

## Painful Restoration: Transformations of Life and Death in Medieval Visions of the Other World

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Medieval visions of the other world require a revision of some of our current concepts pertaining to life and death so that the complex interplay of these two themes in this interesting genre can be defined precisely—hence the term “transformations” in the title of this paper.

There is a second aspect which should be raised briefly prior to the analysis of the texts chosen for this essay: in all of the three texts that will be considered here, the process of restoration from death is accompanied by pain on various levels—hence “painful restoration.”

The primary subject matter underlying most medieval visions of heaven, purgatory and hell is constituted by the events between Good Friday and Easter Sunday: the death and resurrection of Christ as the necessary precondition for the salvation of the soul and therefore its restoration from death. A closer look at the gospels which relate these events will immediately reveal a large and significant gap: no mention is made of Christ’s descent into hell and his triumphant ascent. This gap provides an ample playground for the creative imagination of later writers, intent on filling it and in their turn contributing to the salvation of the soul. Nevertheless, the gospel of John does tell us at least a little more about the resurrected Christ. And this shred of information includes a reference to bodily marks as proof of Christ’s death and resurrection or ‘restoration from death’: “Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27). It will be seen that this means of proof is an important constituent of the first text I have chosen for this paper.

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But let us go back to that period of time extending from Good Friday, around 3 pm, to Easter Sunday morning and usually referred to as the 'Harrowing of Hell.' In the New Testament this hell is described only in very general terms and is associated with the gnashing of teeth, with tears, yells, burning fires, black and evil smelling smoke, bitter cold and utter darkness. Now this is the very place into which the unfaithful will be cast after the death of their bodies and where they have to suffer the everlasting damnation which will result in the perpetual death of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

Bearing in mind this distinction, we must be aware of the fact that, in the context of the Christian religion, we are dealing with the fundamental concept of a double life—the life of the body and the life of the soul; and consequently with a double death—the death of the body and the death of the soul. The metaphorical concept of life and death, that is the life and death of the soul, is dependent on the life and death of the body. And if the life and death of the soul means both promise and damnation, then it might be useful for Christians to know more about these matters on which the Bible itself is so conspicuously and frustratingly silent.

Christian writers who felt called upon to warn their audience against the death of the soul with all its horrible consequences, and to incite them to strive for the life of the soul in the bliss of heaven, have invented a highly useful constellation for their didactic purpose: an elect human being who is granted the extraordinary favour of seeing both regions while still alive—that into which the dead souls will be cast and that to which the living souls will ascend. This elect human being, which may come from any walk of life, will then be able to give a faithful account of both bliss, that is eternal life, and damnation, which of course means everlasting death.

Since both regions, heaven and hell, cannot usually be entered by a human being still in the flesh, the body will usually have to undergo a kind of temporary death so that the soul removed from the body can be conveyed to both regions. After the soul has been restored to the body, the fully restored human being will be able to provide the

evidence necessary to attain salvation which entails the life of the soul after the death of the body. To achieve this purpose, the testimony of the visionary must be reliable, and it should also be vivid and therefore easy to remember.

As a look at even a few medieval visions of the other world will show, the authors of these texts, in most instances anonymous, indeed possessed a considerable amount of creative imagination in describing the *terra incognita* of both heaven and hell. Usually, these visions and journeys to the other world comprise both the region of the dead souls and the region of the living souls—and, I hasten to add, it can be said that the region of the dead seems to have provided a particular stimulus to the creative imagination. I will therefore concentrate on the downward journey in particular, that is, the journey into purgatory and hell. In order to demonstrate some of the literary approaches to and dimensions of these transformations of life and death and painful restorations, I have chosen three texts: one from the eighth century, a second dating from the late twelfth century, and a third that originated in the early years of the thirteenth century. All three were originally composed in the *lingua franca* of the Middle Ages, Latin; two were later translated into the vernacular.

### The Vision of St Fursey

In the early decades of the eighth century, the Venerable Bede, engaged in composing his famous *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*,<sup>2</sup> decided to include a wide range of both ancient and recent events conducive to the strengthening of public morality in the context of the new Christian faith. This strategy is clearly evident in the following quotation taken from the Preface:

Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pur-

sue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God. (3)<sup>3</sup>

Since Bede's account of the early history of the English concerns an originally pagan population in the process of being converted, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* includes several visions of the other world through which both the bliss of heaven, that is life, and damnation in hell, that is death, can be expressed quite graphically.

