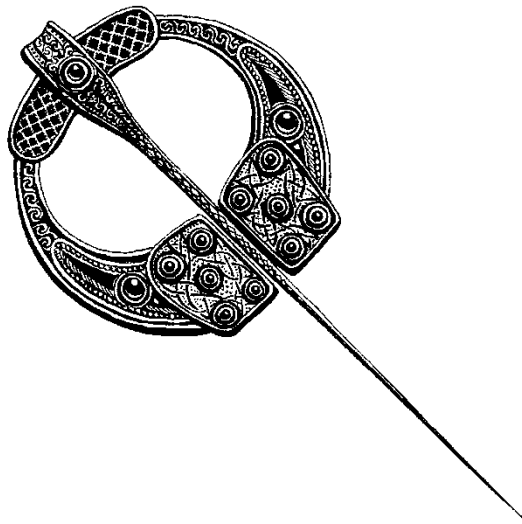


The Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is a yearly spring conference organised by postgraduate students of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic at the University of Cambridge. Information on the next Colloquium, including details of registration and submission of abstracts, may be found on the Colloquium's official website: <http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/ccasnc/>.

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## CONTENTS

<i>Abbreviations</i>	vi
<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Colloquium Report</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
Modes of Commemoration. Latinity, the Vernacular and the Appropriation of Identity <i>Karl G. Johansson</i>	1
<i>Penn a borthaf am porthes</i> : The Subversion of Mourning in Medieval Welsh <i>englyn</i> Poetry <i>Eleanor Smith</i>	21
The <i>Miles Christi</i> in the Lives of St. Guthlac <i>Glenn Cahilly-Bretzin</i>	45
<i>In similitudinem fertae</i> : Mythologization of Burial Mounds in Early Medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin Literature <i>Brigid K. Ehrmantraut</i>	72
A Tale of Two Houses: Creation of Continuity in the Ninth- Century Hagiography of L�hon and Redon Abbeys <i>James Miller</i>	91
Poetic Men-talities: <i>R�mur</i> Poets vs. the Maiden King <i>Lee Colwill</i>	116





## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>Col.</i>	<i>Tírechán, Collectanea, in The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh</i>
<i>eDIL</i>	<i>eDIL: Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language</i>
<i>EWSP</i>	<i>Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study and Edition of the Englynion</i>
<i>GSR</i>	<i>Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium</i>
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
<i>OEPG</i>	<i>Old English Prose Life of Guthlac</i>
<i>TBC-I</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I</i>
<i>TBC-LL</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúailnge from the Book of Leinster</i>
<i>VMag</i>	<i>Vita Maglorii, Miracula in Sargia and Translatio a Sargia</i>

## PREFACE

The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is proud to be associated with *Quaestio Insularis*, the journal of the annual Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (CCASNC). The Colloquium and *Quaestio* were established in 1999 and 2000 by the department's lively postgraduate community, and successive generations of students have maintained the superb quality of both the event and its proceedings volume. The 2019 conference, on the theme of Commemoration and Continuity, was another very successful event which saw a stimulating array of papers given by postgraduate students from a wide range of institutions. Headed up by Professor Karl G. Johansson's rich and fascinating keynote lecture on commemoration and identity, the papers published in this volume showcase the cross-disciplinary ethos which distinguishes CCASNC, combining research into the peoples and cultures of early medieval Northern Europe from literary, historical, linguistic and material perspectives. *Quaestio Insularis* 20 and all back numbers of the journal can be ordered directly from the Department's website ([www.asnc.cam.ac.uk](http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk)).

Prof. Richard Dance

Head of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic (2016–20)

University of Cambridge

## COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The 2019 Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic took place in Room GR06/07 of the Faculty of English on Saturday 9 February. This year's Colloquium saw a wide range of interesting papers on the theme of 'Commemoration and Continuity', followed by a dinner held in the dining hall of Selwyn College. Nine postgraduate speakers from across the United Kingdom and further afield were invited to discuss their research. We were especially delighted to welcome this year's keynote speaker, Prof. Karl G. Johansson, from the Institute of Linguistic and Nordic Studies of the University of Oslo. The papers given at the 2019 Colloquium exhibited an impressively wide range of topics, and each was followed by a fruitful and engaging discussion. Due to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, a celebratory 'cake' was presented to the attendees and speakers. As the day drew to a close, we gave thanks to our speakers and the organising committee. Special thanks is owed to this year's catering officer Patrick McAlary and his assistants, who gave their time and effort to ensure that the 2019 Colloquium ran as smoothly as possible.

### Session I (*Chair: Brittany Hanlon*)

Glenn Cahilly-Bretzin, 'Differing Focuses of Commemoration in Felix's *Vita S. Guthlaci* and the Old English Prose *Life of Guthlac*'

James Miller, 'A Tale of Two Houses: Creation of Continuity in the Ninth-Century Hagiography of Léhon and Redon Abbeys'

Meg Hyland, 'Cross Slabs, Cists and *Cill*-Names: The Early Medieval Church in East Neuk of Fife'

### Session II (*Chair: Calum Platts*)

Brigid K. Ehrmantraut, '*In similitudinem fertae*: Mythologization of Burial Mounds in Early Medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin Literature'

Eleonora Pancetti, ‘Notes on the Etymology of *Sorg* and *Harmr* in the Germanic Languages’

Thomas Matthews Boehmer, ‘Dorchester-on-Thames: Continuities within the Historical Landscape’

Plenary Speaker (*Chair: Sven Rossel*)

