

Histories, Encyclopedias, and *Etymologies*:  
Isidore of Seville and the Collection and Dissemination  
of Knowledge in Medieval Spain

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The Catholic Church canonized Isidore of Seville in 1598, over nine and a half centuries after his death in 636. Isidore's influence, dedication to education, and attempt to catalog and record the sum total of knowledge in his lifetime may be why he has become the patron saint of the internet. Most of his childhood is shrouded in mystery and only appears<sup>s</sup> as prefaces or introductions to translations of his *Etymologies*. Isidore's work influenced not only early education, but also what it meant to *be* Spanish. Charlene Suscavage opens her biographic<sup>al</sup> essay with a quote that succinctly sums up Isidore's importance: "Through his defense of education, Isidore of Seville not only preserved the classical traditions of his people but also helped forge a national identity."<sup>1</sup> It is his encyclopedic collection, *Etymologies*, that<sup>not only</sup> provides a bridge spanning~~not only~~ the Roman tradition and the Middle Ages, but serves as a model for early specialty encyclopedias of the late Middle Ages and the Early-Modern period. Isidore and his *Etymologies* are the direct, although removed ancestor to lapidaries, bestiaries, and herbals that flourished throughout manuscript culture and became one of the staples of book culture.

Spain in the 550s had already been under Visigoth rule for over one hundred years, but that rule grew increasingly unstable throughout the century. The resulting Byzantine invasion of Cartegna in 557 may have spurred Isidore's parents to move their family to Seville where Isidore's older brother Leander became bishop. Leander harbored friendships with future Pope Gregory as well as the Visigoth princes Hermenigild and Reccared.

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<sup>1</sup> Charlene Suscavage. "Saint Isidore of Seville." *Great Lives of History. The Middle Ages, 477-1453*. ed. Shelley Wolbrink, (Pasadena, California; Salem Press, 2005), p 555.

Through Leander both princes converted from Arianism to Catholicism and it was Reccared who made Isidore the Bishop of Seville after Leander's death.<sup>2</sup>

Ernest Brehaut wrote in 1912 that Isidore lived during the completion of a “de-secularizing process” of knowledge. He described this process as “the loss of contact with physical reality through systematic observation which alone had given life to Greek Natural Science...[and] a concentration of attention upon what were believed to be the superior realities of the spiritual world.”<sup>3</sup> Brehaut placed Isidore's *Etymologies* “among the most important sources for the history of intellectual culture in the early middle ages” and claimed that “to understand Isidore's mental world is nearly to reach the limits of the knowledge of his time.” Isidore's encyclopedia was a more generalized collection of knowledge than <sup>those of</sup> his contemporaries, and it is here that Brehaut puts him in line with “encyclopedists of the Roman world, Varro, Verrius, Flaccus, Pliny, and Suetonius.”<sup>4</sup>

Isidore was praised for his abilities and intellect during his lifetime as well. As Bishop, he “was recognized by Visigoth kings and churchman alike as the greatest intellectual and spiritual authority of his day.”<sup>5</sup> As the relationship between the Visigoth kings and the church increased, it was Isidore who shaped the new monarchy into a Catholic model from its earlier Germanic roots. Isidore's theological and historical writings along

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<sup>2</sup> Stephan A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 7<sup>^</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Brehaut. “An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville”. *Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, Vol. 68, no. 1 (Whole no. 120, 1912), p. 8<sup>^</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Brehaut. “An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville”., 8-9<sup>^</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jace T. Crouch. “Isidore of Seville and the Evolution of Kingship in Visigothic Spain.” *Mediterranean Studies*. Vol. 4 (1994) pp. 10.

with his position as overseer of the Fourth Council of Toledo shortly before his death served as the guiding hand behind the throne. Jace Crouch shows that while theology, philosophy, and intellectual pursuits were important to Isidore they were hardly his only focus. Through this lens Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* becomes more than an attempt to record the history of the Gothic monarchy in Spain.

