

CLAUDIA DI FONZO, **La leggenda del "Purgatorio di S. Patrizio" nella tradizione di commento trecentesco**. Comunicazione tenuta presso il Dipartimento di Italianistica della Sapienza di Roma il 10 giugno 1997 in Dante e il locus inferni. Creazione letteraria e tradizione interpretativa a cura di S. Foà e S. Gentili.

**STUDI (E TESTI) ITALIANI, 1999, N° 4, pp. 53-7.**



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**The legend of the "Purgatory of Saint Patrick": from Ireland, until Dante and beyond.**

"Yes by Saint Patrick .... Touching this vision here  
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you"  
(Hamlet, Act I, Scene 5)

"...A cursory reading of some of popular medieval accounts of otherworld journeys [...] reveals that Owen's experiences in Saint Patrick's Purgatory conformed to the conventions of well-worn literary genre..."

**However, before we can talk about the literary genre, it would be useful to discuss some recurring "themes", common narrative patterns, characterising primary models which structure the Irish "Eachtra", that is, the stories of adventure such as the Eachtra Connla, the "Imram", or better, those voluntary travels, such as the one taken by Maeldúin, *Ua Chorra* – prototype of the Christian *Navigatio sancti Brandani* - , by *Snedgus* and by *Mac Riagla* and the "fís", real and irrefutable visions. Among these we must include those of the monks *Fursa*, *Laisrén* and *Adamnán* and those of the laymen such as *Tundalo* and the knight *Owain* to the Purgatory of Saint Patrick.**

And if the reason for the descent into this hell is very old and the representation of an "Other world" has been researched in and of itself as well as in relationship to the *Divine Comedy* "in the Celtic

tradition a visit to the Other world, the "Tir Tairgire" or "Tír na nÓg" was an integral part of the Eachtra or adventure story" and precisely within this tradition, having quickly become a Christian one, the legend of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick is born, codified into three different Latin versions "represents in some way the birth of literature about the Purgatory", even though the identification of a third intermediate reign was already present at the time of the Greeks. Furthermore, Blochet had noted how the *Purgatory of Saint Patrick* offered certain points of commonality with the oriental legends of the Ascension: in particular with the *Arda Viraf* and the oriental vision of Hell. Among the motifs in the oriental ascendance was that of the bridge ( the Persian *cinvat* already present in the *Visio Pauli*), a metaphoric theme that in other texts might be similar to the hebrew-semitic idea of the ladder (also present in the vision of Adamnán) assuming a double nature of the sometimes infernal element (such as is the case of the *Visio Alberici*: "Post hec vidi scalam ferream (...). Pedes autem per scalam ascendentium et descendentium exurebantur in illis gradibus ignitis", sometimes purgatorial one (in the *Visio Pauli*, and later in the *Purgatory of Saint Patrick*).

**All of this describes only in small part the importance that this "zipper legend" had and its popularisation on the European continent.**

It tells the story of the monk Patrick, captured by pirates and transported to Ireland, later becoming an apostle for those peoples "cum tota Britannia algore incredulitas rigesceret". The *Chronica Hybernienses* recounts how one day, Christ himself had led the monk, who in the *Vita Tertia* has the reputation of being a thaumaturgical hero, a miracle worker, to a legendary cave, a sort of well which tradition identifies as being located in Lake Derg or the Red Lake in the county of Donegal, which, by passing through it, one can enter into the hereafter: "De hoc quoque purgatorio et eius origine quod sequitur tradunt veteres historiae hybernienses". The story of the Irish knight, Owain, who ventures into that cavern at one time indicated to bishop Patrick is told by Matteo Paris in his column published in his *Chronica maiora* in the year 1153 and later in the *Tractatus de Purgatorio sancti Patricii* by Henricus Saltereiensis written between the years 1170 and 1185. The legend, started in Ireland, had various versions in different languages, middle English, Anglo-Norman, Provençal, old French and Spanish. They all tell the story of the foundation of Purgatory and the visit made by knight Owain there, how he entered into the cavern, after the preliminary rituals and repentance, how he had been warned by men dressed in white about the tortures and torments that he would encounter, what punishment he would have suffered before arriving in the Heaven on earth from which he was to be excluded. Those who were allowed to enter into the mysterious cavern located on an island in the Lake Derg were to report back to the others, upon their return, exactly what they saw and heard. The narration finished with the acts of the archives of the abbey, but not one of these summations ever arrived all the way to our part of the world. There are many versions of the legend and they are told in many languages.