Bede's account of the Christianisation of East Anglia, Book III, chapter 19, contains one of the most popular visions of the Middle Ages prior to Dante's *Divine Comedy*: The Vision of Fursey. Bede expressly states the purpose of a whole series of visions granted to his saintly hero: to persist in his missionary activities by rendering a convincing and faithful account of the pains in store for those who deviate from the straight and narrow path of Christian morals. Bede's Vision of Fursey makes use of one of the important structural elements of the vision genre<sup>4</sup>: the experienced and reliable guide who is able to explain the mysteries of the other world to the visionary, as Fursey is guided by three angels.

In contrast to most of the later visions of the other world, Bede's text does not offer the wide panorama of either heaven or hell—his emphasis is on the journey to heaven and the dangers accompanying this journey. The central incident of the Vision of Fursey is a dreadful occurrence on the way towards heaven, an incident which can be compared to the singular and decisive moment which characterises the earlier tradition of the modern short story. Guided by three angels, Fursey has to go through the fire of purification and is suddenly attacked by one of the devils:

But when the man of God came to the passage opened up in the midst of the fire, the evil spirits seized one of those who were burning in the flames, hurled him at Fursa, hitting him and scorching his shoulder and jaw. Fursa recognized the man and remembered that on his death he had received some of his clothing. The angel took the man and cast him back at once into the fire. (273-75)<sup>5</sup>

Having been lectured by one of his heavenly guides about the necessity of repentance in the hour of death as a precondition for salvation, hence ensuring the life of the soul, Fursey returns to his body again. In the act of restoration to full life, Fursey's body is subjected to a highly significant transformation:

When Fursa had been restored to his body, he bore for the rest of his life the marks of the burns which he had suffered while a disembodied spirit; they were visible to all on his shoulder and his jaw. It is marvellous to think that what he suffered secretly as a disembodied spirit showed openly upon his flesh. He always took care, as he had done before, to encourage all both by his sermons and by his example to practise virtue. (275)<sup>6</sup>

It would appear that Bede did not put his entire trust into the efficacy of the testimony of the saintly visionary alone but rather relied on the means of providing additional extra-textual evidence: the marks on Fursey's body and his way of life after this dreadful experience. Moreover, as a good historian and author, Bede knew only too well that the miraculous account he had adapted from the anonymous *Vita S. Fursei* would need corroborating evidence. He therefore relies on the additional means of an eye-witness testifying to the veracity of both the visionary and the events:

An aged brother is still living in our monastery who is wont to relate that a most truthful and pious man told him that he had seen Fursa himself in the kingdom of the East Angles and had heard these visions from his own mouth. He added that although it was during a time of severe winter weather and a hard frost and though Fursa sat wearing only a thin garment, yet as he told his story, he sweated as though it were the middle of summer, either because of the terror or else the joy which his recollections aroused. (275)<sup>7</sup>

For Fursey, restoration from death resulted in bearing the marks of a frightful experience for the rest of his life. On the other hand, this frightful experience also ensured that the saintly missionary of the East Angles never again strayed from the right path and led the active life of a devout Christian, whose sanctity was proven beyond any

doubt by his still undecayed body four years after his death. The lesson to be taught by using the motif 'restored from death' is reinforced in Bede's case by material evidence, just as in the Gospel of John.

With reference to the later history of the immensely popular *Visio S. Fursei* we can say that on account of its brevity in the descriptive sections and its emphasis on extra-textual proof, it was possible to use it most effectively in sermons and catechetical writings as an *exemplum* illustrating the evil consequences arising from avarice.<sup>8</sup>

### St Patrick's Purgatory

The second text chosen for this paper is very different from Bede's Vision of Fursey. In the so-called *St Patrick's Purgatory*,<sup>9</sup> which dates back to the last decades of the twelfth century, temporary death of the body is not a necessary condition to enter the other world. St Patrick's Purgatory, shut off from the world by a heavy gate, could be entered voluntarily as an act of penance while still in the flesh. This manner of entering the nether world of St Patrick's Purgatory is the major constituent of a special process of repentance and penance in this life in order to avoid the pains of purgatory and hell in the life to come. Thus, no experienced guide is necessary to open up the nether world to the protagonist, because he enters this world still in the body and of his own accord. The body, however, had to be prepared for this difficult journey by fifteen days of fasting and prayer. Anybody who wishes to enter this very special purgatory, so the text tells us, will have to wait in the hall until the arrival of a company of thirteen men, all God's servants, who will instruct the penitent which direction is to be taken.