Isidore's writing alone was not responsible for the change the shape of the Gothic kingship. Through his relationship with King Sisebut Isidore was able to impress his beliefs in the divine, but not arbitrary, rule of kings as well as the importance of a just rule balanced by piety onto the king, and from the sources that examine their relationship it appears that Sisebut took them seriously. It wasn't just the Gothic kings that needed convincing; Isidore had to maintain a balance with church support for a lineage of monarchs that stemmed from warring, Germanic, non-Christian individuals. At once Isidore had to convince bishops and other churchmen that these Visigoth kings fit into a divine plan and "enlighten the kings on the proper role of kingship" so that they would follow that plan. As Crouch reveals, not only was Isidore successful, but he used his writings to record the triumphs of Sisebut and Suinthila. In *Historia Gothorum* the two "appeared as near-ideal Christian kings: they were victorious in was against those who would disturb the peace of the kingdom; they promoted justice; they were merciful; they were good Christian men; and the real prospered under their rule."<sup>6</sup>

Isidore wrote other goal-oriented histories in addition to *Historia Gothorum*. The *Chronicon* is an expansive "single universal chronology" history of the world written as a

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<sup>6</sup> Crouch. "Isidore of Seville and the Evolution of Kingship in Visigothic Spain." *Mediterranean Studies*. Vol. 4 (1994) pp. 17, 20

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single narrative. Its structure breaks from the traditional organizational patterns of Isidore's time and ~~his~~ that of his predecessors. In contrast to his predecessors Isidore forsook the parallel narratives of different peoples and placed them all along on single continuative narrative. Isidore draws from both biblical and secular sources and places them together along his narrative without apparent favor for one over the other. Additionally Isidore's use of the bible as "simply one more source of data" without his usual expressed "convictions that the biblical record is unique" warrants deeper inspection into the "historiographical intentions" of the *Chronicon*.<sup>7</sup> Paul Bassett deconstructs each of Isidore's six "ages" of history to reveal that Isidore's history had a deep impact on the divine power of the Gothic throne. The universalization effect of Isidore's literary model reveals that "the literature of any given people may say something to the history of all peoples." For Isidore this universal was the Church, for "it is the Church into which the Romans, with all of their past, have come, and it is the Church into which the Goths have come, and thereby have been made heirs to the riches from the past." The purpose of Isidore's "universal" history was to show how all histories, secular and biblical, led to the present Universal Church. As Bassett described it, the "Universal history is now bound up with the history of the Universal Church, and it is this Church, gathering together all of the ancient heritage, which is the only suitable vehicle in which to ride out of time onto eternity."<sup>8</sup>

Modern historians are critical of Isidore's approach to history. In 1969, E.A. Thompson wrote "He could hardly have told us less, except by not writing at all."

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Merritt Bassett. "The Use of History in the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville." *History and Theory*, Vol. 15, no. 3 (Oct., 1976), pp 279-280.

<sup>8</sup> Bassett. "The Use of History in the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville.", pp 289, 292.

Questionable methodology aside, Isidore's accounts have a special relevance <sup>ing</sup> as/are the only sources that discuss the history of the Visigoths reign in Iberia.<sup>9</sup> Brehaut had the same complaints fifty years earlier claiming that Isidore's "view of the past had no perspective; or, rather, it had an inverted perspective."<sup>10</sup> For historians, Isidore's chronicles without commentary leave much to be desired as source material but the lack of other material forces them to begrudgingly cite his histories as the only "authoritative" accounts of Spanish history between the late sixth and early seventh centuries, but always with the qualification that we know of no other.

Humanist <sup>s</sup> took issue with Isidore's authority not in history but grammar. H.J. Stevens, Jr. said that while Lorenzo Valla's *De Linguae latinae elegantia* is "indebted to Isidore for suggesting topics discussed especially in the fourth book of *Elegantiae*" he remained an anonymous source.<sup>11</sup> To confuse the issue Valla criticizes Isidore specifically within his text, which may lead readers to "conclude that Valla's treatise was entirely free of Isidore's influence." Stevens' analysis reveals that this is untrue in light of Valla's particular topic choices and the arrangement and grouping of chapters within *Elegantiae*. Valla's "refusal to

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<sup>9</sup> E.A. Thompson. *The Goths in Spain*. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1969), 7, in Paul Merritt Bassett. "The Use of History in the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville." *History and Theory*, Vol. 15, no. 3 (Oct., 1976), pp.278.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest Brehaut. "An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville". *Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, Vol. 68, no. 1 (Whole no. 120, 1912), p. 80 in Bassett. "The Use of History in the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville." pp.278.