**Kölbing distinguished three Latin versions of the legend: a complete unedited version was published in the work of Joannes Colganus; an intermediate version which he identifies in the *Tractatus de Sancti Patrici* by Henry of Saltrey, and a brief version which can be found in the aforementioned *Cronica majora* by Matteo de Paris.**

Paul Meyer, in his revisitation of the writings of Kölbing brings to light that a further text was missing, the manuscript Ee. 6 from the Cambridge University Library II, an Anglo-Norman translation of the Latin text by Henricus Saltereiensis handed down from this manuscript only and from the fragment An (called by others F) Lansdowne 383. In 1891, Meyer compiled a comprehensive list of the seven French texts and with reference to the three middle-English translations ((<sup>1</sup> a, OM<sub>1</sub>, OM<sub>2</sub>) wrote that "ne parait faite après l'un des poèmes français".

**Mall published two Latin texts according to the manuscripts of Bamberg E. VII. 59 and Arundel 292 from London, which closely follow original font to which Marie de France made reference. Frati produced the text of the legend contained in the extract by Stephan of Bourbon *De septem donis Spiritus Sancti* according to the lesson of the Parisian codicil 15970 in the National Library (ff.158 v- 159 v). Keeping along the lines of the latest research, the Latin versions of the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* by Henricus can be grouped together in two families:  $\alpha$  e  $\beta$  . The manuscripts of the first family, precisely, Ar British Library MS Arundel 292, B Bamberg, Staatliche Bibliothek MS E. VII. 59, H British Library MS Harley 3846, U Utrecht, University Library, MS 173, contain the edited version of the *Tractatus* ; the manuscripts of the second, L Lambeth Palace Library, MS 51, R British Library MS Royal 13 B VIII e S Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 50, contain the more extensive version.**

Easting believes that the edited version is a successive reduction of the more extensive one: "I argued that  $\beta$  may represent a closer approximation to the original shape of T [*Tractatus*], as Henry of Saltrey either composed it or revised it, and that the shorter  $\alpha$  versions represent a reduction of  $\beta$  rather than that  $\beta$  is an expansion of  $\alpha$ , as Warnke argued"

**An ulterior critical edition is being prepared of the *Tractatus* which will consider all the new acquisitions and the existing relationships among the many different forms of the text found in the over one hundred fifty manuscripts, all works of Jean-Michel Picard and Yolande de Pontfarcy, who had already been involved in the past in researching this topic.**

The most famous and well known among the French poetic versions is that of Marie de France who was the greatest go between in the popularisation of the legend of the knight Owain in all of Europe. After the translation done by Marie de France, as Le Goff writes, there were many editions of the Purgatory of Henry in Latin as in the other common languages, particularly in French and in English.

**However, writes Frati, "it is not quite true to affirm that only the legend of the knight Owain reached us; since other narratives of truly historic descents made into the cavern of Saint Patrick can be found in manuscripts from the richest Italian and foreign libraries, and there is also the testimony of other descents made by writers likewise trustworthy". In 1328, Raimondo Visconte di Perillos, chamberlain for the King of France, after the death of King John I of Aragon, decided to become a "new Aeneas", to go into the cavern of Saint Patrick. In the year 1358, Malatesta da Rimini, called the *Ungaro*, completed his *descensio* into Purgatory, which has been recorded in the *Fons memorabilium universi* by Domenico di Bandino D'Arezzo. Cecco di Meletto da Forlì writes himself, in a letter honouring Malatesta, about "locus ille cavernosus". Another vision recounts the *peregrinatio* to the Purgatory of Saint Patrick done in 1358 by a certain *Lodovico Di Sur*.**