The hero of *St Patrick's Purgatory* is a knight called Owein, who, according to the early fourteenth-century Middle English version I will be quoting from, resided in Northumberland, "Bi Steuenes day, þe king ful riȝt" (stanza 29), and was an expert in both warfare and



sinning against his Creator. Having been instructed by the thirteen wise men to send a prayer to God when oppressed by the devils, Owein is handed over to the chief devil himself who greets our protagonist with the following words:

“Welcome, Owein!  
 Pou art ycomen to suffri pine  
 To amende þe of sinnes tine,  
 Ac alle gett þe no gain,  
  
 For þou schalt haue pine anouȝ,  
 Hard, strong, and ful touȝ,  
 For þi dedli sinne.  
 No haddestow neuer more meschaunce  
 Pan þou schal haue in our daunce,  
 When we schul play biginne.” (stanzas 55-56)<sup>10</sup>

The penitent is therefore actively engaged in the events which are unfolded carefully before our eyes, and he experiences the pains of purgatory and hell in a very direct way. However, by sending a prayer to his creator, he does not have to undergo the punishment of the various stations to the very full:

þe fendes han þe kniȝt forþ taken,  
 And bounde him swiþe hard  
 Opon þe whele þat arn about,  
 And so loþly gan to rout,  
 And cast him amidward.  
  
 Do þe hokes him torent,  
 And þe wild fer him tobrent,  
 On Ihesu Crist he þouȝt.  
 Fram þat whele an angel him bare,  
 And al þe fendes þat were þare  
 No miȝt him do riȝt nouȝt. (stanzas 88-89)<sup>11</sup>

After traversing the dangerous ground, almost drowning in the ice-cold water of a stinking river and being rescued from pits filled with boiling metal, Owein finally comes to the narrow bridge<sup>12</sup> crossing a

second stinking river (“It stank fouler þan ani hounde,” stanza 116) which separates purgatory and hell from paradise (“Þis is þe brigge of paradis,” stanza 117). Since he has repeatedly received heavenly help in his tour of the nether world, he crosses the bridge confidently and successfully, leaving the realm of death behind him and entering the region of life. Owein is granted a vision of paradise and is touched by the Holy Ghost, who tells him to return into the world again—which he does, but very reluctantly now that he has received a first and most promising impression of the bliss of heaven in the life to come. However, he does receive some kind of comfort before he has to leave paradise:

“Now kepe þe wele fram dedli sinne  
 Pat þou neuer com þerinne,  
 For nonskines nede.  
 When þou art ded, þou schalt wende  
 Into þe ioie þat haþ non ende;  
 Angels schul þe lede.” (stanza 187)<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of his first-hand impressions, the former sinner Owein is indeed restored from spiritual death, becomes a pilgrim to the Holy Land and returns to Ireland where he lives as a monk for a further seven years. When he died, so the narrator tells us, he was immediately admitted to the high joy of paradise—no wonder after such an exemplary life of warfare, sin, repentance and devotion.

In contrast to Bede’s brief account of Fursey, *St Patrick’s Purgatory* offers a wealth of descriptive detail of both heaven and hell. Whoever is prepared to accept the lesson taught by this text will indeed be restored from the everlasting death of the soul. Moreover, with its precise geographical location on Station Island in Lough Dergh, Co. Donegal in Ireland, “St Patrick’s Purgatory” is still a famous pilgrimage site in Ireland and thus a means of salvation and restoration from death on yet another level. Today, Station Island draws on a long history, dating back to the late twelfth century after the Cistercian monk Henry of Saltrey in Huntingdonshire decided to concentrate his literary activities on this journey to the nether world.



