisations one could advance the hypothesis that texts directly intended for lay ears would have been shorn of theological misgivings and complications, and, likewise, such as were written for ecclesiasts, to be used in pastoral work only through paraphrasing, would have been better suited for voicing actual theoretical concerns.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, our evidence does suggest the possibility of a learned critical view entertained on the higher rungs of the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical hierarchy, although a leap from representations to ideas is certainly not a straightforward one.

In addition to the narrative sources we have an early eighth-century penitential, purporting to collect the judgements of metropolitan bishop Theodore of Canterbury, which is apparently the first piece of western ecclesiastical legislation since the fourth century that lists oneiromancy among prohibited methods of divination.<sup>35</sup> However, the issue the passage actually concerns itself with is women practicing “*incantationes vel divinationes diabolicas*”. Only after this reference to a supposedly actual practice<sup>36</sup> doest the text follow up with a justification, introducing, “*de hoc in canone dicitur*”, a quote from a Latin version<sup>37</sup> of the acts of the council of Ancyra (*circa* 314), condemning all “*qui auguria auspicia sive somnia vel divinationes quaslibet secundum mores gentilium observant*”.<sup>38</sup> Thus the compilation employs an older and more prestigious council to legitimate the prohibition of an ostensibly peculiar Anglo-Saxon practice. To strengthen the impression that oneiromancy was not an extraordinary problem, later Anglo-Latin penitentials and canons,<sup>39</sup> when treating supposed pagan survivals, make no reference to it. Continental penitentials, however, did pick up the prohibition, which also found its way into Carolingian legislation,<sup>40</sup> and there is again no reason to invoke cultural influences from below to explain this.

Thus the prohibition of pagan oneiromancy – and this may in any case have been the effect of the decree, its intentions notwithstanding – has the appearance of an exercise in comprehensively connecting the young Anglo-Saxon Christianity to the traditional position of the universal Church, rather than that of a reaction to an actual practice. This, in general, had been the essence of the late seventh-century reforms undertaken by Theodore, in whose name the penitential was written. It can hardly be insignificant that he hailed from the Byzantine east, not only a highly learned ecclesiastical culture but also one possessing authors even more critical of dreams than the Western Fathers.<sup>41</sup> If the penitential can thus be explained through new currents in ecclesiastical thought, it also suggests a model

of explanation for the care observed in the narrative sources. On the other hand, it may well itself have exerted direct influence on the authors we have been examining.

Pursuing the hypothesis that we are dealing with intra-ecclesiastical influences, it must be pointed out that sophistication – as employed by Patrick Sims-Williams – might still not be quite the right term for the phenomena, eclipsing as it does the intellectual achievements of the Merovingian church.<sup>42</sup>

Certainly Continental writers could have been aware of the patristic opinion, and for example Gregory's *Dialogues* were read and used as a literary model in mid seventh-century Francia.<sup>43</sup> Yet explicit references to the problematic nature of dreams are rare in continental narratives. Perhaps the seventh-century Gallican Church regarded the pope's writings as doctrinal sources among many. Anglo-Latin ecclesiasts, however, held the pope in special reverence, seeking to adhere to the spirit of the writings of the founder of their church.<sup>44</sup> More importantly, the missions appear to have created a new need to answer questions about the real nature of orthodoxy and to find or create an authoritative tradition to connect to, and many were inclined to see the Roman church embodying this authority and tradition.<sup>45</sup> Robert Markus has argued that the Anglo-Saxon missionaries of the 8<sup>th</sup> century applied a new definition of Christian behaviour, vehemently attacking practices often already condemned but practically tolerated by the Gallic and Roman churches.<sup>46</sup> In organising congregations many Anglo-Latin ecclesiasts applied new models of pastoral organisation and care.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately such concerns influenced the Carolingian formulation and application of new standards of lay Christianity.<sup>48</sup>

