

## **The *Contrappasso* in Visionary Texts: The Irish Tradition and the *Commedia***

The vision, a popular genre in medieval literature, must be discussed among the most important sources of the *Commedia*, as it virtually constitutes the basic outline of the work. The *Commedia* merges the principles of different literary trends and genres into itself: traces of Virgilian epic poetry, the model of the allegorical journey, and the eschatological poetry of Lombardy – and it does so with a hitherto unknown encyclopaedic diligence. At the same time, however, this holds true for the traditional structure of the vision which already incorporates elements and characteristics proper to other genres. Accordingly, the *Commedia* can be considered the highest outcome of the visionary literature, and indeed it is seen as such by several experts of medieval literature.

The Irish visions – I refer to those related to Ireland yet written in Latin – bear the imprint of Celtic-Irish folklore, beliefs, and mythology, which, converging with Christian thought and apocalyptic texts, created an imagery of the afterlife in an unparalleled richness. This imagery – owing to the cultural transmission activities of missionaries who left their homeland to spread the message among pagan populations – influenced the birth and consolidation of the vision as a genre in the regions of continental Europe.

The Irish *visiones* – exemplifying all existing typologies of the genre – form a unique branch within the visionary tradition: being more related to the country's geography and religious cults, they feature, for the first time in the tradition, local historical and religious characters who act as the hero's helpers in the otherworldly experience. Moreover, the corporality of the protagonists is given greater prominence than in different branches of the tradition.

In this presentation, I intend to focus on the typology of the possible sin–punishment relationships in Irish visions, which can be taken as models of the Dantean *contrappasso*. I shall discuss visions from the *Visio Sancti Pauli* – the archetype of the vision genre – to the *Visio Tnugdali*, a 'bestseller' of its time, focusing on parallels with Dante's *Inferno* where *contrappasso* is a key concept.