Prof. Karl G. Johansson, ‘Modes of Commemoration: Latin, the Vernacular and the Appropriation of Identity’

Session III (*Chair: Alisa Valpola-Walker*)

Eleanor Smith, ‘*Penn a borthaf am porthes*: The Subversion of Mourning in Medieval Welsh *englyn* Poetry’

Lee Colwill, ‘Poetic Men-talities: *Rímur* Poets vs. the Maiden-King’

Bob van Strijen, ‘Continuity and Ideology in the Works of Jan de Vries (1890-1964)’

The members of the colloquium committee for 2018–19 were Claudia Hossbach, Alisa Valpola-Walker, Brittany Hanlon, Patrick McAlary, Calum Platts, Sven Rossel and Anouk Nuijten.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Quaestio Insularis* 20 was edited by Claudia Hossbach, Alisa Valpola-Walker, Brittany Hanlon, Patrick McAlary, Calum Platts, Sven Rossel and Anouk Nuijten. The editors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Tom Grant, Prof. Richard Dance and our anonymous peer reviewers. Special thanks are due to the editors of *Quaestio* 21, Brittany Hanlon and Patrick McAlary, who aided in the distribution of this volume. Editorial design is by Alistair Vining and the *Quaestio Insularis* logo was drawn by Katharine Scarfe Beckett. The production of this volume and the successful running of the conference have been made possible through the generosity of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and the support of the Faculty of English.

## Modes of Commemoration. Latinity, the Vernacular and the Appropriation of Identity

Karl G. Johansson

The text in a medieval manuscript obviously is a construction of individual and collective, as well as cultural memory from conception, and it can represent re-constructions or re-writings of memory, oral or written, in a longer tradition.<sup>1</sup> The layers of possible interpretation can easily become overwhelming. Rather than constructing a particular memory, scholars working in the field have been convinced that their task ‘consisted in establishing a more positive, all encompassing, and explicative memory’.<sup>2</sup> Implicitly, never the less, the study of medieval texts inevitably involves the construction of memory. The medieval texts from the Nordic realm extant today are only a small part of the mass of texts produced in the vernacular and in Latin. Time has taken its toll and today much of the extant material is in a fragmentary shape; perhaps we could, with Pierre Nora, talk of the medieval texts and manuscripts as *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory.<sup>3</sup> A first task for medieval studies has therefore been to *recover* texts from the fragmentary

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of these concepts see e.g. Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 15–110 and Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire’ *Representations*, 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), pp. 7–24 (p. 9).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

material, what from the perspective of memory studies equals to establish cultural monuments, reconstructions of the past.<sup>4</sup>

In the quest for reconstruction there has often been a focus on the canonical works, as for example the *Íslendingasögur*, while the more general aspects of cultural history have often been treated with less enthusiasm. This has to some extent contributed to a reconstruction of the medieval literary canon based on nineteenth-century ideas of the singular and individual author. Medieval studies have contributed to the construction of a memory of the Middle Ages, where an idea from Romanticism of a reconstructed *work* and an *author* for the vernacular literature has been central rather than the transmission and mediation of texts in a tradition of great variance.

In a Scandinavian perspective the interest in reconstructing the past as found in medieval material has its starting point in Renaissance antiquarianism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with, for example, the humanists of Bergen.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden and Denmark the crucial period is the second half of the seventeenth century when medieval texts were collected and studied as records of a glorious past by Swedish and Danish scholars in competition with each other; in itself a period of reconstructing a collective memory. Already in the last quarter of the seventeenth century the first Scandinavian texts were edited, and learned men in the two competing

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<sup>4</sup> See Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, p. 37. For recent introductions to the long tradition of philology in Europe see e.g. James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Rens Bod, *A New History of the Humanities: The Search for Principles and Patterns from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). A thorough and very useful discussion of the early classical scholarship is offered by Leighton Reynolds and Nigel Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek & Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> For a treatment of the Norwegian humanist tradition see Jon Gunnar Jørgensen, *The Lost Vellum Kringla*, *Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana*, 45 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2007), pp. 97–125.

powers strived to out-do each other in interpretations of prose and poetry found in the old manuscripts.

It is only in the nineteenth century that modern philology and manuscript studies are established. With the national romantic ideas a new project was presented for the study of vernacular literatures throughout Europe. In classical as well as vernacular philology there emerged new methodological approaches parallel to the ones that were established in the sciences. Methods for textual criticism and the establishing of critical editions were presented which were considered to be objective and providing absolute results. In a book entitled *The Powers of Philology. Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht defines philology as ‘referring to a configuration of scholarly skills that are geared toward historical text curatorship’.<sup>6</sup> He distinguishes four major implications of this narrow definition:

1. philological practice has an affinity with those historical periods that see themselves as following a greater cultural moment, a moment whose culture they deem to be more important than the cultural present
2. because of its emergence from a desire for the textual past, philology’s two-part core task is the identification and restoration of texts from each cultural past in question
3. the identification and restoration of texts from the past – that is, philology as understood in this book – establishes a distance vis-à-vis the intellectual space of hermeneutics and of interpretation as the textual practice that hermeneutics informs

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<sup>6</sup> Hans Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 2.