At the beginning of the fifteenth century the Purgatory of Saint Patrick became the subject of a much more original vision than the ones from the preceding century. The writer, William Stauton, tells of being led into the cave by the prior of Saint Matthew in the year 1409, with devout processions and prayers by the prior himself and by some monks from the convent who offered up prayers to him which to ease his way: *Jhesu Criste, fili Dei vivi, miserere mihi peccatori*. This vision has been conserved in two manuscripts in the British Library Additional 34, 193 e Royal 17 B XLIII. In the fifteenth century, the legend by Henricus (Enrico di Saltrey) gained a greater popularisation but received less credit until the Pontiff Alexander VI, having listened to the report of the trip of the Dutch monk from the monastery in Eymstadt, ordered the destruction of the "Purgatory", effected then on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, St. Patrick's day, in the year 1497. However

the legend just like a serpent lies in the field of the literary production of all of Europe, in France as in Spain and in England and it had a widespread, although tardy diffusion even in Italy where it is possible to find as many as seven different versions, betrayed by a number of manuscripts destined to increase. A shorter version of the narrative, as Bieler writes, can be found in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacopo da Varagine. An brief Italian text has been published in the *Vite dei Santi Padri* (IV, 88). Other more ample versions were printed by Villari and by Grion. The edition published by Grion, betrayed by a manuscript from the fifteenth century owned by Monga di Verona, is a document written in the Veneto dialect which is derived from the same font as the Tuscan edition, produced by Villari, even though it has been more popularised. "The Tuscan version has as its hero Owain, the name of Ireland; Jacopo da Varaggio in the thirteenth century and Domenico Cavalca in the fourteenth mistake it for the one of the hero of Pugliese Nicolò; the Venetian friar gives him the name, very popular in Venice, of Alvisè". Lucia Bertolini returned to edit the Tuscan V version herself, published by Villari, acquiring a modern edition. The impossibility of demonstrating the existence of an archetypal version has made it necessary to choose a single manuscript between the two testimonies already considered by Villari, Pal. 93 (P) and the Conv. Soppr. G. 3,676 (M) from the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence and a third manuscript II, IV, 64 (F) this one again from the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence. This last testimony is preferred to the other two because of its low coefficient of errors, which has required the intervention of the editor in only a few points. To the testimonies used by the scholar, Lucia Bertolini, Mario Degli Innocenti has added the ms. Rome, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Bibl. Corsiniana, Fondo Rossi, 30 (44 C 5), and has collated it into Bertolini's edition. He has published the results confirming the observations made by Bertolini in relation to the traditional manuscript of the legend: "the multiplicity of the versions, the great possibility of contamination, the lack of a complete census of the Italian popularisation, of the Latin manuscripts of the *Tractatus* and (...) of the manuscripts of the French translations". Therefore, the professor has identified a seventh edition of the legend to add to the six already marked by Bertolini, handed down from at least nine manuscripts and at least included in the *Vite dei Santi Padri* by Cavalca which Bieler spoke of, popularised by the *Legenda aurea*. An ulterior development in the research of Mario Degli Innocenti pertains to the popularisations from the French version: the edition from Veneto of the legend handed down from the manuscript of the Monga family and published by Grion (G) and the Lombard version, attested to by the ms. T 67 sup. of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan (A) for which Degli Innocenti publishes his edition.

**The legend "best seller of the Middle Ages", to today identified as a possible font of the *Commedia*, and utilised by at least two ancient commentators in order to illustrate the poem itself and more precisely the one by Alberico da Rosciate in his general introduction to the *Purgatory* and by Benvenuto da Imola. The text of the annotations by Alberico, which is for the most part a translation from Latin by the one written by the other Bolognese jurist Jacopo della Lana (1324-28), is betrayed by a very limited number of manuscripts: Cod. Bodleiano Canon. Misc. 449 of Oxford (*olim* Canonici di Venezia), Parigino cod. ital. 538 (Pa), Cod. Barb. Lat. 4037 di Roma, Parig. Cod. Lat. 8701, Cod. Laurenziano Pl. XXVI, sin 2 di Florence, Parigino cod. it. 79 and the manuscript by Grumelli in the Biblioteca Angelo Mai of Bergamo, Cassaforte 6, 1 (già D 9, 16). From this last manuscript, we can reproduce, in these offices, the transcription of the part of the general *Preface* to the second canticle which recounts the legend of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick, the interpolation would be ascribed to Alberico himself, of which we find mention also in the *Dictionarium Juris*, under the entry *Purgatorium*: "Purgatorium, an sit locus materialis, vide XXV di .s. c. qualis hinc et c. seq. et primo ad Corin. III et in Psalmo: *Iubilate Deo ver. Transivimus per ignem et aquam, et deduxit nos in refrigerium et plene in secunda parte comediae Dantis, quam titulavit purgatorium. vide etiam de quodam purgatorio in legenda sancti Patricij, supra purgatio*". The interpolation of Alberico follows closely the *Legenda aurea*, where he himself declares to have found it: "in legendis sanctorum in festo sancti Patricij"**