<sup>11</sup> H.J. Stevens, Jr. "Lorenzo Valla and Isidore of Seville." *Traditio*, Vol. 31 (1975), p.345.

identify his source merely emphasizes a humanist's contempt for Isidore's authority in the field of Latin lexicography."<sup>12</sup>

In addition to theology, politics, histories, and grammar Isidore delved into geography and his discussion on the shape of the earth and the antipodeans reveal the breadth of his interests. Geographically, the antipodes were lands believed to be beneath the earth opposite the accepted areas, in the case of the Middle Ages Europe, Asia, and Africa. Isidore also uses antipodeans to describe the people that would be living in these areas. Isidore himself wrote that they were so-called "because they are thought to be opposite us in that, placed beneath the earth, as it were, their footprints oppose our own." His stance on the authenticity of their existence is undeniably clear: "it is by no means to be believed. Neither the solidarity nor the center of the earth permits it, nor is it confirmed by any historical evidence, but it is the poets, in a kind of quasi-reasoning, who make such conjectures."<sup>13</sup> McCready points out while there are some confusions and out of context remarks surrounding the solidarity and center of the earth, Isidore made two strong cases that appear again in the Venerable Bede's discussions, namely the lack of historical proof and the fact that men should not hold beliefs based on conjecture.

To confound matters even further Isidore wrote of an inhabited southern hemisphere which was an idea that was "clearly rejected by both Augustine and Bede." McCready asserts that this "tension in Isidore's thought is a product of the ambivalence (if not

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<sup>12</sup> Stevens, "Lorenzo Valla and Isidore of Seville." p 345

<sup>13</sup> Isidore's *Etymologiae* 9.2.133, ed W.M. Lindsey, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarium sive Originum libri XX*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911) cited in William D. McCready. "Isidore, the Antipodeans, and the Shape of the Earth." *Isis*, Vol. 87, no. 1 (Mar., 1996), 110.

confusion) that characterized his approach to the sphericity of the earth.” This same ambivalence pervades most of Isidore’s works and is part of the issue surrounding the divided scholarly discussion on the importance, quality, and usefulness of his work. Regarding the shape of the earth McCready points out that the Greeks and Romans, including Pliny the elder <sup>by</sup> whom Isidore was influenced ~~by~~, had established the earth as a sphere. The early Christian views, shaped as they were by ancient Hebrew texts, still “conceived the earth as a flat disk covered by the dome of the heavens.”<sup>14</sup> In this sense Isidore was a man of two worlds influenced by two disparate traditions concerning the shape of the earth. He again worked to reconcile these two seemingly incompatible views into on Universal theory, just as he had done with his histories, and that led to more than a little confusion. In the end Isidore’s “grasp on the spherical nature of the earth was tenuous at best.” His analysis of the earth’s discs and its distance from the sun and moon are irreconcilable with his “unequivocal denial of the existence of the *Antipodae*.” If, however, Isidore follows the Hebrew/Christian model and views the earth as “a disk, with both temperate zones on the top side, and the Antipodeans, as Lactantius evidently thought, would have to be on the underside, a manifestly ridiculous notion. It is a view of the world that Isidore, one suspects, has not entirely escaped.”<sup>15</sup> If this is indeed the case, it is evidence of Isidore’s church sources overpowering the ancient sources in a failed attempt to form a universal theory of the shape of the earth.

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<sup>14</sup> William D. McCready. “Isidore, the Antipodeans, and the Shape of the Earth.” *Isis*, Vol. 87, no. 1 (Mar., 1996), 113.

<sup>15</sup> McCready. “Isidore, the Antipodeans, and the Shape of the Earth.”, 127.