4. it follows from everything that I have said so far about philology that such craft and competence play a particularly important and often predominant role within those academic disciplines that deal with the most chronologically and culturally remote segments of the past [...].<sup>7</sup>

In relation to the second implication Gumbrecht explicitly states that ‘[i]dentifying fragments, editing texts, and writing historical commentary are the three basic practices of philology’ and also the historicising of texts and taking part in the teaching of this cultural context.<sup>8</sup> In a comment to his third implication, Gumbrecht rather arrogantly states that ‘[r]ather than rely on the inspiration and momentary intuitions of great interpreters, as, for example, New Criticism did, philology has cultivated its self-image as a patient craft whose key values are sobriety, objectivity, and rationality’.<sup>9</sup> Gumbrecht’s discussion of the power of philology and the philological task of historicising leads him to conclude that ‘[h]istoricizing means to transform objects from the past into sacred objects, that is, into objects that establish simultaneously a distance and a desire to touch’.<sup>10</sup> This should be compared with Jan Assmann’s statement that:

The foundational mode always functions – even in illiterate societies – through fixed objectifications both linguistic and nonlinguistic, such as rituals, dances, myths, patterns, dress, jewellery, tattoos, paintings, landscapes, and so on, all of which are kinds of sign systems and, because

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<sup>7</sup> Gumbrecht, pp. 2–3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

of their mnemotechnical function – supporting memory and identity – capable of being subsumed under the general heading of *memoria*.<sup>11</sup>

We could easily add the medieval texts and manuscripts to this list, observing both of them as monuments of the past.

Jan Assmann is one of the most well-known representatives of the field of Memory Studies. I will not go into his work more specifically here, but his definition of communicative versus cultural memory could be of interest for our thinking. Assmann defines the concept of cultural memory through a double delimitation that distinguishes it:

1. from what we call “communicative” or “everyday memory,” which in the narrower sense of our usage lacks “cultural” characteristics.
2. from science, which does not have the characteristics of memory as it relates to a collective self-image. For the sake of brevity, we will leave aside this second delimitation which Halbwachs developed as the distinction between memory and history and limit ourselves to the first: the distinction between communicative and cultural memory.<sup>12</sup>

Before arriving at the main topic of this article I would like to make a detour into more modern monuments and our awareness of them in our everyday life. Monuments we never think of, but which are situated in our midst. Let us start with a monument related to a central event in Norwegian history. The statue of Karl XIV Johan (king of Norway and Sweden 1818–1844; his real name was Jean Bernadotte) placed in front of the royal castle could very well be seen as a monument constructing cultural memory of this important

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<sup>11</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Assmann, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, trans. by John Czaplicka, *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), 125–133 (p. 126).

date in Norwegian memory, 17 May 1814, when the Constitution (No. Grundloven) was established in Eidsvoll. Every year this day is celebrated with large events all over Norway, but with an absolute centre at the royal castle in Oslo, which can be seen behind the statue on many pictures from 17 May celebrations. So, does the statue play a part in reconstructing a cultural memory? When you ask Norwegians there seems to be a rather shallow interest in the statue and the person on the horse, while the castle in the background is always mentioned as related to the 17 May. So it is rather the castle once built for the Swedish king but now the residence of the Norwegian royal family that has become a monument related to cultural memory, while the statue of the Swedish king seems to have been relegated to the dull department of history. It turns out that there are few who have any relation to the statue at all, not even in the realm of more collective memories, such as for example the first romantic kiss of the grandparents below the statue which the whole family talks about and “remembers”.



*Photo 1: Monuments: Karl Johan (of Sweden).*

Another monument that we perhaps do not think about at all is of a different character. We walk on it and it concerns the same Swedish king and the same memory of 17 May 1814. I am referring to the street Karl Johan. It turns out that Norwegians I talk to do not consider it as important for the memory celebrated on 17 May (even though they walk on it in every 17 May parade!). On the other hand, this monument has not been placed among the historical objects together with the statue. Rather, the memories associated are of a collective nature, for example the 17th of May when it snowed all day or the ice-cream for the children when for once the weather was nice.



*Photo 2: Karl Johan, Oslo.*

But the street Karl Johan is definitely related to another important (and more challenging) date in Norwegian history, 9 April 1940 when German



*Photo 3: April 1940. German troops and a young man with a bike on Karl Johan, Oslo.*

forces marched up the street. And here I receive some more response from my Norwegian source persons. Yes, they do think of the image of German troops marching up Karl Johan, and the street (with the eternal royal castle in the background) seems to function as at least part of a monument reminding everyone of this sad day in Norwegian history.

There is something peculiar with this image, however. It has become truly iconic in Norwegian memories of the war and there is one particular thing in the image that has caught special interest. This is a young man with a bike standing on the pavement to the left watching the marching Germans. In Norwegian conscience this man has always been considered to be the later hero from the resistance movement, Gunnar Sønsteby.



*Photo 4: Statue of Gunnar Sønsteby?*

The man with the bike has become an important symbol reminding of the war and the resistance. Some years ago the icon was made real in the form of another statue, first placed on Solli plass close to a statue of Winston Churchill, but later moved to a place close to where the war photograph was taken in Karl Johan. And this statue far out-does the older one of Karl XIV

Johan as a monument of cultural memory; if you ask any Norwegian they can tell you the story of Gunnar Sønsteby from seeing the statue. Jan Assmann states:

Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these “figures of memory”.<sup>13</sup>

But there can be no happiness without someone trying to ruin it. A few years before his death, Gunnar Sønsteby was challenged for the role of standing with his bike on Karl Johan. Another hero from the resistance years, Erik Gjems-Onstad, claimed to be the man and bringing out documentation to



*Photo 5: 9 April 2010. Gunnar Sønsteby and Erik Gjems-Onstad on Karl Johan in Oslo.*

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<sup>13</sup> Assmann, ‘Cultural Memory’, p. 129.

strengthen his case. The challenge brought a number of articles and debates in the papers about who the man with the bike actually was, the monument of cultural memory was challenged! The two men met to discuss the issue, but no consensus seems to have been reached; rather it seems as if the cultural memory today is restored, that is, as long as we accept it to be Gunnar Sønsteby on the picture it does not really matter if it is historically correct.

