

Literal and Symbolic: the Language of Asceticism in Two Lives of St Radegund

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Ascesis as practised within the early church combined a variety of qualities and functions: combat with the devil, suffering and mortification of the flesh, separation from the world, and preparation for death. It was also a means by which those saints who were not martyrs demonstrated heroic action; through asceticism saints created and maintained power.¹ Hagiographers, in turn, described the ascetic actions of saints in order to construct a sense of the saint's body as a holy place, a locus of power. And yet, ascetic behaviour is not transparent of interpretation; hagiographers represented ascetic practices, and thus sainthood itself, differently. These differences are readily apparent in the two major lives of St Radegund.

Radegund was an influential sixth-century Thuringian nun and princess who was captured in battle and forced to marry Lothar, a Frankish king. After several years of married life, she left Lothar and with his aid founded two monasteries in Poitiers. One of these, Holy Cross monastery, where she lived, was inside the walls of the city. There she arranged for the collection of a variety of relics for the monastery, and eventually enclosed herself inside a single cell adjoining the monastery. She died around 587.² Her story offers an invaluable opportunity for comparative study of the construction of sainthood through asceticism in that her life was recorded by two different people who knew her personally—Venantius Fortunatus, who wrote a *vita* sometime around 600 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 359), and Baudonivia, one of the nuns of the Holy Cross monastery, which Radegund founded, who wrote a second *vita* several years later, around 609.

Since Radegund was never martyred, it is through her ascetic practice, a vicarious martyrdom, that her sanctity must be constructed. Both Fortunatus and

Baudonivia treat Radegund's ascetic practices as a means of creating the powerful body of a saint, a living relic, but the differences in the two writers' approaches are notable.³ Fortunatus' descriptions of violent self-aggression, combined with an emphasis on domestic service, contrast sharply with the strong queenly leadership emphasised in Baudonivia's version, as other scholars have noted. As well, I will argue here, the rhetoric employed by the authors in describing Radegund's asceticism relies on two different styles of language, with Fortunatus tending to literalise his terms while Baudonivia draws on symbolic meanings. These rhetorical styles extend beyond the descriptions of ascetic behaviour and in fact reflect differences in the authors' notions of the public or private nature of the saint's body, and of the position of the author within the text.⁴

Fortunatus' rhetorical strategy is most apparent in his description of Radegund's activities at Quadragesima; he provides a short list of extreme ascetic action that covers two paragraphs. The first incident involves the saint's binding her neck and arms with two iron bands, then inserting three chains and wrapping these around her body in order to enclose herself tightly:

Quadam vice, dum sibi latos tres circulos ferreos diebus quadragesimae collo vel brachiis nexuit, et tres catenas inserens, circa suum corpus dum alligasset adstrictae, inclusit durum ferrum caro tenera supercrescens. Et transacto ieiunio, cum voluisset catenas sub cute clausas extrahere nec valeret, caro per dorsum atque pectus super ferrum catenarum est incisa per circulum, ut sanguis fusus ad extremum exinaniret corpusculum.

[Once, through Quadragesima, she bound her neck and arms with three broad iron circlets. Inserting three chains in them, she fettered her whole body so tightly that her delicate flesh, swelling up, enclosed the hard iron. After the fast was ended, when she wished to remove the chains locked under her skin, she could not, (so) the flesh was cut in a circle through her back and breast above the iron of the chains, so that the flow of blood nearly drained her little body to the last drop (25).⁵]

The author then describes two other ascetic episodes. In one Radegund takes a burning brand with the sign of Christ and presses it against herself in two places:

Item vice sub altera iussit fieri laminam in signo Christi oricalcam, quam accensam in cellula locis duobus corporis altius sibi inpressit, tota carne decocta.

[On another occasion, she ordered a brass plate made, shaped in the sign of Christ. She heated it up in her cell and pressed it upon her body most deeply in two spots so that her flesh was roasted through (26).]