In the absence of evidence of an especially oneirocentric popular culture, a simple dialectical model of Christianisation fails us in this case. Instead, we are faced with hints of complex developments inside and between the hierarchies of the western churches. This is not to deny popular or vernacular influence, but rather, in the absence of specific data, to reduce its ascertainable influence to a more general level: irrespective of the specific nature of any wayward popular culture the very idea of a missionary frontier, something culturally Other,<sup>49</sup> must have been, in part, what drove ecclesiasts to take a closer look at the scriptures and to seek authoritative answers. It has been my intention to suggest that the attitudes to dreams visible in the Anglo-Latin texts, simultaneously representing and participating in the process of Christianisation, were substantially Mediterranean-Christian, and that their probable inspirations indicate this particular case of Christianisation taking place between ecclesiastical traditions, betraying differences of opinion between the human constituents of what is still too often viewed as a monolithic institution. The texts not only show what might be a difference between the views of the Gallic and Anglo-Saxon ecclesiasts, but also hint to differences inside – at

least – the latter. Further study, however, both of the patristic theories and of Merovingian and Carolingian thought on these matters, seems to be needed to clarify the nature and extent of the apparent differences. It seems we might apply to this case the larger point argued among others by Peter Brown<sup>50</sup> – namely the fruitful diversity of Western Christendom in the first millennium – but wishing to point out that a comparative and contextual approach may help us explain some of this apparent diversity without resorting to assumption of straightforward influences from below.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on my unpublished Pro gradu -thesis (Keskiaho 2003) as well as ongoing work on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Riché 1962, pp. 303–25; Angenendt 1995, pp. 268–83 and 288–92; Brown 1996, pp. 270–3; Depreux 2002, pp. 28–38. Note that while Anglo-Saxon England was substantially Christianised in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, treating the Anglo-Latin church as a missionary culture is in keeping with the view of the Anglo-Latin ecclesiasts themselves; e.g. Anglo-Saxon missionary Boniface of Mainz confided in bishop David of Winchester regarding his problems in evangelisation, on the grounds that David was dealing with similar issues in his diocese; see *Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, pp. 271–3 and 328–30. On an aspect of the cross-fertilisation between the continental mission and Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical government see Cubitt 1995, 102–10.

<sup>3</sup> A note on terminology: I use Anglo-Latin to refer to the extant (Latin) sources written in Anglo-Saxon England, to the authors of these texts as well as the ideas and images contained in them. Anglo-Saxon is used of either the society as a whole or any part of it not directly or only partly evidenced in the sources.

<sup>4</sup> While this paper is not an exercise in perpetuating the misguided notion of a *culture clericale* and a *culture folklorique* with little or no mutual contact (as in Le Goff 1999; for criticism see e.g. Hen 1995, pp. 18–20), it nevertheless seeks to remind that not all ecclesiastical attitudes to popular cultures should be explained simply as reflections of these.

<sup>5</sup> Besides the spirit world, classical philosophies and Christian thinkers attributed dreams to a variety of bodily causes. On Classical and Early Christian attitudes to oneiromancy, see Le Goff 1985; and my critique: Keskiaho 2003, pp. 3–7 and 95–8; Dodds 1963, pp. 37–68; Hanson 1980; Foucault 1984, pp. 17–50; Miller 1994; Stroumsa 1999. The quick overview of patristic oneirology that follows is largely based on Le Goff 1985; but it must be pointed out that a number of unresolved questions on the nature and influence of patristic thoughts on dreams and visions remain.

<sup>6</sup> II Cor. 11:14.

<sup>7</sup> Illustrating the importance of inspiration in interpretation St. Augustine referred to the examples of the prophets Joseph (Gen. 40:5–41:3) and Daniel (2); S. Augustinus, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII.1, pp. 392–94. See further Gregorius Magnus, *Moralia in Iob* VIII.xxiv, 42, p. 413; Grégoire Le Grand, *Dialogues* IV.50.1–5, pp. 172–6; and Isidorus Hispalensis, *Sententiae*, III. 6.11b–13, p. 119. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* 19.14, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> See Moreira 2000; and 2003; cf. Keskiaho (2003), esp. pp. 95–8.

<sup>9</sup> See Keskiaho 2003.

<sup>10</sup> In many texts doubt about the interpretation of specific dreams is countered by simply and affirmatively identifying even ambiguous oneiric figures as saints. See e.g. Gregorius Turonensis, *Liber in gloria confessorum*, 62, p. 333; Gregorius Turnonensis, *Libri IV de virtutibus S. Martini*, II.31, p. 170; Ionas Bobiensis, *Vita Iohannis*, 20, p. 343; *Vita S. Richarii*, 14, p. 452; *Vita Amandi*, 7, p. 434. For a rare description of authentication, see *De virtutibus Geretrudis*, 2, p. 465; where a vision is authenticated based on its appearance. Gregory of Tours, however, depicts a number of ecclesiasts and laymen detecting satanic illusions in dreams and visions, and recommends methods for an individual to use to this end, see Keskiaho 2003, pp. 20–5.