This leads me on to the questions of appropriation, assimilation and construction of cultural memory. It is obvious from my examples, I think, that it can sometimes be difficult to be conclusive as to what is a cultural memory and what has little or no significance (especially when you are a Swedish academic in Norway). The memories concerning 17 May 1814 seem to be more related to the modern royal castle than to the historically important Karl XIV Johan. You could even say that the modern royal house has appropriated the day of commemoration as well as been assimilated by the society reconstructing the memories. In the case of the man on the bike the symbol has been so strongly made into a part of cultural memory that it survives a more historical, or at least critical, approach. Gunnar Sønsteby has been assimilated and used to reconstruct the cultural memory of the occupation years and he will stay in the national cultural memory despite claims of other memories. All these perspectives on monuments of memory could relate to the points suggested by Jan Assman:

1. The concretion of identity
2. Capacity to reconstruct
3. Formation
4. Organization

5. Obligation

6. Reflexivity<sup>14</sup>

And Assmann's statement about the relevance of these memories for our understanding of a society are highly relevant for everyone working with a historical perspective:

Through its cultural heritage a society becomes visible to itself and to others. Which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society.<sup>15</sup>

From this I would like to go back in time to when Norway was emerging as a large and powerful kingdom in medieval Europe. I argue that Latin and vernacular texts from this period should at all points be regarded as constructions of memory, some turning into cultural memory while others at various points rather belong to the historical archive. In all stages my focus will be on the appropriation and construction of memory, and how it may be understood differently depending on the point of view of the reader. My first focus will be on the appropriation of memory in the Middle Ages from the early Latin works and in the vernacular chronicles. Here I argue that it is possible to distinguish different agents and agendas in the establishing of these texts in a similar way to the construction and appropriation of the memories represented in monuments commemorating more modern Norwegian history as described briefly above. From this discussion I will move on to argue that the modern appropriation of the medieval monuments in the form

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<sup>14</sup> Assmann, 'Cultural Memory', pp. 130–32.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.



of chronicles has direct connections to modern cultural memories related to the emerging modern Norwegian nation.

The Norwegian twelfth century is primarily a century of Latin literacy, something we all too often forget. The Danish Latinist Lars Boje Mortensen has in various contexts discussed the relation between Latin literacy and the emerging vernacular literature, and how the two have been treated in Scandinavian studies. He states:

Selv om den latinske lærdom, i Vesteuropa, ofte bliver nævnt som essentiel baggrund for folkesproglitteraturene, får den alligevel ikke megen plads som en egentlig aktiv dialogpartner i litteraturhistorien. Den reduceres nemlig til baggrund: når redegørelsen for den er afviklet, kan den trænges i baggrunden når man skal behandle den egentlige, folkesproglige litteratur.<sup>16</sup>

It will therefore be of interest here to start our investigation with some texts that are forming part of this Latin background. The first short passage I have chosen to look at is from a Latin chronicle that is generally called *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* and is attributed to a man under the latinised name Theodoricus monachus. We do not know that much about Theodoricus, but it has been argued that he is identical to the archbishop

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<sup>16</sup> Lars Boje Mortensen, 'Den formative dialog mellem latinsk og folkesproglig litteratur ca 600–1250. Udkast til en dynamisk model', in *Reykholt som makt- og lærdomssenter i den islandske og nordiske kontekst*, ed. by Else Mundal (Reykholt: Snorrastofa, 2006), pp. 229–271 (p. 229). 'Even when the Latin erudition, in Western Europe, often is mentioned as an essential background to the literature of the vernacular language, it is not given much space as an active partner in the dialogue of literary history. It is namely reduced to forming a background: when this background is provided it can be neglected when the real vernacular literature is to be treated.' Unless otherwise stated, this and all following translations are my own.

Dórir of Niðarós (1206–1214). He is definitely part of an influence in Norway (and Iceland) from the monastery St Victor in Paris which has been related to the development of literacy in the archbishop see of Niðarós, and perhaps more so, to the changes in Latin chronicles and the subsequent emergence of chronicles in the vernacular.<sup>17</sup> Even if this identification is not definite it is clear that Theodoricus is primarily related to the Church and the clerical environment of Niðarós. In the prologue to his work Theodoricus makes an interesting statement:

Opere pretium duxi, Vir Illustrissime, pauca hec de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium breuiter annotare et prout sagaciter perquirere potuimus ab eis, penes quos horum memoria precipue uigere creditur, quos nos Islendinga uocamus, qui hec in suis antiquis carminibus percelebrata recolunt.<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to note the last statement of Theodoricus here, when he attributes some of his information to the *memoria* found in *carmina antiqua* preserved by the Icelanders. This prologue is not very often quoted in modern research into the oral sources of the early chroniclers; one could suspect that many scholars do not even know of its existence. But nevertheless it is of great

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<sup>17</sup> For further references see Gunnar Harðarson, *Littérature et spiritualité en Scandinavie médiévale. La traduction norroise du De arrha animae de Hugues de Saint-Victor*. Bibliotheca Victorina, 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> *Theodoricus. De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium. On the Old Norwegian Kings*, ed. and trans. by Egil Kraggerud, Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture Series B: Skrifter, 169 (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2018), pp. 4–5. ‘I have believed it worth the effort, most distinguished of men, to write these few brief notes on the early kings of Norway and as accurately as we have been able to ascertain from those among whom their memory is thought especially to thrive, the folk we call Icelanders, who often mention and recall these events in their age-old poems.’

importance in relation to the appropriation of indigenous tradition. Theodoricus' affiliation to the Catholic Church and as a representative of its invested interests in the Christianisation makes it plausible to think that his intention is to provide a monument of cultural memory. His explicit mention of Icelanders as sources and that they have preserved the memories in poems are interesting then as evidence of a Norse oral tradition, but also as an explicit example of the Latin literacy of the twelfth century. The Church used its Latin tradition to appropriate an indigenous tradition and make it part of Latin book culture.