Finally, Fortunatus describes Radegund burning herself by pressing a basin of burning coals into her flesh:

Lima cilicii membra tenera setis asperis dissipante, iubet portare aquamanile ardentibus plenum carbonibus. Hinc discedentibus reliquis, membris trepidantibus, animus armatur ad poenam, tractans, quia non essent persecutionis tempora, a se ut fieret martyra. Inter haec, ut refrigeraret tam ferventem animum, incendere corpus deliberat, adponit aera candentia, stridunt membra cremantia, consumitur cutis, et intima, quo attigit ardor, fit fossa.

[With the rubbing of the haircloth scraping her tender limbs with its hard bristles, she ordered a water basin full of burning coals to be brought; then, when the others left, with her limbs quivering, her soul was armed against the pain, (she) planning, since it was not an age of persecution, to make a martyr of herself. To cool her fervent soul, she determined to burn her body. She imposed the glowing bronze and her burning limbs hissed. Her skin was consumed and there was made a deep furrow where the heat had touched (26).]

Others have commented on the unusually violent nature of Radegund's actions here, but we should note that it is not only the actions that are of interest, but the language used to describe them. In the first instance, Fortunatus has Radegund enact her fast in the most literal way possible, by actually enclosing her body in iron. The terms used are reminiscent of the language of monastic enclosure. The iron bonds are *circulos* and her body is *inclusit* "enclosed" in the chains, echoing Radegund's own enclosure in her cell. The quadragesimal fasting is thus a literal binding of her body, so intense that it cuts through her skin and threatens her life. On the second occasion Radegund not only binds her body, but actually impresses the sign of Christ into her flesh, calling to mind the topos of the saint bearing Christ internally. But here, Fortunatus does not describe Radegund bearing Christ within in the spiritual sense, but without, as the mark of Christ is literally branded on her skin. As in the previous act, her flesh is penetrated by metal. In the third description, as in the other two, the ascetic action leaves a mark, thus extending the act beyond the immediate moment of the pain and advertising the saint's self-imposed martyrdom. The furrow left by the

basis is a *fossa*, literally a “ditch.” This term, recalling a landscape, makes clear not only how deep the furrow is, but also the fact that the saint is engaged in reconfiguring her body. Furthermore, Fortunatus emphasises the fact that the furrow made by the basin is *intima*, a word that has connotations of intimacy and secrecy, so the *fossa* is not just a reshaping of the body’s surface, but an invasion, a cutting into the interior. Fortunatus deals with the relationship between the marks on the body’s surface and its interior in a contradictory manner. Where in the episode of the burning sign of Christ Radegund pressed the brand into her flesh as a means of paralleling her spiritual fervour, *Sic, spiritu flammante, membra faciebat ardere* “Thus, with her spirit flaming, she caused her very limbs to burn” (26), in the case of the basin of coals, Fortunatus draws a contrast between inner and outer: *Ut refrigeraret tam ferventem animum, incendere corpus deliberat* “To cool her fervent soul, she determined to burn her body” (26). First her violence reflects the fervour of her soul, then it opposes it. Clearly the spiritual effect is less important than the actions themselves, which are all forms of penetration. Essentially, Fortunatus has Radegund enact literally the symbolic language of sanctity. The iron bonds literally bind the fasting body as they dig into her flesh, while the brand forces Christ into Radegund’s body with a literal *ardor*. The saint’s ascetic acts are an intimate rewriting of herself, making her body into the body of a martyr. The scars left by the burning brands are signatures of her sainthood, replacing Christ’s body with her own, as John Kitchen points out (120).

Once marked, Radegund’s body begins to speak, first in the manner of a book, which is silent until read (although her limbs do literally speak since they “hiss” when she forces the basin against them), revealing what Radegund herself would not: *Tacens tegit foramina, sed conputrescens sanguis manifestabat, quod vox non prodebat in poena* “Silently, she concealed the holes, but the putrefying blood revealed what her voice did not report in pain” (26). Later, her acts of extreme asceticism give Radegund the power to perform miracles, which, like her body, now speak for her.⁷ When Radegund cures one of the nuns who is near death, she orders everyone to leave, remaining alone with the woman for two hours during which time she supports or perhaps traces the form of the woman’s body with her hands.⁸ This cure, done in an enclosed and separated space, becomes a public announcement of Radegund’s power: *Illud quod gessit in secreto proferatur in populum* “What she did secretly was to become known to all people” (29), as Fortunatus says before relating the story.