It is unknown whether Bede pulled from Isidore, was directly influenced by Augustine, or both. In any case McCready points out that “of the three, Isidore alone claims that the *Antipodae* are an invention of the poets.”<sup>16</sup> This is no mere cast off as simple literary symbolism and fancy, Isidore was decidedly hostile to pagan poets, citing Suetonius’s authority linking it to the original pagan religions and by association the evils of demon worship. Brehaut’s research claims that Isidore ranks the pagan poets below philosophers and “The Christian is forbidden to read their lies.”<sup>17</sup> In other cases, specifically non-pagan instances, Isidore wrote that “It is the business of the poet to take veritable occurrences and graceful~~ly~~ change and transform them<sup>m</sup> to other appearances by a figurative and indirect mode of speech.”<sup>18</sup> Here we see another example of Isidore’s relationship with the Church and the ancient sources creating seemingly antithetical stances on the same form of literature. He was less hostile to pagan philosophy since by the time Isidore was compiling *Etymologies* it had been “de-secularized” and “completely lost its essential content. It can, therefore, no longer be a source of offence to any Christian.”<sup>19</sup>

Almost all of Isidore’s writings found their way into his magnum opus<sup>s</sup> the *Etymologies*. A substantial work by any standard<sup>s</sup> the *Etymologies* spans twenty books with notes on subjects as diverse as arithmetic (Book 3.1) and men and monsters (Book 11).

Barney et al. best sum up the way we should look at the *Etymologies* and Isidore himself:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>17</sup> Brehaut. “An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville.”, 43<sup>u</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Isidore. *Etymologies* 8, 7, 10. Cited in Brehaut. “An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville.”, 43<sup>u</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Brehaut. “An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages Isidore of Seville.”, 43<sup>u</sup>

“To assess Isidore’s achievement we cannot look to original researches or innovative interpretations, but rather to the ambition of the whole design, to his powers of selection and organization, and to his grand retentiveness. His aims were not novelty but authority, not originality but accessibility, not augmenting but preserving and transmitting knowledge.”<sup>20</sup> As with most collections *Etymologies* is not the product of one individual laboriously collecting the knowledge of the known world into a set of manuscripts. There is suggestive evidence that Isidore relied on help from copyists even to the detriment of the end product. Whether or not mistakes were the result of Isidore’s own failed memory, a copying error, from sources copied out of context, or simply bad copies remains unanswerable, but with a work of this magnitude, spanning Isidore’s lifetime and his political and church responsibilities, all are likely.

As with his other works *Etymologies* was aimed at a diverse set of readers namely the Church and the Court, or at least the governing class. The dedication to King Sisebut was not just pen service to the king, but an urging to the king and others in power to “partake of and patronize a liberal education.”<sup>21</sup> His aims to educate the clergy were just as intense, and it was through his use of biblical and secular sources that “he wished his priests and monks to possess a general knowledge of what books [were] available, and to possess the preliminary skills that make intelligent reading, especially of Scripture, possible.”<sup>22</sup> Isidore used the Council of Toledo to meet such educational end. Through the Fourth Council, and only three

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<sup>20</sup> Stephan A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Barney et al. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville.*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

years before his death, he decreed that bishops establish educational centers at each cathedral city of Spain. Even the style of *Etymologies* reveal Isidore's audience. Isidore highlights the Seven Liberal Arts in "easy Latin" and "relentlessly utilitarian prose." It is a collection of not only knowledge, but ~~for~~ *sources* of knowledge throughout Isidore's included notes. It was written as his histories were, that is in continuous prose of a "pleasing variation" which ensure that readers could "absorb the work consecutively, even as its careful organization ensures access topic by topic to a reader looking for a particular fact."<sup>23</sup>

Through this narrative style Isidore can be seen "carefully denying" superstitions including the use of the stars to predict the future. He wrote that Christians should ignore horoscopes as they fell "contrary to our faith." In a later book he dismissed the practice of predicting the future by watching crows writing "It is a great sin to believe that God would entrust his counsels to crows." He looks at pagan religious deities as stories of human beings that had "been wrongly elevated as supernatural creatures by benighted heathen." Far from dismissing situation where the Christian and the pagan clash outright, Isidore presents both the Christian and pagan views. For example, he gives both terms for the days of the week with an interjection that "Now, in the Christian mouth, the names for the days of the week sound better when they agree with the Church's observance." He does not dismiss or attempt to replace the standard common use names of the heathen gods. This is evidence of "Isidore's theological precision and his episcopal tolerance."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 7.