But Theodoricus is not the only Latin writer who appropriates Norse traditions. A more famous representative of the Church and Latin book culture, Saxo Grammaticus, has a similar reference in the prologue to his *Gesta Danorum*. He states:

Nec Tylensium industria silentio obliteranda. Qui cum ob natium soli sterilitatem luxurię nutrimentis carentes officia continuę sobrietatis exercent omniaque uite momenta ad excolendam alienorum operum notitiam conferre soleant, inopiam ingenio pensant. Cunctarum quippe nationum res gestas cognosse memorięque mandare uoluptatis loco reputant, non minoris glorię iudicantes alienas uirtutes disserere quam proprias exhibere. Quorum thesauros historicarum rerum pignoribus refertos curiosus consulens haut paruam pęsentis operis partem ex eorum relationis imitatione contexui. Nec arbitros habere contempsit, quos tanta uetustatis peritia callere cognoui.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Karsten Friis-Jensen, *Saxo Grammaticus as Latin poet. Studies in the verse passages of the Gesta Danorum*, *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici. Supplementa*, 14 (Roma: Bretschneider, 1987), p. 74, 76. 'Nor should the industrious Icelanders be passed in silence. This people, because of the infertility of their land, has no base for luxury and live a life in sobriety using every moment of their lives to learn about the deeds of others as a means to

We do know a bit more about Saxo. He was a contemporary of the archbishop of Lund, Absalon (1178–1201), and the Danish king, Valdemar (r. 1146–1182). He has been related both to the Catholic church and the king's court. In the prologue he also states that he wrote the chronicle of the Danes, *Gesta Danorum*, on the suggestion of Archbishop Absalon. But in the above quotation he refers to one of his sources, the Icelanders who have gathered narratives of world history which he has studied and copied. Where Theodoricus seems to refer to oral poetry, Saxo is more explicitly referring to what seems to be written sources. As far as we know, however, written Icelandic and Norwegian sources in the vernacular would at this time have been sparse; it would seem therefore that Saxo is not only appropriating vernacular oral traditions, he also assimilates them into the Latin book culture.<sup>20</sup>

The general impression would be that there was a vernacular tradition for commemoration of history, Icelandic, Scandinavian and global, primarily attributed to the Icelanders. What we see in the works of Theodoricus and

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exchange poverty with spirituality. It gives them great pleasure to know and commemorate the history of all peoples, as they consider it no less an honour to describe the virtues of others than to display ones own. The treasures of historical lore they have collected I have studied with curiosity, and this present work is to a considerable extent copied from their narratives. I have not contemptuously, where I spotted such knowledge, rejected these men as witnesses.'

<sup>20</sup> The Icelandic Sæmundr Sigfússon (1056–1133) is mentioned as an author of a Latin chronicle. There are indications that his writing was known in Norway and perhaps also in Lund, which would perhaps explain Saxo's reference to written texts. Another Icelandic learned man who wrote chronicle texts is Ari Þorgilsson (1067–1148) who is attributed as the author of *Íslendingabók*. Both Sæmundr and Ari are active in the first half of the twelfth century, allegedly building their work on both written sources known from the Continent and oral traditions. See e.g. Mortensen, 'Introduction', in *Historia Norwegie*, ed. by Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003), 8–48, (pp. 16–21). for a discussion of the relation between the earliest chronicles in Latin and the vernacular.

Saxo, could then be seen as an appropriation of this vernacular tradition and assimilation of this material in a Continental tradition (or should we say traditions?) of written chronicles. The Church and the political power of the court were the milieu where this appropriation took place, and it could be expected that this had implications for both form and content.

If we now turn to the perhaps most famous of all writers of Icelandic chronicles in the vernacular, the one who is attributed as the compiler of *Heimskringla*, Snorri Sturluson, we find yet another prologue, this time to his *Óláfs saga hins helga*. This text makes its references primarily to indigenous, Icelandic sources in a way that seems to echo the references made by Theodoricus and Saxo Grammaticus. It mentions the learned Ari fróði Þorgilsson, the compiler of *Íslendingabók*, and the information about Iceland, its lawspeakers and the kings of first and foremost Norway found in his work. But the prologue also refers to Icelandic poets as Þjóðólfr ór Hvini and Eyvindr skáldaspillir who have composed poems about the Norwegian kings. The compiler states:

Þau orð er i qveðskap standa ero en somo sem i fyrstu voro ef rett er kveðit þott hver maðr hafi siðan numit at auðrom. oc ma þvi ecki breyta. En sogur þę er sagðar ero. þa er þat hett at eigi sciliz aullum a einn veg. en sumir hafa eigi minni þa er fra liðr hvernig þeim var sagt. oc gengz þeim mioc i minni optliga. oc verða frasagnir omerkiligar.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Saga Óláfs konungs hins helga. Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. by Oscar Albert Johnsen & Jón Helgason (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1941), p. 4: ‘Those words that are found in poetry are original if the form is right even if every man has since learned them from others, and it should not be changed. But as for the narratives that are related the risk is that not everything is understood in the same way, some do not remember as time passes how they were told and they often changed in memory and the narratives become uninteresting.’