<sup>11</sup> My studies have so far focused on Frankish, Anglo-Latin and, to a lesser extent, Irish narratives. For an overview of the previous scholarship, as well as my approach, see Keskiaho 2003, pp. 2–7. Additionally Dutton 1994; Carozzi 1994; Moreira 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Bitel 1991, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. van Uytenghe 1981, who may, however, approach the opposite extreme by overestimating the degree of learned scepticism in Merovingian hagiography.

<sup>14</sup> Brown 1996, 230.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Wittmer-Butsch 1991, 107, who invokes generally Germanic pagan beliefs in dreams as a factor in ecclesiastical oneirocriticism. However, as apparent from her notes, reconstructions of "Germanic" beliefs come from high- and late medieval sagas and epics – and even so, there is nothing to suggest any peculiarities in this regard in the Anglo-Saxon culture in contrast to continental Germanic cultures. For a discussion specific to the Anglo-Saxons, see Hines 1997.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed treatment of the narrative sources examined here, and a discussion of my method, see Keskiaho 2003, pp. 7–19 and appendix A. Central to my approach is treating the sources as primarily indicators of the thought of their authors, especially pertinent in the Anglo-Latin case, where most texts recount events distant in time or recount and edit stories

already put into writing. Generally on Early Medieval hagiography and histories see Graus 1965; McClure 1983; Prinz 1989; Prinz 1992; von der Nahmer 1994; Lifshitz 1994; van Uytanghe 1999; Cubitt 2000; Heinzelmann 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* Auctore Felice, XLVI, p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> On such “early day televangelist-cum-Robin-Hood[s]” (Mathisen 1996, pp. 315–6) and other cases of questionable prophecy see Gregorius Turonensis, *Libri historiarum decem*, IX.6, II.7, p. 49; V.14, p. 210–11; *Libri IV de virtutibus S. Martini*, II.40, p. 175; *Liber in gloria martyrum*, 50, p. 73. See also Carozzi & Taviani-Carozzi 1999, p. 40–2.

<sup>19</sup> See especially *Libri historiarum decem*, VII.33, p. 401; and *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici liber III*, 12, p. 97.

<sup>20</sup> And, beyond P. Brown’s hypothesis, this is suggested by a reaction to a ninth-century continental case of “real” popular visionary culture: in 847 in Constance a woman called Thiota was brought before Hraban Maur for questioning concerning her reputed visions of the end of the world. She confessed a priest had put words in her mouth and was condemned as an impostor; see Dutton 1994, pp. 126–8. Perhaps this case precipitated Hraban’s hostile outburst in his *Expositio Super Jeremiam Prophetam*, 9, 985B. This episode is also a useful reminder that often the lower tiers of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were complicit in activities frowned upon by the clerical elite – no model of a monolithic Church applies.

<sup>21</sup> Beda Venerabilis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iv.24, pp. 396–98. Cf. Riché 1962, p. 325; Kartschoke 2000, pp. 35–6.

<sup>22</sup> Keskiäho 2003, pp. 78–84. Cf. Moreira 2003, pp. 634–41. See e.g. Ionas Bobiensis, *Vitae Columbani Libri II*, I, p. 152; *Passio Praeecti*, 1, p. 226; Alcuinus Turonensis, *Vita Willibrordi*, 2, p. 117.

<sup>23</sup> *Visio Baronti*, pp. 377–8; *Vita Sancti Fursei*, pp. 280–303. See generally Dinzelbacher 1981; Carozzi 1994; Ciccicarese 1981/2; Hen 1996; Contreni 2003. There appears to be no reason to suppose (Pace e.g. Flint 1993, pp. 193–4) such long otherworld journeys represented a Christianised version of a Germanic pagan idea. However, this does not mean they were not intended for missionary use, and some elements of individual texts might be identified as answers to pagan notions; see e.g. Carozzi 1994, pp. 133–8.

<sup>24</sup> *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v.12, pp. 463–73. Bede, in his veterotestamental conception of history, wished to see kings taking a pastoral role with the clergy, see McClure 1983.

<sup>25</sup> *Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, 10, pp. 252–7, p. 256: “quemadmodum ab illo instructus fieret, hominibus pronuntiaret”.