Grumelli manuscript, Bibl. Civica Angelo Mai (Cd. Grumelli Cassaforte: 6, 1 già δ . 9. 16)

**Preface cc. 140 r.-v.: *Purgatorium*. For Transcription see in "Studi Danteschi" 1993.**

Even Benvenuto da Imola refers to the legend. We cite from the annotation printed in the year 1374 present in the electronic data bank of the [Dartmouth Dante Project](#) , leaving the other two editions with the same annotation aside: the Recollecte and the text of the Ashburnamiano 843. Benvenuto, in the comment on the first poem of the Purgatory, writes that Hell, is two-fold: essential and moral. Therefore, in the same way, the Purgatory is also two-fold: essential and moral. Furthermore, the Purgatory, according to an opinion shared by many theologians, is underground and is part of Hell, just as is stated in the fourth book of Gregory; the only punishment that exists is the fire, although the spirit can be purified elsewhere, as Gregory says of Pascasio, who is purified in ice, or by the intercession of some holy man *sicut sanctus Patricius impetravit quod quidam purgaretur in quodam loco subterraneo, ex quo postea fabulose ortum est ibi esse purgatorium*.

Benvenuto 1373: *Purg* I, 100-108.

*Questa*. Hic Cato, quia mandaverat novum poemam recingi junco, docet ubi inveniantur junci, et describit locum ubi abundant; sed ad intelligentiam huius literae est praesciendum, quod poeta noster fingit quod in illo hemisferio inferiori ex opposito inferni est una parva plana insula circularis, in cuius medio est unus mons altissimus usque ad coelum, qui circa medium est muratus et factus ad gradus circulariter; et sicut gradatim descenditur ad centrum inferni, ita gradatim ascenditur ad cacumen istius montis contigui coelo: sicut si quis volens ascendere arenam Veronae incipiat a fundo et tendat ad altum: sed in arena itur ab intra, hic vero itur ab extra in circuitu montis per unam viam excisam, quam poeta cornicem vocat, ut saepe patebit in processu. Nunc ad literam. [...] Et hic nota, lector, quod sicut notavi in principio inferni et postea saepissime per totum, quod infernus est duplex, scilicet essentialis et moralis, et quod poeta alterutro calle procedens tractavit de utroque, et praecipue de morali maxime in dando poenas omnibus generibus peccatorum; ita a simili purgatorium est duplex, scilicet essenziale et morale. Ideo autor descripturus purgatorium eodem modo nunc tractat de essentiali, nunc de morali, sed principalissime de morali in describendo situm et distinctionem omnium poenarum poenitentium. Unde ut videas clare quod poeta loquitur moraliter in descriptione huius loci, volo te scire aliqua circa purgatorium essenziale. Et primo quidem nota, quod locus purgatorii, secundum communem opinionem theologorum, dicitur esse sub terra, quia talis locus vilis correspondet vilitati foeditatis culpabilis, qui locus creditur esse pars inferni a quibusdam propter verbum Gregorii quarto dialogorum, ubi dicit, quod sub eodem igne electus purgatur, et damnatus crematur. Unde sola poena ignis est in purgatorio. Potest tamen ex divina dispensatione alibi anima purgari, sicut dicit ibidem Gregorius de anima Pascasio qui purgabatur in glacie, quod Deus concedit vel propter velociorem liberationem, ut possit aliis suam indigentiam revelare, sicut patuit in Pascasio praedicto, vel ad instructionem nostram, ut poena evidens nos terreat, sicut de aliquibus audivi a viventibus, vel propter impetrationem alicuius sancti viri, sicut sanctus Patricius impetravit quod quidam purgaretur in quodam loco subterraneo, ex quo postea fabulose ortum est ibi esse purgatorium; sicut etiam a simili in mari siculo insula Vulcani dicitur esse unum ostium inferni, quia ex se emittit tonitrua et incendia, in quem locum anima Theodorici regis gothorum visa est demergi cuidam sancto eremita. Est autem poena purgatorii durissima; nam Augustinus in quodam sermone dicit quod ille ignis est durior quam quicquam poenarum in hoc saeculo quis possit audire, videre, vel cogitare. Ex his ergo evidenter apparet quod autor describit hic locum purgatorii moraliter. Et ultimo Cato dat tertium et ultimum documentum optimum, dicens: *poscia non sia di qua vostra reddita*, quia homo ingressus purgatorium, idest