Snorri Sturluson is relatively well known to us. He was a powerful player in Icelandic politics and also took part in Norwegian politics under king Hákon Hákonarson (r. 1217–1263). It has been suggested that he compiled the sagas of Norwegian kings in the large compilation *Heimskringla* as part of building cultural capital both in Icelandic society and in relation to the Norwegian court.<sup>22</sup> But if this is accepted, it would be the forming of a chronicle in the tradition of the Latin book culture that provided the cultural capital to be shared. The two prologues discussed briefly above appropriated the vernacular tradition, but Snorri, the most well-known among the thirteenth-century compilers of vernacular chronicles, by using the Latin book culture as his matrix for a chronicle in the vernacular, is appropriating this very book culture at the same time as he re-appropriates the indigenous tradition. In his compilation we find the Icelandic poems mentioned by Theodoricus in the book form expected by Saxo, both in a chronicle written in the vernacular. It is important to note, however, that the vernacular chronicle does not move far from the Latin book culture of the Church or the king's court: the compiler is trained in this culture and his quest for cultural capital is part of the overall literate culture. The new thing here is the use of the vernacular language, a monument raised over indigenous cultural memory in the vernacular; the matrix is still the Latin chronicle.<sup>23</sup>

Above I mentioned that the three examples of medieval constructions of memory could be related to my introductory thoughts about monuments and

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<sup>22</sup> See Gottskálf Jensson, 'Tylensium thesauri: Den islandske kulturkapital i *Gesta Danorum* og *Heimskringla*', in *Saxo og Snorre*, ed. by Jon Gunnar Jørgensen et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003), pp. 187–207.

<sup>23</sup> Already in the twelfth century there were compilations of kings' lives in the vernacular, as e.g. the Norwegian *Ágrip*. In Iceland Snorri's compilation of what is today known as *Heimskringla* was preceded by e.g. *Fagrskinna*. For my discussion here these texts are not central; it is rather the prologue to *Heimskringla* and its reasoning about the value of various sources that is at the centre of my attention.

cultural memories of modern Norway and Scandinavia. Already in the seventeenth century the first post-Reformation use of medieval chronicles can be studied in the Swedish attempts to appropriate Icelandic material to form memories of a great past for the Swedish kingdom. This Gothic movement can also be seen in the learned works of Danish scholars from this period. At this point in time no great distinction was made between Latin chronicles and Icelandic saga texts, rather both were used to promote the image of past greatness. The interest in vernacular language was, however, established already now and was strengthened in the following centuries. In the decades after the 17 May 1814 the movement of national romanticism had a great impact in Norway, both in a new interest in the vernacular language and in the texts from the thirteenth century when Norway was a great power in Europe. The combination of language and medieval texts became a strong brew that drew the focus to Norse chronicles as e.g. *Heimskringla* as monuments of cultural memory while the Latin chronicles were rather referred to the history department where we find the statue of Karl XIV Johan discussed above. This had an impact also on the emerging modern scholarship in history and philology where Latin texts generally were regarded as less important.

A good example of the evaluation of vernacular versus Latin sources can probably be seen in the frequency with which the chronicles have been edited and translated. While *Heimskringla* has been edited again and again over the last 150 years, *Gesta Danorum* just recently was the object of a modern edition replacing the older ones from the nineteenth century (and this new edition was subsequently followed by translations into English and Danish) and *De antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* was edited only in 2018 with a parallel English translation by the Norwegian scholar Egil Kraggerud after having only been available in Storm's edition from 1880.

The lack of interest can, I would contend, also be seen in the treatment of vernacular versus Latin sources to Norse mythology and culture. The Latin works are at best seen as representative of a learned culture that explores the indigenous cultural memories while the Norse texts seem to carry some kind of pure representation of the same memories.<sup>24</sup> As Lars Boje Mortensen pointed out, the Latin book culture is seen as a background to the vernacular tradition that does not deserve the same interest.<sup>25</sup>

It is sometimes hard to break old habits of thoughts. This may perhaps be exemplified by a quotation of the Danish scholar Annette Lassen, a scholar who has written extensively and with great insight about Norse mythology. In an article where she is treating the relation between Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson she compares the narrative on Útgarda-Loki in versions of the two thirteenth-century compilers and here she seems to fall for a habit of thought:

Vi kender disse beretninger fra Snorris *Edda* fra o. 1220, men her kan Saxo i sagens natur ikke have læst dem. Historien har en helt anden funktion i Saxos værk end i Snorris *Edda*, og Saxo bruger sin Thor-skikkelse på en ininteressant måde. Thorkil er slet og ret et menneske i Saxos beretning; han identificeres aldrig som en hedensk gud eller som et menneske, der lader sig dyrke som sådan.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Jonas Wellendorf, *Gods and Humans in Medieval Scandinavia. Relying the Bonds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> See Mortensen, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Annette Lassen, 'Saxo og Snorri som mytografer: Hedenskapen i *Gesta Danorum* og *Heimskringla*', in *Saxo og Snorre*, ed. by Jon Gunnar Jørgensen et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 209–230 (p. 213). 'We know these narratives from Snorri's *Edda* from c. 1220, but Saxo cannot, obviously, have read them there. The story has a totally different function in Saxo's work than in Snorri's *Edda*, and Saxo uses his Thor-character



It can of course be stated as certain that Saxo Grammaticus could not know the work of Snorri Sturluson, as he was most likely dead when the latter compiled his *Heimskringla*. But does that necessarily have to mean that the compiler of a Latin narrative uses a “Thor-character” while we know the “real” narratives from the prose *Edda*? I would expect Annette Lassen to contradict my rather unfair reading of this quote, but perhaps it still shows how difficult it is to free oneself from the idea of the vernacular as the carrier of the tradition and the Latin as a foreign and intrusive force causing corruption of the same tradition.