<sup>26</sup> *Vita Fursei abbatis Latiniacensis*, p. 436: “egressus inde verbum Dei predicabat et ea quem viderat vel audierat omnibus populis Scottorum adnuntiabat”; *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iii.19, p. 258. This may not be the only passage Bede edited to more closely fit orthodoxy: *Vita Sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo*, II.6, p. 86; and Beda Venerabilis, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, XIII, p. 198. Cf. Beda Venerabilis, *Beati Felicis confessoris vita*, col. 791A. There are also the long otherworldly visions of St. Guthlac, which the hagiographer insists were not dreams – see *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, XXIX, p. 96. Such a notion, if not explicitly expressed, is common to such visions, excepting that of Barontus, which takes place *per somnium* – something one might be tempted to interpret suggesting a laxer attitude to dreams.

<sup>27</sup> Sims-Williams 1990, p. 247. To me it seems comparable care is reflected in a seventh-century Hispanic visionary account – likewise from an arguably “more sophisticated culture” – see *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*, I, pp. 6–12. Generally a pertinent analogy might be presented by the Anglo-Saxon attitudes to drinking, which – it has been suggested (Hugh Magennis 1986) – were more careful than elsewhere in Christendom. Certainly this does not mean that the Anglo-Saxons were distinguished for being extraordinary drinkers, since excessive drinking was prevalent everywhere in the “barbarian” West; see Hen 1995, pp. 234–49.

<sup>28</sup> *Historia Ecclesiastica*, v.9, pp. 476–8.

<sup>29</sup> *Liber beati et laudabilis viri Gregorii*, pp. 103–4.

<sup>30</sup> See Keskiäho 2003, pp. 47–56, for examples and discussion.

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps he was accommodating the views of the elders of his own monastery – it might not be entirely irrelevant that Whitby, the probable place of the text’s composition, was where Bede tells us Caedmon’s interrogation was organised.

<sup>32</sup> The rest of the Anglo-Latin oneiric passages, however, appear by no means to contradict the present case. See *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis prosa De virginitate*, 25, pp. 297–321; 27, pp. 335–49; Aldhelmus, *De virginitate carmen*, lines 595–650 and 715–29; *Liber beati et laudabilis viri Gregorii*, p. 100; *Vita Sancti Cuthberti auctore anonymo*, I.4, p. 66; I.5, p. 68; II. 2, p. 76; Beda Venerabilis, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, II, p. 158; IV, pp. 739–40; VII, p. 176; *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i.19, p. 68; ii.6, pp. 152–4; ii.12, p. 178; iv. 9, pp. 346–8; v.13, pp. 474–6; v.14, pp. 476–8; Eddius Stephanus, *Vita Wilfridi*, p. 251; *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, XXX, p. 98; XXXI, p. 104; XXXIII, p. 108; LII, p. 164. Unlike Bitel (1991, 52, 56) I do not count *Historia Ecclesiastica*, iv.23, p. 394 among the depictions of ecclesiastical control; see Keskiäho 2003, p. 42 and n. 288.

<sup>33</sup> On the production and pragmatic contexts of Early Medieval hagiography, as well as the related question of comprehension of Latin, see Heinzelmann 1981; van Uytanghe 1985; Heene 1989; Heene 1991; Hen 1995, pp. 20–42; Wood 1999, pp. 106–7; van Egmond 1999; Depreux 2002, pp. 210–3.

<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Stancliffe (1992, 97) has argued that a difference in the textual level between depicted types of miracles in continental and Irish *vitae* may not reflect a cultural preference for certain types of miracles, but instead correspond to the preoccupations of secular vs. monastic congregations. See also van Egmond 1999, 53; who notes a rare known instance of intended selective reading of a hagiography to a lay audience, Hincmar of Rheims’ ninth-century *Vita Remigii*, where passages reserved for the *illuminati* are specially marked (see Hincmar’s own explanation, p. 258).

<sup>35</sup> For recent surveys of medieval anti-oneiromantic legislation see Semeraro 2002, pp. 37–72; and Moreira 2003, pp. 629–33.

<sup>36</sup> For an attempt at a distinction between *topoi* and actual practices depicted in Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical legislation, see Meaney 1992; where this passage on female diviners is thought to refer to an actual practice (pp. 105–6). I am inclined to follow the argument of Yitzhak Hen (1995, 180–9), who contends that ecclesiastical legislation reflects, in the first place, the very real fears and wishes of the administrative clergy, rather than necessarily features of popular culture; see further Hen 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Whether the canon, which only appears in this form in a sixth-century Hispanic Latin version, (*Concilium Ancyritanum interpretatio*, xxiii, 112) actually was included in the original Greek acts, or represents a later forgery, as claimed by Isabel Moreira (2003, pp. 629–33), it certainly was not alien to the spirit of Late Antique ecclesiastical legislation; cf. Wittmer-Butsch 1991, pp. 20–103; Semeraro 2002, pp. 38–40. Both Moreira and Semeraro fail to notice that the wording closely echoes Mosaic Law; see Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10–1.