poenitentiam, non debet amplius redire versus infernum, idest, vitia, a quibus recessit. Et respondet quaestioni tacitae, quia posset dicere Virgilius: et quis diriget nos in viam virtutis respondet: *lo sol, che surge omai*, idest incipit oriri post Luciferum, *vi mostrerà prender lo monte*, idest, radius divinae gratiae qui oritur in intellectu talium viatorum ostendet vobis arduum iter virtutis. Et dicit: *a più lieve salita*, idest carpetis montem, ubi invenietis viam faciliorem.

**An important consideration regards the topographical ambivalence of the Purgatory of Patrick: sometimes the cavern can be found near Lake Derg, other times in the mountains in the Connaught. The different location of the *locus purgatorii* and its nature dates back to the same Anglo-Norman writers from the twelfth century: Henry of Saltrey (*Tractatus*) and Marie de France talk about a pit (fossa/une fosse) located in a desert in no way associated with a lake or an island; Jocelin of Furness in the *Life of Saint Patrick* (1185/86) talks about a mountain in the Connaught, known by the name of Cruachán Aigle. "From Jocelin and the *Annals of Loch Cé* we learn that Croagh Patrick, like Lough Derg, was visited by Irish pilgrims in the twelfth century in imitation of Saint Patrick's visit".**

How incisive the location of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick is in that crevice or a pit and how the nature of the *locus purgatorii* preserved its characteristics of an abyss is deduced from the apocryphal *Charta S. Patricii* in which a relationship between the place indicated to Patrick and the veneration of Saint Michael the Arcangel is established when "quadam autem nocte", as Patrick was sound asleep, Jesus Christ appeared before him and he said: "Patrici serve meus, scias me elegisse locum istum ad honorem nominis mei, et ut hic honoranter invocent adiutorium archangeli mei Michaelis. Et hoc tibi signum et fratribus tuis, quatenus et ipsi credant: brachium tuum sinistrum arescet, donec quae vidisti annuntiaveris fratribus qui in cella sunt inferiori, et denuo hic redieris".

**The iconography which, in Italy, is referred to in the legend, betrays the ambivalence of the location of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick and demonstrates a promontory in which in the cavity, the Purgatory of Saint Patrick can be found. I am referring to the fresco, done in 1346 and discovered in 1975 in the choir of the Monastery of St. Francis (Borgo Nuovo - Todi), attributed to Iacopo di Mino del Pellicciaio. The fresco, which takes up the entire wall of the monastery, figures souls which are freed from Purgatory: a mountain quarry in which seven caverns can be seen, and on the peak of which there is a pit, the Irish monk and the Knight Nicolaus; the passage into Heaven is granted by way of the Virgin Mary and S. Filippo Benizi. The fresco was probably derived from the *Legenda Aurea* which describes the entrance into Purgatory, located in the cavern of a mountain, much like a fissure.**

The revolution which Alighieri brings about consists of the definitive removal of Purgatory from underground. He transforms the mountain into a ladder (*escalina: Purg. XXVI, 146*), through which the movement is upwards, in a sort of high tower which is possible to approach only through a door reached by a flight of stairs (*Purg. XXI, 48*), using a clever play on the duplication of the motif. This in no way takes away from the fact that the purgatorial mountain which we find in at least two branches of the tradition of Saint Patrick "is a precise parallel of the mountain in Dante's poem".