Radegund’s secret actions lead to a climax in which she enacts the part of St Martin in resurrecting a woman from death. In this case Radegund has the body of a

dead girl brought to her cell, and then closes the doors to keep others from knowing what she is doing. For seven hours she handles the child until she returns to life. This miracle in the manner of St Martin (*more beati Martini* 37) is another action performed secretly that cannot be concealed; as a miracle its very nature proclaims its presence.⁹ In this case, Fortunatus' explicit reference to St Martin makes clear that Fortunatus is once again relying on literal re-creations, for Radegund here performs with her body exactly the actions of St Martin just as earlier she literally enacted the torture of a martyr. This episode is the last miracle described by Fortunatus before Radegund's death, and clearly functions as a climax, demonstrating the extent of the power she has attained through her aggressive asceticism; her body has literally become equivalent to St Martin, capable of the same actions and the same power.

Fortunatus' preoccupation with silent penetration and speaking body is present through the *vita*, in which he repeatedly depicts Radegund's ascetic behaviour as hidden or private, using a variety of expressions for the concept: *subocculte* (4), *occulte* (15), *secretissime* (16), *furtim* (19), *in secreto* (29).¹⁰ When Radegund feeds the poor she does it *subocculte, ne forte cognosceretur ab aliquo* (4), "secretly, lest by chance anyone notice." When she eats barley bread at the table, she hides it under her cake,¹¹ and she secretly imports a millstone so that she can follow the example of St Germanus by grinding meal with her own hands. Fortunatus even enters the chamber of her mind, claiming that a joke made by the abbess made Radegund secretly sorry that she had not yet effected a cure for another woman.¹² This accumulation of secrets is more than a demonstration of the humility of the saint; it is also a means of drawing attention to the narrator's own privileged knowledge as he reveals secrets that were unknown even within Radegund's own religious community. Fortunatus' position as omniscient narrator reflects the elements of his narrative; he is the one who penetrates private spaces and who speaks of the saint's asceticism when she does not speak.

Thus Fortunatus' narrative of asceticism follows a pattern; acts of extreme physical violence, invasive to the body, are followed by miracles which reveal those acts and which ultimately testify to the saint's supreme power. Fortunatus' own narrative echoes the miracles, making the secrets known and allowing the reader to enter the enclosed chambers and cells with the saint. At the same time, the miracles mean that what is done in private is also done publicly. Like Radegund's body, Fortunatus' text reveals the secrets of saintliness, and thus constructs not only Radegund's holiness, but also the authority of the author who is an outsider to the world of the convent, but a secret observer of what is hidden to others.

Fortunatus' approach is precisely the opposite of Baudonivia's. Where Fortunatus dwells on the complementary notions of secrecy and invasion, allowing the reader privileged access to the saint's private world, Baudonivia creates a world in which the convent, including herself, and the city of Poitiers are concentric circles with Radegund at their centre. Her construction of Radegund's holiness is based on a series of images that figure Radegund's body as a container within a larger container.¹³ The larger container appears in a variety of guises—literally it is the walls of the convent, while symbolically it is the body of Christ, the Church, and the community of Holy Cross. In keeping with this imagery, fasting is pictured as a sealing off of the body; Radegund “closes herself off” *conclisit* in abstinence.¹⁴

Although Baudonivia's Radegund does not literally encircle her body with iron bonds, her symbolic bondage is powerful enough to control the external world, especially the boundaries and entrances of the monastery and the city.¹⁵ Furthermore, Baudonivia is able to make the ostensibly passive activity of containment appear active. Early in the *vita* we encounter two stories about Radegund's relationship to Christ that demonstrate Baudonivia's approach. In the first episode, Radegund enforces the destruction of a pagan shrine, overpowering the pagan mob while remaining immobile on her horse.

Franci universaque multitudo com gladiis et fustibus vel omni fremitu diabolico conabantur defendere; sancta vero regina immobilis perseverans, Christum in pectore gestans, equum quem sedebat in antea non movit, antequam et fanus periretur.

[The Franks and the whole crowd tried to defend (the shrine) with swords and staffs, even with a diabolical roar; the holy queen, remaining immobile, bearing Christ in her breast, did not move forward the horse on which she sat, until the shrine was destroyed (2).]