Perhaps it is this balance that led to Isidore and the *Etymologies* to become so influential in shaping medieval European culture. Just how popular was *Etymologies*? Stanley, et al reveal that “by the year 800, copies of the *Etymologies* might be found ‘in all the cultural centers of Europe.’” No doubt this assortment would have included the cathedral schools mandated by the Fourth Council of Toledo. Presently nearly one thousand copies of *Etymologies* survive in manuscript form alone. While it was one of the earliest printed works in 1472, the fifteenth century saw more than sixty manuscripts produced in its entirety and at least another seventy made up of excerpts.<sup>25</sup>

The earliest influences outside of Spain come from Gaul and Ireland. The earliest fragments of the *Etymologies* that survive were written by an Irish scribe “perhaps as early as the mid to late seventh century,” and are located in modern day Switzerland at the monastery of St. Gall which has historical connections with Ireland going back to at least Isidore’s lifetime. Evidence of Irish knowledge of the *Etymologies* may possibly be seen in the *Twelve Abuses of the Age* written in 650. Stronger evidence reveals that the English scholar Aldhelm was aware of Isidore’s works in the late seventh century and as seen in the discussion on the shape of the earth “the works of Isidore of Seville were a major influence on the development of Anglo-Saxon intellectual life in the age of Bede.”<sup>26</sup> This level of use and popularity outside of Hispaniola reveals that Isidore’s work is far more important than helping construct a national identity.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 24-25

*Etymologies* had a more general lasting influence than its subject matter. In addition to text like *Liber Glossarum* which draws much from Isidore's text, it is also Isidorean in scope. Others take on a similar methodology and arrangement that reveal a "direct influence of the *Etymologies* on the traditions of lexicons and encyclopedias that were standard referenced works of the later Middle Ages"<sup>27</sup> This specific encyclopedic tradition took hold as a march of authors borrowed Isidore's style, words, or both. Papias' *Elementarium Doctrinae Rudimentum* written around 1053 exists today in close to ninety manuscripts and some additional, but substantially fewer, printings from the Renaissance and is "replete with etymologies and differentiae from Isidore" all arranged alphabetically. Osbern of Gloucester produced *Panormia* a century later in the same style as Papias while the bishop of Ferrara compiled *Liber Derivationum* another hundred and fifty years after that (around 1200). During the thirteenth century Guillelmus Brito, a Franciscan master at Paris, finished his work on the *Summa* which treated over 2,500 words with "extensive use of the *Etymologies*, where Isidore is cited hundreds of times." Over 130 manuscript versions of the *Summa* have survived and we know that it was printed in the fifteenth century. In 1286 Giovanni Balbi of Genoa's *Catholicon* compiled these sources (and others) into an "encyclopedic dictionary of the Middle Ages." Printed in 1460, it was one of the first manuscripts to transcend the new technology, but the original source, the *Etymologies*, was in print soon after. Even though *Etymologies* had been borrowed and appropriated for eight centuries, it was still important enough to move to the new medium in addition to its numerous offspring, this again is testament to its enduring legacy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

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The thirteenth century saw an explosion of encyclopedias arranged topically as Isidore had done in the seventh. Barney et. al. lists the most important: Honorius Augustodunensis' *The Image of the World*, Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *The Property of Things*, Thomas of Cantimpre's *Nature of Things*, and Vincent of Beauvais's massive three million word *Speculum Maius*. Close to eighty manuscripts of the *Speculum* have survived and we know that it was the first book printed at Strasbourg. Compilers in the following century continued to draw from their predecessors. Pierre Bersuire's *Reductorium Morale* is a "thoroughly allegorized encyclopedic work" based on Bartholomaeus's *The Property of Things*. In 1265 Brunetto Latini's *Li Livres dou tresor* appeared as the very first encyclopedia not written in Latin. This first vernacular encyclopedia was "duly dependent on Isidore."<sup>29</sup> ~~Hear~~<sup>re</sup> we see Isidore's work transcending time, media, and languages. *Etymologies* even transcends genres as it appeared in early poetry and served as a strong "influence on the great Italian and English Poets of the fourteenth century" including Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, John Gower, and Chaucer.<sup>30</sup>