**The idea of Hell and Purgatory of the visionaries is, rather, of underground places and a relic of such a structure is the moral organisation of the two Dantesque domains informed from the beginning by a progressive *augmentum* of the fault as of the punishment, *gradatim* to descend into the infernal downward spiral according to *le tre disposizion che 'l ciel non vole / incontenenza, malizia e la matta / bestialitate* and to ascend into the purgatorial mountain afterwards, which the love for the spirit wanders for *malo obietto / o per troppo o per poco di***

*vigore, ut sicut in Burcho seu foramine Inferni descendit de gradu in gradum, ita ut de gradu in gradum ascendit predictum montem.* Among those ancient annotations, Benvenuto da Imola, in addition to maintaining the traces of the legend of the Purgatory of Saint Patrick, also proposes the differences, which dates back to Peter of Dante, between the essential Hell and the moral one and in the same way, between an essential purgatory and a moral one: *infernus est duplex, scilicet essentialis et moralis ..ita a simili purgatorium est duplex, scilicet essentielle et morale.*

The revolution of the *imago mundi* which Dante initiates with respect to the visionaries is not to be underestimated or of limited importance but rather it avails itself of the theological reflection of its times, and in particular the one relative to the *Confessio culpae* and to the evolution of the sacrament of Confession which at the time of the monks in Ireland, starting with Patrick and on from there, was conceived as an extraordinary fact to do only once in a life time and that, rather, at the time of Dante, became an act practised almost annually. The development of this concept has given its contribution to the definition of the problem. To the category of the "quantity", relative to the serious and less serious, whether it is *in corpore vivo* or else *post mortem*, the category of the "quality" has been added, relative to the nature of the sin committed, or better, if it is with or without repentance, whether it is venal or mortal, and if the first category, in so far as *augmentum* of the fault like in the suffering, is valid for the two reigns of Hell and Purgatory, the second becomes the distinctive character of it. So, in fact, Alberico da Rosciate continues in his general preface to the second canticle cited above in c. 140 v.:

**"[P]er corer miglior acqua etc. auctor in hac prima parte tractare intendit de statu animarum divisarum a corpore que sunt libere ab Infernali pena non tamen ex toto a culpa propter quam priusquam conscendant ad beatitudinem vitte eterne oportet purgari ab ipsa ne malum aliquod remaneat impunitum. Circa quam culpam notandum est quod culpa sive peccatum comitti potest altero de duobus modis, quorum unum dicitur mortale; aliud veniale. Mortale est quando homo ex toto recedit ab ordine virtuoso et etiam a deo. Et tali peccato debetur pena infernalis de qua habita est plena mundo in prima parte. Quia peccatum mortalle est contra deum qui est sempiternus et deo pena eius sempiterna et infinita iuxta illud psalmi 21 et Mathei 7 *discedite a me omnes qui operamini Iniquitatem* etc. Veniale est illud quod quando comittitur adhuc remanet homo in ordine virtuoso et cum remorsu conscientie, nec ex toto recedit a deo. Et talia peccata purgantur in purgatorio commensurando penam pro modo culpe Ysaye 21 *in mensura contra mensuram cum abiecta fuisset iudicabo eam*".**

Whether Dante used or didn't use the legend is a problem to examine also in light of the fact that the ancient commentators also used it, just as was written. Grion wrote that "In Venice, Dante found the legend of the cavern of Saint Patrick rather well established". In Padova, the well in the courtyard of Rinaldo Scrovegni is called Hell. Grion remembers the Latin verses attributed to Dante in the *Vita Dantis* by Boccaccio: "Ultima regna canam fluido contermina mundo, / Spiritibus quae lata patent, quae premia solvunt / Pro meritis cuicumque suis..." and notes that the domains bordering the liquid world could have easily been the island of Brandano and the Purgatory of Saint Patrick. To me the hypothesis seems interesting for which the Ulysses of Dante, in addition to the Columns of Hercules could have noticed the mountain of the Purgatory, he, the anti-Owain or better, the anti-Nicola of the *Legenda aurea* the anti-Alvise of the edition written in te Venetian dialect or the anti-Ugo of the legend of the *Discesa di Ugo D'Alvernia all'Inferno* who died while