In the second story Radegund, in the first year of her monastic life, sees a vision of herself within Christ's breast:

In primo anno conversionis suae, vidit in visu navem in hominis specie et in totis membris eius sedentes homines, se vero in eius genu sedentem; qui dixit ei: Modo in genu sedes, adhuc in pectore meo sessionem habebis.

[She saw in a vision a ship in the form of a person and in all his members people were sitting, and she saw herself sitting on his knee. He said to her:

Now you sit on my knee, you who will later have seating in my breast
(3).^{16]}

In the first instance, Christ *in pectore* is clearly both shield and sword, while Radegund's refusal to move in the midst of the clamour presents her inaction as an action that is not only powerful, but irresistible and triumphant.¹⁷

In the second story, Radegund is portrayed as a member of the community of saints in advance of her death through her membership within the body of Christ. Where in the earlier episode Radegund's power derived from her active containment of Christ within herself, here it derives from her containment within him. The parallel enclosure images, Christ *in pectore* followed by Radegund *in genu*, allow Radegund to participate in Christ's body without transforming her own flesh.

The symbolic aspect of Baudonivia's imagery is most apparent in her descriptions of invasions or breaching of walls, where bodily enclosure and monastic enclosure are paralleled. The bodies of saints and sinners are clearly contrasted in Baudonivia's account of Lothar's attempt to remove Radegund from her monastery in Poitiers, and his subsequent repentance:

Prostermit se et ille ante limina sancti Martini pedibus apostolici viri Germani, rogat, ut sic pro ipso veniam peteret beatae Radegundi, ut ei indulgeret, quod in eam per malos consiliarios peccaverat. Unde ultio divina de praesenti in eos vindicavit: sicut Arrius, qui contra fidem catholicam certans, omnia intestina sua in secessu dimisit, ita et de istis evenit, qui contra beatam reginam egerunt.

[He (the king) prostrated himself before St Martin's threshold at the feet of the apostolic Germanus and prayed him to ask blessed Radegund's forgiveness for obeying his evil counsellors and sinning against her. As a result, the same divine punishment soon struck those who acted against the blessed queen as struck Arius, who, for opposing the Catholic faith, lost all his bowels in a flux (7).]

Thereafter, Radegund prepares for her future life with a series of fasts and vigils *Quasi carceris se sui corporis fecit...custodem* "as though she were the jailer of her own body" (7). The powerful self-control in which Radegund must be both jailer and jail is contrasted with the divine punishment meted out to Lothar's wicked counsellors, who are punished by the "death of Arius," whose bowels are voided in a flux.¹⁸ The death

of Arius, reserved for heretics, is structurally the opposite of Radegund's self-containment. Where she seals herself off, their insides are literally forced out of their bodies. Where her fasting symbolically enacts her ability to resist invasion and abduction in the monastery through her own body, so the counsellors' bodies are forced to enact their attempt forcibly to eject Radegund. Furthermore, Lothar's miraculous change of heart occurs at the tomb of St Martin in Tours, demonstrating the lines of power running between Radegund and Martin. Martin here is a gate-keeper, parallel to Radegund herself *vis-à-vis* her own body.¹⁹ Where in Fortunatus' narrative Radegund was presented as literally re-enacting the role of Martin, and thereby Christ, by raising an infant from the grave, Baudonivia connects Radegund to Martin horizontally, making his tomb into a symbolic threshold of Holy Cross monastery.