During ~~this same time~~<sup>while</sup> the new compiling of Isidore's work was underway another literary tradition was growing: the bestiary. The bestiary is just one example of a specialized encyclopedia concerned with animal life. Others include herbals as a botanical reference (usually for healing) and lapidaries for precious and semi-precious stones. In addition to health <sup>-related uses</sup> lapidaries served as a guidebook to gems that warded off evil or aided in the practice of divination. While they all existed in antiquity, <sup>of</sup> Pliny lists nearly forty lapidaries in his

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 25-26

natural histories, most written accounts survive from early medieval collections where the lapidary, bestiary, or herbal was part of a larger collection. As the specialist niche grew portions of larger works such as the *Etymologies* would be picked through, redacted, and copied (later printed) as a single handbook. It is in this tradition that I see Isidore bridging the ancient and the modern worlds. Many medieval cities have their own bestiary tradition rooted in their own unique fauna, but as we have seen Isidore's works rapidly spread to Gaul and Ireland which give suggestion that the *Etymologies* in some form could have easily spread over most of Europe in the five or six centuries before bestiaries became an exclusive topic for manuscripts.

The strongest evidence I have is Alan Deyemond's work on marine bestiaries in Spain. While he says there are no bestiaries of the medieval tradition in Castile they do exist in Portugal and Catalonia. These would have been early recipients of the church schools decreed by Isidore shortly before his death. There is, however a representative of "the bestiaries ancestor, the *Physiologus* ... two removes (mediated through Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, Book XII), in Castilian, Aragonese, and Catalan translations of Bruno Latini's *Livres dou Tresor*."<sup>31</sup> This direct lineage to Isidore via Latini's vernacular encyclopedia is evidence that not only is Isidore's work, specifically his *Etymologies*, the foundation for a bridge between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries, but that vernacular texts may have had a farther reaching impact on the development of specialized encyclopedias such as the bestiary. In addition to the *Etymologies* and the growing use of vernacular texts it is also evident that Isidore and Spain have had a greater impact on the collection and dissemination

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<sup>31</sup> Alan Deyemond. "The Marine Bestiary in Medieval Spain." *E'tudes de langue et de litte'rature me'die'vales* (Brepolis Publishers, 2005), 267.

of knowledge during the Middle Ages than the amount of secondary sources suggest. Isidore alone opens up numerous avenues to study medieval Iberia in context beyond the bookends of the Visigoth and the Moor invasions, particularly in areas that concern the historians of science.



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Suscavage, Charlene. "Saint Isidore of Seville." *Great Lives of History. The Middle Ages, 477-1453*. ed. Shelley Wolbrink, (Pasadena, California; Salem Press, 2005), pp. 555-558.

An interesting essay that surveys the *Etymologies* and its impact on the naturalist tradition of the later middle ages. I especially like the suggestion on the final two pages, that Isidore's work may have had an influence on both subsequent Latin works and the vernacular tradition, even in places which traditionally have been thought to have been untouched by the Isidorean tradition.

You've assembled a good bibliography of works about Isidore, and of course the recent translation of the *Etymologies* by Barney, Lewis, Beach and Berghof has really made the work accessible. You might consult RI-Opac [[http://opac.regesta-imperii.de/lang\\_de/](http://opac.regesta-imperii.de/lang_de/)] for further bibliographical sources. One of the ironies is that many of these modern sources are themselves entries in recent historical encyclopedias. On the early Irish connection, I'd consult Michael Herren, "On the earliest Irish acquaintance with Isidore of Seville," in *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches*, ed. Edward James, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 243-250; Marina Bridget Smyth, "Isidore of Seville and early Irish cosmology," *Cambridge medieval Celtic studies* 14(1987) 69-102.

I've also noted a few places where another round of proofreading or revision would have made a big difference in the final product.

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