*The Visio Thurkilli*

My third and last text, the *Visio Thurkilli*,<sup>14</sup> was composed only a few years later than *St Patrick's Purgatory*—the date given in the preface is 1206. In contrast to the previous two texts, the *Vision of Thurkill* contains many references to historical people and places, and both place names and personal names mentioned in the text contribute considerably to its authenticity.

In the preface, the anonymous redactor, who emphasises that he is writing for the benefit of a Christian audience, refers to the special conditions of the vision genre, pointing out that the Bible on the whole is not very explicit as far as life after death is concerned (“de statu animarum atque earum post mortem expiatione,” 14). His detailed argument which, highly appropriately, includes the famous line 180—“segnius iritant animos demissa per aurem”<sup>15</sup>—from the *Ars poetica* of Horace that favours sight over hearing, amounts to a veritable justification of the genre, which had come under attack from various sides. The redactor further supports his argument with frequent references to a long literary tradition that includes many undisputed authorities, among them Gregory the Great, whose immensely popular *Dialogues* can be considered as highly influential in the evolution of the genre. With reference to contemporary visions, the author raises the question of probability and truth, and points out the popularity of modern visionary texts, such as *St Patrick's Purgatory*, the *Revelations of the Monk of Eynsham* and others. In doing so, he succeeds brilliantly in establishing an intertextual context for the validity of the vision he is about to relate. Indeed, a careful reading of the events related in the *Visio Thurkilli* will reveal that in order to prove a particular aspect of the doctrine, the redactor does adduce the very contextual evidence he has established so carefully in the preface.

The redactor also devotes great care to weighing the matter of credibility, and this discussion is underlined by a quotation from John 7:12: “And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he

deceiveth the people." And with its reference to Christ, the quotation at once settles this issue. Who would not be willing to embrace the argument which immediately follows this quotation from the Bible:

sed quia plurimi, quorum mens est sanior, intellectus acutior, vita religiosior, huic visioni fidem adhibent tum pro simplicitate et innocentia viri, cui hec visio contigit, tum quia plerique audientium ex relatione predictae visionis non minimum profecerunt emendatiorem vitam eligentes [...] visionem simplicis viri simplici eloquio, sicut ab eius ore audivimus, scripto summatim mandare curavi. (19-20)<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, the visionary is said to have been a simple man, living close to London and, contrary to Fursey, not an exemplary character, let alone a cleric or a public figure like the renowned knight Owein in *St Patrick's Purgatory*. There are, however, a few references in the text that clearly establish that we are not dealing with a very simple and churlish character; the simple man Thurkill, a farmer by profession, leads a life of pious devotion and has even undertaken a pilgrimage. This man is granted a vision of both hell and heaven, a vision that is so terrible that he does not want to talk about it until admonished in a dream by St Julian, who had been his guide, to relate his experience in well-ordered language in church on a feast day. The visionary obeys this command and relates his experience in full on the highly appropriate feast days of All Saints and All Souls, i.e. on November 1 and 2, 1206, for the benefit of his fellow countrymen.

In addition to the features just mentioned, all of which contribute to a careful contextualisation of the vision, there are other features which significantly differentiate the contents of the *Visio Thurkilli* from other contemporary visions. Even a cursory reading of the text of the vision itself will reveal that great care has been devoted to what could be called literary detail. We can not only find most of the elements which had gradually become associated with judgment day, such as the weighing of the souls, the bridge leading to heaven, fire, the pit of hell with its boiling cauldrons and so on: compared to earlier visions, we also discover several new elements pertaining to the pains of hell.<sup>17</sup>

Several passages in the *Visio Thurkilli* reveal that the author/redactor was indeed a very good story-teller who knew exactly how to handle the expectations of his intended audience. For instance, when approaching the privities of hell, one of the devils tells Thurkill's saintly guides to leave their pupil outside a very dark and threatening building. The devil argues that if Thurkill were admitted to the privities of hell he would, on his return to the living, by his account of the secret punishments and deeds prevent many sinners from persisting in their bad deeds and therefore considerably reduce the revenue of the devil.