A major element in Baudonivia's rhetoric involves not the reconstruction of Radegund's body, but the symbolic reorientation of the external world, with Poitiers and therefore Radegund, at its centre. This is most apparent in the emphasis Baudonivia places on Radegund's acquisition of relics from the east. Although Radegund is strictly enclosed, Baudonivia compares her to Helena, noted for her travels to Jerusalem and her discovery of the true cross.²⁰ Likewise, Radegund's acquisition of a piece of the true cross indicates that her immobility and separation from the world are not to be understood as a restriction on her power or a marginalisation. Rather, it is clear throughout Baudonivia's text that Radegund herself provides the spiritual centre of a newly-reconstructed world. When Radegund first breaks with Lothar, she flees to her villa at Saix. In describing this episode, Baudonivia comments that Radegund has closed herself off from worldly love, choosing to live as an exile rather than wander from Christ.²¹ Here Baudonivia essentially re-creates the world around Radegund, inverting the notions of wandering and exile: Radegund's centre is with Christ, whom she herself contains, not with Lothar. Radegund's acquisition of relics, a means of bringing the sanctity of the East within the monastery walls, is a way of reorienting the world for, as Baudonivia says, the East bears witness and the North, South and West acknowledge the assembling of the relics *hoc oriens testatur, aquilo, auster vel occidens profitetur* (14). In mentioning the four cardinal points in this manner, Baudonivia situates Poitiers in a central location with the rest of the world encircling it and looking on. In the same paragraph, the bringing of another relic, the finger of Mammas, to the monastery serves to link Jerusalem and Poitiers rhetorically. The relic is described as coming *de Hierusolima usque Pictavis* (14), although in fact the finger may not have come directly from Jerusalem.²² Radegund's movement

of relics into her monastery is a form of motionless pilgrimage, for although she cannot travel to the sacred sites, the relics are made to come to her, and through the relics she constructs a parallel community of saints who participate in the life of the monastery. Her ascetic activity is then channeled into communion with the saints in the form of relics as she chants hymns and songs, not with the sisters of the convent, but with the relics themselves (14). As with the vision of the man-ship, we are made to realise that Radegund is already a member of the heavenly community and that Holy Cross itself is an earthly parallel to that community, and thus a centre rather than a margin. Where Fortunatus literally reconstructed Radegund's body, Baudonivia has symbolically reconstructed the world surrounding Radegund.

Baudonivia reserves her greatest rhetorical powers for what she regards as Radegund's greatest triumph, the acquisition of a relic of the cross. Here she combines Radegund's role as gatekeeper with the imagery of the reoriented world. When the relic is first brought to Poitiers, Bishop Maroveus, the bishop of Poitiers, refuses to allow it into the city, and the cross is then sent to a male monastery at Tours, a banishment equivalent to the injuries inflicted at Christ's crucifixion:

Non minorem iniuriam est passa sancta crux per invidiam, quam Dominus, qui per cursorem fidelem vocatus et revocatus ante praesides et iudices, omnem maliciam pacienter sustinuit, ut quod creaverat ne periret.

[Thus envy inflicted no less injury on the holy cross than on the Lord himself, who endured every malicious act patiently when, by the faithful messenger, he was called and re-called before the governors and judges so that (the people) he created might not perish (16).]²³

In this passage Baudonivia rhetorically re-enacts the sacrifice of Christ at the gates of Poitiers. Since the entrance of the relic into the city would normally be seen as symbolically parallel to Christ's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, Maroveus' refusal to allow entrance to the relic places him in the role of a malicious persecutor akin to Pilate,²⁴ while the cross itself enacts the role of Christ. Radegund's response to the situation is to embark on a course of ascetic activity:

In quanto se cruciatu posuit, in geiuniis, in vigiliis, in profusione lacrimarum, tota congregatio sua in luctu et fletu omnibus diebus, usquequo respexit Dominus humilitatem ancillae suae, qui dedit in corde regis, ut faceret iudicium et iustitiam in medio populi.

[She cast herself into such torments through fasts, vigils and profusion of tears, (with) the whole flock lamenting and wailing every day until at last the Lord respected his handmaid's humility and moved the heart of the king to do judgment and justice in the midst of the people (16).]

The ascesis once again involves fasts and vigils. These torments of bodily enclosure cause the king to arrange for Bishop Eufronius to bring the relics into the city. As when welcoming the relics, Radegund's asceticism is a highly public activity, taken on by the entire community. But here it is also a means of engaging the bishop in spiritual combat, a contest from which Radegund emerges victorious, thus allowing her, rather than the bishop, to become the city's benefactor and demonstrating once again the saint's power.²⁵ Her public triumph is a structural opposition to the earlier episode in which Lothar had attempted to have Radegund removed against her wishes; in each case Radegund controls the entrance or exit to the holy space. But here she has caused the gates to be opened, not closed. Radegund's triumph is also a means of reshaping the topography of power in Poitiers; with the acceptance of the relic, Radegund symbolically moves Jerusalem into the heart of Poitiers.