submerged in those sacred waters, he who does not become a *miles christianus* of the Arthur – Patrick – Christ who must return. It is not necessary to demonstrate that in the thirteenth century the voyage towards Purgatory was attributed to the hero of Ithaca, rather, it is enough to speak about a superimposition of motifs for which the new Aeneas, Paul, little by little was substituted for the *miles christianus* Patrick – Owain/Nicola/Alvise/Ugo which are condensed together to become Paul, Aeneas, Arthur, Orpheus, heroes of their own national epics or *chanson* whose anti-model, within the Dantesque system, is Ulysses and the fallen angel Lucifer, the knight who did not trust in God but only in his own powers.

**Even in Italy the legend had imitators. Wright observes that in the fourteenth century, the Purgatory of Saint Patrick was introduced in the Italian fiction through the *Guerin meschino*: "The whole is, in fact, a palpable and poor imitation of Dante, built upon the legend of Henry of Saltrey". In reality it would be necessary to make the same consideration even for what could have been the work of fiction, founder of the family of the travellers cycle, *Ugo d'Alvernia*. Ugo d'Alvernia, writes Rajna, "is worthy of being carefully considered not only because it contains this imitation, in my opinion the most ancient one, of the *Commedia*, but also for the form in which it is written. Observing carefully, it seems to me that the same one is the unedited one which was written by Renardo published for himself by Teza. Another monument which offers us the same (language\*) form of language is the *Buovo d'Antona* discovered personally by me. To compare the three compositions under this aspect, revealing the differences which run between them, and those others that they in turn have with the Italic-French of the Venetian texts, will be a study which I will undertake with the greatest of care (for which\*) I am capable, and I have high hopes of being able to extract a certain resolution of the problems posed in the face of this literature from Northern Italy".**

In reality it is important to make the same consideration even for what might be the founding father of fiction of the series of travellers, the Ugo d'Alvernia, writes Rajna, an important popular go between for the diffusion of the legend in Italy, before *Guerin Meschino*, was in fact the descent of Ugo into the "Inferno", produced in that Franco-Italian literature that Formisano defines "no man's land" and that makes up an important chapter in the fortune of the *chanson de geste*, the "point of intersection between the old traditions of the epic and the new tradition of the singers".

**To conclude, it is worth proposing a couple of reflections about the meaning of a legend, the legend of Patrick, which often, just as anything else which occurs through the visions belonging to the same genre, has been considered only a fable for wicked children invented by factious monks.**

"Patrick has left us two rather brief writings, the *Confessione* and an *Epistola*, both generally accepted as authentic".

The first short piece is an apology of the idea that the missionary needed certain moral and intellectual qualities in order to carry out his service, the second, the *Epistola* is directed against *Coroticus*, governor of a part of Britannia, which had raged against the neophytes of Patrick. Remarkable for our purposes is the *Libro di Armagh*, which contains the four *Dicta Patricii* of which *Detti*, the fourth "asks the Irish to conform themselves to the Romans, and sing the *Kyrie eleison* " at each canonical moment. Although the authenticity of the two *Detti* is uncertain, it would not seem at all impossible that the legend of the cistercense monk Henricus considered such a need and used the filigreed didactics in order to exemplify his *Tractatus* where, in fact, the prayer that is said to the knight Owain and that he had to repeat in face of various dangers is "Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner", just as it appears in Marie de France, in the *Legenda aurea*, in the preface by Alberico who later reproduced it. Evidence of the profound Christianity of the Irish

Eachtra is this scream from the sky at Jerico that implores Jesus the healer in the Gospel of Luke, which is also the *Kyrie eleison* of the liturgy. It is the prayer of the *agens* Dante, the first words that he pronounces in the *Commedia* while turning to his guide: *miserere di me*.

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