A further proof of the author's skill in composing a lively and at the same time awe-inspiring narrative can be found in his rather detailed account of the weighing of the souls: St Paul, when weighing the deeds of a bad priest, is disappointed that the devil's weights are heavier than his own. Trying to save the soul of the bad priest, he throws a soaking-wet aspersion onto the scales, with the result that the devil's weights are thrown up into the air by the rapid movement of the scales. In coming down, one of the weights, a black and sooty hammer, lands on the devil's foot, causing him severe pain. The devil, roaring with pain, complains to St Paul of having been cheated and produces a long list of the crimes committed by the priest.

There is even more in store for readers of the *Visio Thurkilli*. From a conversation between one of the devils and St Domninus, one of Thurkill's saintly guides, we gather that every Saturday the usual torments will have to be interrupted. This is because every Saturday the damned souls are forced to re-enact the sins they have committed in the flesh on the stage of the theatre of hell—to the great merriment of the devils watching this great spectacle. After their performance the sinners will be taken to their chairs of torture, which are in the building housing the stage. In these red-hot iron chairs of punishment, adorned with sharp spikes and glowing rings forged of iron, they will receive an extra treatment for their sins they have just re-enacted on the stage.

The presentation of the theatre of hell is one of the longest and most lively sections of the vision. In addition, the description of both sin and punishment is not restricted to the seven deadly sins, for example; it also refers to the social groups which make up a typical medieval society. To give but one example from another source: in the *General Prologue* of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the miller is described as very apt at stealing corn. Chaucer's miller would have been able to work out which torture would be prepared for him—burning flour will cover his entire body, causing the most severe pain imaginable.

Compared to these lively descriptions of the places entailing the death of the soul, the description of the forecourts of heaven with their inhabitants who have been restored to a life of the soul is somewhat bland, even though this section of the vision offers precise information on the number of masses by which a soul can be released from purgatory and the more quickly restored to life. Unlike the first two texts, the *Visio Thurkilli* ends very abruptly with the restoration of the visionary to his body—there is no reference to the visionary turning to a life of penance or seclusion after his dreadful vision. There is no mention, as in Bede relating to Fursey, that Thurkill turned to missionary work, or became a monk like Owein in *St Patrick's Purgatory*—only a brief indication that the visionary is very disappointed that he was prevented from experiencing a more detailed vision of heaven, which had been promised to him. No wonder he is very reluctant to return to his former life; his restoration from death is thus also a painful one.

Turning to the primary function of the vision genre, it would appear that the anonymous author of the *Visio Thurkilli* considered his literary product, which reveals an unusual amount of creative imagination and a loving care for detail, as sufficient to achieve his primary goal: to convince his audience of the desirability and necessity of having their souls restored from a most cruel and horrible death by leading a pious life in the flesh. It would also appear that the singular and innovative *Visio Thurkilli* was too far advanced in the development of the genre, so much so that some of its subject matter may have been

considered too 'licentious' for the ears of laymen in the early thirteenth century. We know of only four manuscripts, probably locked away for a long time in the great monastic libraries on the British Isle. There are no extant vernacular versions of the *Visio Thurkilli*, while there are 150 MSS of *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, and three vernacular adaptations: two in verse and one in prose.

*Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli*<sup>18</sup>—the words of Terentianus Maurus provide a fine closure: Medieval visions of heaven and hell prior to Dante offer a multitude of aspects worthy of further study. It is the duty of a medievalist to make modern readers familiar with a genre which certainly deserves close attention.<sup>19</sup>

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Chaucer's "Parson's Tale" (X, 847): "This cursed synne [i.e. lechery] anoyeth grevousliche hem that it haunten. And first to hire soule, for he obligeth it to synne and to peyne of deeth that is perdurable." (Larry Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987] 317.)

<sup>2</sup>[Beda Venerabilis] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1969).

<sup>3</sup>"Siue enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemorat de prauis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector deuitando quod noxium est ac peruersum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognouerit, accenditur." (2)

<sup>4</sup>A wide range of important aspects and properties of the genre has been investigated by Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 23 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981); see his "Bibliographie" (267-80) for further studies. See also Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook*, Garland Medieval Bibliographies 11 (New York: Garland, 1993).