Baudonivia's location of herself in the narrative is also significantly different from Fortunatus' for, although she is one of the participants in the circle of the monastery walls, she does not draw attention to her own intimate knowledge of Radegund. She describes the saint's banishing of threats from the interior or walls of the convent,²⁶ and thus participates in Radegund's special presence as the centre of the circle, but she makes little of her own position as a member of the community and privileged participator in Radegund's holiness. When Radegund has her vision of Christ early in the story, Baudonivia says that she related it privately to her followers; what is private is in fact known to a small group who have been told the information by Radegund herself. The triangle of writer, saint, and reader that we found in Fortunatus' version has been enlarged to include the community. In those places where Baudonivia does describe Radegund's ascetic actions as secret, she passes over it very quickly. Radegund's concerns, according to Baudonivia—to control and maintain her control over the enclosure of the city and monastery—call for a public recognition of fasting and vigils. The imagery of enclosure thus extends from the saint's body to the convent community to the world at large; for Baudonivia, Radegund's sanctity and her body are public, not secret rooms for the reader to penetrate.

Although I have by no means attempted an exhaustive survey of asceticism in these two *vitae*, it should be clear that the language of asceticism used by the two

writers leads in two different directions. Fortunatus demands a literal enactment of martyrdom on Radegund's flesh, and his language imitates her action in its reliance on imagery which must be taken literally, not symbolically. Where Fortunatus sees the saint's body as powerful through acts of penetration and bodily reconstruction, for Baudonivia it is the extremes of bodily integrity that lead to power. At the same time, Fortunatus' narrative—with its insistence on exposing secrets—echoes the bodily penetration of Radegund's asceticism, while Baudonivia's means of creating saintly power uses symbolic language to reconstruct the world, rather than literally reconstructing Radegund's body. For both authors, asceticism is itself a kind of language. Fortunatus presents Radegund's ascetic actions as the voice of the body, enacting and betraying Radegund's martyrdom, while her tongue is silent. For Baudonivia, Radegund's fasting is a way of communing with the saints, but also of intervening in and controlling the world beyond the walls, a form of persuasion more powerful than words.

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Notes

1 The Greek noun *askesis* means “exercise, practice, or training” and originally referred to the training of athletes for competition in the arena. Hence the notion of asceticism as a self-imposed discipline for the purpose of combat with the devil. See “Asceticism,” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1990).

2 For information on Radegund's life, see Louise Coudanne, “Baudonivie, moniale de Saint-Croix et biographe de sainte Radegonde” in *Études Mérovingiennes* (Paris: Université de Poitiers, 1953), p. 46, and “Radegundis” in J.R. Martinale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* IIIB (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), pp. 1072-4. Primary sources for Radegund's life are Gregory of Tours' *Historia Francorum*, his *In Gloria Martyrorum* and *In Gloria Confessorum*; and the poems of Venantius Fortunatus, as well as a poem on the Thuringian war, which was written by either Fortunatus or Radegund herself. On the development of the cult of Radegund, see Brian Brennan, “St Radegund and the Early Development of her Cult at Poitiers” *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1985): 340-54, and also his “Deathless Marriage and Spiritual Fecundity in Venantius Fortunatus' *De Virginitate*” *Traditio* 51 (1996): 73-97.

3 On the saint as a living relic and the notion of relics providing friends “in the region of heaven,” see Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), pp. 191-2.

4 These differences have sometimes been seen as a function of the author’s gender; see John Kitchen, *Saints’ Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), pp. 115-53; and Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 126-35. Other studies of Radegund include Suzanne Fonay Wemple, “Female Spirituality and Mysticism in Frankish Monasteries: Radegund, Balthild and Aldegund” in *Medieval Religious Women* eds Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987) 2:39-53; and Giselle de Nie, “‘Consciousness Fecund Through God’: From Male Fighter to Spiritual Bridegroom in Late Antique Female Sanctity” in *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages* ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 101-61.