Just as the modern monuments, medieval texts, whether in Latin or the vernacular, are constantly changing their meaning. Sometimes they are at the center of attention and actively taking part in our forming of cultural memory, sometimes they are relegated to the archive as historical documents only relevant for what we like to think of as objective history, collecting dust on the archival shelves. In scholarship they are still, I would contend, all as relevant if we try to understand medieval literate culture.

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in an interesting way. Thorkil is in all ways a human being in Saxo’s narrative; he is never identified as a pagan god or as a human who lets himself be worshipped as one.’

## ‘Penn a borthaf am porthes’: The Subversion of Mourning in Early Welsh *englyn* Poetry

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The corpus of early Welsh *englyn* poetry includes a very specific genre: poetry set in the mouths of historical characters who have suffered a disaster and lived to tell the tale. The poetic texts *Canu Llywarch Hen*, *Canu Urien* and *Canu Heledd* are all examples of this genre.<sup>1</sup> The narrators of these texts—Llywarch Hen (‘the Old’), the unnamed man carrying Urien’s severed head, and Heledd—have all experienced an immense loss both personal and political. Llywarch, the father of twenty-four sons, loses all of them in battle and is forced to spend his old age in exile; the speaker of *Canu Urien* loses his lord, Urien king of Rheged, possibly by his own hand, leading to the ruin of Rheged’s hall and the scattering of its armies; and Heledd, a princess of Powys, loses all her siblings and sees Powys laid waste by the English. For all these characters, the world has irrevocably changed, both to its and to their detriment. Real continuity with the world as it used to be is impossible, but these characters share a desire to maintain some kind of bond with the past, to create a sort of emotional continuity. There is surely no better medium for this than the commemoration of the dead. Each of these texts contains a section commemorating a dead person: in these sections, we watch the narrators try to maintain a link with the past, using language which brings to mind traditional praise poetry and *marwnadau* (laments for the dead), only for

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<sup>1</sup> *Canu* here means the ‘song’ or ‘singing’ of, or about, a particular character.

their own grief and horror to intrude on this formalised mourning and subvert it.

It is interesting to note that while the narrators of these texts are engaged in mourning and commemoration, the texts themselves can also serve as a form of cultural mourning and commemoration more generally. Although the texts are usually dated to the ninth and early tenth centuries (based on linguistic and political considerations), the characters hail from the sixth and seventh centuries.<sup>2</sup> Llywarch and Urien in particular come not only from the past but from a region that—to the tenth-century Welsh reader—exists only in the past: from the 'Old North' of Britain, kingdoms that by the end of the seventh century had been annexed by the Angles.<sup>3</sup> After Urien's death, Llywarch appears to flee southwards, as many of the *Gwŷr y Gogledd* ('Men of the North') were thought to have done,<sup>4</sup> and Rheged almost seems to drop off the map.<sup>5</sup> *Canu Llywarch* and *Canu Urien* are commemorating not only dead people, then, but a 'dead' era. In taking on the voices of characters from the past, they claim a continuity of poetic voice from the past, but they do so only in order to emphasise the past's *discontinuity* with the present.

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<sup>2</sup> Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study and Edition of the Englynion (EWSP)* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 387–89; Sir Ifor Williams, *Canu Llywarch Hen: gyda Rhagymadrodd a Nodiadau* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935), pp. xvi–xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Marged Haycock, 'Living with War: Poets and the Welsh Experience, c.600–1300', in *Kings and Warriors in Early North-West Europe*, ed. by Jan Erik Rekdal and Charles Doherty (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), pp. 24–87 (p. 26).

<sup>4</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Gwahodd Llywarch i Lanfawr', in *EWSP*, pp. 414–15 and 474.

<sup>5</sup> *Yr Echwydd*, a territory ruled by Urien, appears in *Armes Prydein Vawr*, a tenth-century prophetic poem, as does *Manaw*, the territory of the kingdom of Gododdin; but this is the only mention I know of, and while *Armes Prydein* refers to the 'Men of the North', it does not explicitly mention any hope of restoring the kingdoms of Rheged, Gododdin or Elmet. See *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain*, ed. by Sir Ifor Williams with English version by Rachel Bromwich (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1972), pp. 2–3 and 12–15. There is also a *marwnad* for Owain ab Urien attributed to Taliesin, and a reference to Urien's son Rhun in *Historia Brittonum*.

Meanwhile, *Canu Heledd*'s image of a devastated Powys is more accurate to Powys' history in the eighth and ninth centuries (during which it suffered Mercian hostilities and Viking raids) than to the seventh century, and its place-names reflect Wales' borders in the ninth century rather than the seventh, as Sir Ifor Williams and Jenny Rowland have pointed out.<sup>6</sup> *Canu Heledd* establishes a false continuity between past and present Powys, perhaps because the fear and horror it expresses would be out of place in a contemporary *marwnad*, but can be safely projected onto the past.<sup>7</sup> In short, setting the poetry in the mouths of long-dead figures allows these texts to mourn lost eras, and to explore past defeats in a way that might be inappropriate for defeats in the present.