<sup>38</sup> *Paenitentiale Theoderici*, 1.15.4. On Anglo-Latin penitentials in general see Frantzen 1983.

<sup>39</sup> See especially the so-called penitential of Egbert (*Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, pp. (413) 416–33) that does list a number of “pagan” practices (8.1–2) covered in the penitential of Theodore, yet omits any mention of dreams. Neither are dreams expressly mentioned in the acts of Clofesho 747 (*Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, pp. 360–76). On the problems associated with these texts, see Meaney 1992, pp. 108–12; on the council Cubitt 1995, pp. 99–124.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. *Excarpsus Cummeani*, 7.16, p. 482; and *Admonitio Generalis*, 65, pp. 58–9.

<sup>41</sup> According to Dagron 1985 some eastern ascetics held that not only was oneiric imagery possibly illusionary, but that only the cross, nothing else, could be counted as trustworthy imagery. Such questions appear to have gained additional importance due to the iconoclastic crisis, see e.g. Brown 1996, p. 249. Real oneiromancy with possibly pagan roots was also demonstrably alive and well in the east, and possibly influencing the discussions – such texts (see Semeraro 2002) found their way west from the ninth-century onwards.

<sup>42</sup> On these, Wood 1994, 323; and especially Hen 1995.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Vogeler 1988; and Bischoff 1961. Additionally, these authors appear from the late seventh-century onwards in both Irish and, later, Frankish theological digests and treatises, but the surviving texts pay no specific attention to oneirocriticism; see e.g. *Ecloga quam scripsit Latchen*; and *Defensoris Locogiacensis monachi Liber Scintillarum*. The latter appears to make a choice to omit oneirocritical passages of the chapter III.6 of Isidore’s *Sententiae*. For a later example of a selective reading, employing critical authors in apparent contradiction to their views, see the Carolingian *Vita Adelphi* (10, p. 228): “Igitur visiones illas ... iam narrandas aggrediar, auctoritate dultus de talibus scripta beati Augustini et almfici Gregorii papae ... Nam et beatus Augustinus refert, cum iustorum animae in locis amenis iustis fuerint sociatae, licentia adepta, quos in hac vita dilectos habuerunt reventuntur invisere per somniorum revelationes et consolatum ortamina: quod et crebro acta per sactorum comperimus libros...”

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. Boniface’s letter (*Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi*, 33, pp. 283–4) in 735 to Nothelm, metropolitan of Canterbury, requesting a verified copy of the Gregorian *Responsiones* (ostensibly a collection of Augustine’s questions and the pope’s answers on various pastoral concerns), as well as indication of the AD date of the missionaries’ arrival. Boniface had encountered a set of the *Responsiones*, used to legitimate Germanic marriage customs within degrees of kinship forbidden by canonical traditions. Boniface, who held Gregory and his *memoria*, as well the idea of Rome as a central authority, in great respect suspected the clauses were a forgery, which they may well have been, see Meyvaert 1971, pp. 15–33. Regarding dreams the *Responsiones* appear to have introduced a more nuanced view of nocturnal pollution, which, probably through missionaries, found its way to continental penitentials – see e.g. the mid eighth-century *Poenitentiale Merseburgense*, 90, pp. 152–3.

<sup>45</sup> Wood 2001; Depreux 2002, pp. 39–42.

<sup>46</sup> Markus 1992. See also Markus 1990. One sign of a redefinition of borders between Christian and secular might be found in changing burial customs; see Dierkens & Périn 1997; and Naumann-Steckner, Friederike 1997; cf. Depreux 2002, p. 38, pp. 99–102.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Cubitt 1995, pp. 115–18, pp. 123–4.

<sup>48</sup> Chélini 1991. For earlier periods cf. Riché 1962, pp. 153–200; Hen 1995, esp. pp. 121–53; and Hen 2001.

<sup>49</sup> This, for example, was the case with the monks of St. Wandrille who, in the late eighth- or early ninth-century, cooked up a competing version of the Christianisation of the Frisians, in answer to Alcuin’s *Vita Willibrordi: Vita Vulframmi*, 9, p. 668. See also Wood 1999, p. 107. The story of *dux* Radbod’s dream neatly illustrates the missionary imagination, but probably has little to do with the – already at the time of its writing long past – historical reality.

<sup>50</sup> In Brown 1996.