5 All quotations from the original are taken from “De Vita Sanctae Radegundis Libri Duo” *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum 2* (Hanover, 1888), pp. 358-95. For the translations I have made partial use of the translations of the two *vitae* in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, ed. and trans. Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg with E. Gordon Whatley (Durham: Duke UP, 1992), pp. 70-105, but have made changes where necessary to bring out the literal meanings of the Latin. I would also like to thank a reviewer of this paper for advice on certain passages. I give references by paragraph number.

6 John Kitchen points out that this degree of physical violence to the self is not found in any of Fortunatus’ other *vitae* (p. 119), while McNamara, Halborg and Whatley point out that in no other source for Radegund’s life do we find evidence of this degree of self-assault (p. 81n).

7 *Quod ipsa abdiderit, hoc miracula non tacerent* “The miracles were not silent about what she hid” (26).

8 *Quantum est corporis forma, a capite usque ad plantam infirma membra conbaiulat* “She nursed the sick limbs, tracing the form of her body from head to foot” (29). The term *conbaiulat* is unclear in this context. *Baiulare* means to carry a burden (Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *bajulo*). Here the saint is clearly engaged in an activity that involves specific attention to the entire body, from head to feet. McNamara, Halborg and Whatley interpret this as tracing. The miracle is similar to St Martin’s resurrection of a dead man by isolating himself with the dead

man's body and then prostrating himself over the body for two hours; see Sulpicius Severus, *De Vita Beati Martini* (PL 20, cols 159-76), 164:VII, 165:VIII.

9 *Sed, quod occulte gessit, celare diu non potuit* "But what she did secretly could not be concealed for long" (37). This miracle, like the curing of the sick nun (29), is similar to a miracle of St Martin's. See note 8.

10 The topos of secret ascetic activity is certainly not limited to Fortunatus, but it is significant in light of the almost complete absence of this motif in Baudonivia's *Life*. Baudonivia's *Liber II* describes secret behaviour only once, *sed ita se pauperem tractabat, ut hoc nec abbatissa sentiret* "but her behaviour as a pauper was so discreet that even the abbess suspected nothing" (8). The secrecy topos is especially interesting in light of the fact that the Rule of Caesarius of Arles strongly discouraged any notion of privacy; gifts could not be received in private, nor could outsiders visit the women in private. Donald Hochstetler, "The Meaning of Monastic Cloister for Women according to Caesarius of Arles," *Religion, Culture and Society in the Early Middle Ages. Studies in Honor of Richard E. Sullivan* eds Thomas F.X. Noble and John J. Contreni. *Studies in Medieval Culture* 23 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), pp. 27-40 especially pp. 30-31.

11 *Quod in mensa sub fladone sigilatium panem absconsum vel ordeatium manducabat occulte, sic ut nemo perciperet* "At table she secretly chewed rye or barley bread which she had hidden under a cake to escape notice" (15).

12 *Fecit sanctam mulierem occulte reficiendi tempore paenitentem* "She made the holy woman secretly sorry at the time of eating that she had been so slow to heal the afflicted" (33).

13 Throughout, Baudonivia employs images of containment when referring to Radegund. Radegund is "girdled about with obedience to God's servants" *in servorum Dei obsequio succincta* (1). Her entrance into monastic life consists of *respuens* "spitting out" the false blandishments of the world *in quo monasterio sancta regina mundi falsa blandimenta respuens gaudensque ingressa est* (5) after which she "embraces God with her heart in order that she might feel Christ come to dwell within her" *Deum...corde conplectens, Christum in se habitorem esse sentiret* (5).

14 *Se autem in tam ardua abstinence distictione conclusit, usquequo infirmitas permisit, ut mens intenta Deo terrenum iam nec requireret cibum* "As much as her weakness allowed, she closed herself off in such strict abstinence that she had no craving for earthly food, her mind was so intent on God" (8).

15 The rule of Caesarius of Arles required strict enclosure for the duration of the nun's life so it is not surprising to see how significant an image this is in Baudonivia's *vita*, and in the lives of other monastic saints. For a discussion of the importance of enclosure in the lives of female monastics, see Jane Tibbetts Schulenberg, "Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (500-1100)," *Medieval Religious Women* eds John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984) 1:51-86. On the importance of locks and doors in the Rule of Caesarius of Arles, see Hochstetler, pp. 28-9.