<sup>5</sup>"Sed uir Dei ubi ad patefactam usque inter flammam ianuam peruenit, arripientes inmundi spiritus unum de eis, quos in ignibus torrebant, iactauerunt in eum, et contingentes humerum maxillamque eius incenderunt; cognouitque



hominem, et quia uestimentum eius morientis acceperit, ad memoriam reduxit." (272-74)

<sup>6</sup>"Qui postmodum in corpore restitutus, omni uitae suae tempore signum incendii, quod in anima pertulit, uisibile cunctis in humero maxillaque portauit, mirumque in modum quid anima in occulto passa sit, caro palam praemonstrabat. Curabat autem semper, sicut et antea facere consuerat, omnibus opus uirtutum et exemplis ostendere et praedicare sermonibus." (274)

<sup>7</sup>"Superest adhuc frater quidam senior monasterii nostri, qui narrare solet dixisse sibi quendam multum ueracem ac religiosum hominem, quod ipsum Furseum uiderit in prouincia Orientalium Anglorum, illasque uisiones ex ipsius ore audierit, adiciens quia tempus hiemis fuerit acerrimum et glacie constrictum, cum sedens in tenui ueste uir ita inter dicendum propter magnitudinem memorati timoris uel suauitatis quasi in media aetatis caumate sudauerit." (274)

<sup>8</sup>See Frederick Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1969) 178: No. 2229. See also Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature 3 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997).

<sup>9</sup>Robert Easting, ed., *St Patrick's Purgatory: Two Versions of Owayne Miles and The Vision of William of Stranton Together with the Long Text of the Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, EETS OS 298 (Oxford: OUP, 1991).

<sup>10</sup>"Welcome, Owein. You have come to suffer pain in order to amend your sins. But all this will not help you at all: You will have to suffer enough pains, hard, strong and very tough for your deadly sins. You have never experienced anything more terrible than the dance with which we will open our game with you."

<sup>11</sup>"The fiends caught the knight and tied him fast to the wheel revolving fiercely. And they were roaring terribly and cast him right into the centre. When the hooks fastened to the wheel began to tear his body and the fire to consume him he thought on Jesus Christ. An angel took him off the wheel and all fiends standing around the wheel couldn't harm him any more."

<sup>12</sup>See Peter Dinzelbacher, *Die Jenseitsbrücke im Mittelalter*, Dissertationen der Universität Wien 104 (Wien: Verband der wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1973).

<sup>13</sup>"Guard yourself from now on against deadly sin so that you do not become guilty of it for whatever reason. When you are dead you will enter the joy that has no end, angels will be your guides."

<sup>14</sup>Paul Gerhard Schmidt, ed., *Die Vision des Bauern Thurkill* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987). A modern English translation of the vision (though not of the "Praefatio") is available in Eileen Gardiner, ed., *Visions of Heaven & Hell Before Dante* (New York: Ithaca P, 1989) 219-36.

<sup>15</sup>In the translation by Philip Francis the entire sentence reads: "What we hear, / With weaker passion will affect the heart / Than when the faithful eye beholds the



part." Philip Francis, *A Poetical Translation of the Works of Horace*, 4 vols. (London: A. Millar, 1746).

<sup>16</sup>"However, since those endowed with the gift of a higher understanding, a sharper intellect and a firmer faith, will give credence to this vision considering the simplicity and innocence of this man to whom this vision was given and considering that many hearers derived great benefit from the narration of this vision by opting for a better life, I have been at pains [...] to record the most important parts of this vision of a simple man in simple language as I have heard it from his own mouth."

<sup>17</sup>A look at the Chaldon Mural, which also dates from the early years of the thirteenth century, will lead to a good first impression of the main features of purgatory, hell and heaven as described in the *Visio Thurkilli*. See for example Peter Dinzelbacher, *Himmel, Hölle, Heilige: Visionen und Kunst im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002) 84-85; Roger Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings in English & Welsh Churches* (Woodbridge: The Boydell P, 2008) 73 and 81.

<sup>18</sup>"The fate of books depends on the discernment of the reader." Terentianus Maurus, *De litteris, syllabis et metris*, *Grammatici Latini*, ed. Heinrich Keil, 8 vols. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961) 6: 363 [l. 1286].

<sup>19</sup>Thanks to Wendy Smith for her critical reading of the text.