16 This vision combines the notion of the church as the body of Christ with that of the church as ship. The Life of Caesarius of Arles, which Baudonivia may have known, describes the monastic community as an ark: *quasi recentio temporis nostri Noe, propter turbines et procellas sodalibus vel sororibus in latere ecclesiae monasterii fabricat archam* "like a latter-day Noah of our time, he fashioned an ark on account of storms and tempests. He built it for the companions and sisters on the side of the church." *MGH Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* 3 (Hanover, 1888), p. 470. Translation by William Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1994), p. 26.

17 Radegund's armour consists not only in her containment of Christ, but also in her asceticism itself, as Baudonivia makes clear when describing Radegund's behaviour in the monastery: *Quo tamen tempore fortioribus armis induta, sine cessatione orationibus, vigiliis, lectione propensa, peregrinis ipsa cibos ministravit ad mensam* "At which time, ever more strongly armed with ceaseless prayers and vigils, and devotion to reading, she herself served food to pilgrims at the table" (8).

18 *Omnia intestina sua in secessu dimisit* (7). This form of death is, for Gregory of Tours, the quintessential death of heretics and is evoked several times in the *Historia Francorum*. Most interesting for our purposes is the death of the priest who attempts to eject the bishop Sidonius from his own church. See *Historia Francorum* II.23, and also III Prol. For a use of the same topos in a much later text, see *Guide du Pelerin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1990), p. 62.

19 It is worth noting that Gregory of Tours refers to bishops as "holy doorkeepers," and presents the saints and the churches as walls guarding the city (*Vitae Patrum* 4.2); see Van Dam, *Leadership and Community*, p. 231.

20 Radegund is clearly meant to be a western Helen: *Quod fecit illa (Helena) in orientali patria, hoc fecit beata Radegundis in Gallia* "What she (Helen) did in oriental

lands, Radegund the blessed did in Gaul” (16). It was not unusual, however, for women of Radegund’s status to be compared to Helen. See Jo Ann McNamara, “Imitatio Helenae: Sainthood as an Attribute of Queenship in the Early Middle Ages,” in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography* ed. Sandro Sticca (Binghamton: Centre for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1996), pp. 51-80.

21 *Exclusit caritatem mundialem, elegit exsul fieri, ne peregrinaretur a Christo* “Excluding worldly love, she chose exile, lest she wander from Christ” (4).

22 The relics of St Mammias may not have been in Jerusalem at all. See Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyres* Subsidia Hagiographica 20 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1933), pp. 203-4.

23 A reviewer of this paper suggested that the *cursor fidelis* may be the messenger who brought Christ before the judges and was converted in the Gospel of Nicodemus. See *Gospel of Nicodemus* ed. H.C. Kim (Toronto: Centre for Medieval Studies and Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), pp. 14-16.

24 The formal entrance of a relic into a city was referred to as *adventus* and was normally “arranged and directed by the local bishop.” See Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul A.D. 481-751* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), p. 109. Hence the need for Radegund to have the bishop’s cooperation.

25 *Quamquam illa cum Rege caeli gloriaret, unde eis subvenire posset, hoc donum caeleste provitrix optima, gubernatrix bona, ut oves non usquequaque relinqueret, precium mundi de pignore Christi, quam de longinqua regione expetiit, ad honorem loci et salvationem populi suo in monasterio dimisit....Quis queat dicere, quantum et quale donum huic urbi beata contulit?*

[Thus, though she would always be able to help them when she was in glory with the King of Heaven, this best provider, this good director would not leave her sheep in disarray. She bequeathed a heavenly gift, the ransom of the world from Christ’s relics, which she had searched out from far away for the honour of the places and the salvation of the people in her monastery...Who could attempt to tell the greatness and richness of the gift the blessed woman conferred to this city?(16)]

26 Near the end of the narrative, Baudonivia describes two attempts to invade the sacred precincts of the monastery, once by demons in the form of goats on the monastery walls (18), and once by an owl *in medio monasterio* (19). With Radegund’s help, the threats are banished. Both stories draw attention to the spatial confines of the monastery, to its borders as opposed to its centre.