All three of these texts are preserved in the Red Book of Hergest, a manuscript dating from the late fourteenth or possibly early fifteenth century, as a continuous stream of stanzas: the start of each text is announced by a large coloured initial capital.<sup>8</sup> They also appear in sixteenth and seventeenth-century manuscripts, two based on a lost portion of the mid-fourteenth-century White Book of Rhydderch, and one seemingly on an independent medieval manuscript.<sup>9</sup> Editors such as Sir Ifor Williams and Jenny Rowland have divided each text into sections based on subject matter. These texts are neither whole poems in their own right nor cycles made up of individual

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<sup>6</sup> *EWSP*, pp. 138–40 and 387–88; Williams, pp. lxxiii–lxxiv.

<sup>7</sup> There are of course exceptions, most notably Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch's *marwnad* for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, which predicts apocalyptic destruction, but for the most part *marwnadau* focus on the lifetime of the lord being commemorated rather than the future without him.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press and the National Library of Wales, 2000), p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> For further discussion, see Jenny Rowland, 'The Manuscript Tradition of the Red Book *Englynion*', *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983/4), 79–95; for a stemma, see David Callander, 'Trefn Canu Llywarch Hen yn Llyfr Coch Hergest', *Llên Cymru*, 38 (2015), 1–11.

poems, but something in between; but the editorial divisions generally reflect the content accurately, and provide a convenient set of reference points, so they are used here. This article will look at the sections 'Marwnad Gwên', from *Canu Llywarch*; 'Pen Urien', from *Canu Urien*; and 'Marwnad Cynddylan', from *Canu Heledd*. Where I refer to the language of traditional praise poetry and *marwnadau*, I will be using the poetry of the Gogynfeirdd and a selection of the Urien Rheged poems attributed to Taliesin for comparison. It is difficult to speak of the early *englyn* poetry drawing on the language of these texts, as such, since the *englyn* poetry is generally thought to be earlier than the Gogynfeirdd poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the dating of the Taliesin poetry is contentious. However, the Taliesin poetry, at least, was presumably envisioned as belonging to a similar Old North context, and the features that I will argue all these texts have in common are so consistent across poems, authors, manuscripts and centuries that it is not difficult to imagine something similar existing at the time the *englyn* texts were being written.

#### CANU LLYWARCH: 'MARWNAD GWÊN'

*Canu Llywarch* begins, in the manuscript tradition, with 'Cân yr Henwr' ('Song of the Old Man'), in which an aged Llywarch laments his current state, unable to take part in any of the activities he once enjoyed, isolated and unvisited by others. Towards the end he says that sleep and happiness do not come to him after the killing of his sons Llawr and Gwên, hinting that grief is troubling him as well as old age.<sup>10</sup> We then move into a flashback, beginning with the section 'Gwên a Llywarch'. Here we see a tense conversation between Llywarch and his last living son, Gwên, on the night

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<sup>10</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Cân yr Henwr' st. 20, in *EWSP*, pp. 418 and 476.

of Gwên's death. Llywarch goads Gwên into making more and more excessive promises to hold the ford against enemies without retreating or showing cowardice, and at last Gwên even swears that he will not use the horn Llywarch's cousin, Urien, gave him in order to call for help. They part on a bitter note. The next section is 'Marwnad Gwên'.

'Marwnad Gwên' is an editorial title, but one that reflects the fact that this section is dedicated to commemorating a dead man. As such, if it followed the conventions seen in Taliesin's *marwnad* for Owain ab Urien and Gogynfeirdd poetry, a large portion of it ought to be dedicated to praising Gwên as he was in life.<sup>11</sup> There is praise here—take these three stanzas towards the beginning, heavily linked by repetition in the first and last lines:

15     Gwen wrth lawen yd wylwys neithwyr.  
          ar ysgwyt ar y ysgwyd.  
          can bu mab ymi bu hywyd.

16     Gwen wrth lawen yd wyliis neithwyr  
          ar ysgwyt ar y gnis.  
          kan bu mab ymi [nyt egis].

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<sup>11</sup> Haycock, pp. 75–76, notes that poems addressed to rulers and their sons who died in battle usually aim to recreate the dead men as they were in life, 'suspending them in bubbles of an endless present'.

- 18      Gwên vordwyt tylluras. a wylyas neithwyr.  
          ygoror ryt uorlas.  
          a chan bu mab ymi ny thechas.<sup>12</sup>

Gwên's readiness for battle, physical power, and refusal to retreat are all among the usual criteria of praise in a *marwnad* or praise poem. Prydydd y Moch describes Maredudd ap Cynan as 'Arwar trydar, trin ograð';<sup>13</sup> Bleddyn Fardd calls Llywelyn ap Gruffudd 'Gór ni garei fo y'r ffort nessaf';<sup>14</sup> one of the Taliesin poems to Urien says of him, 'kat gwortho ny bu ffo pan pwyllatt'.<sup>15</sup> But the third lines of these stanzas, laid out in this order, also describe the reason for Gwên's death. Gwên's eagerness for battle meant that he died instead of escaping, because he would not retreat. The repeated phrase *can bu*

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<sup>12</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Marwnad Gwên' sts. 15–16 and 18, in *EWSP*, pp. 406–07 and 469. [*Nyt egis*] in stanza 16 reflects an emendation from the manuscript reading *ny diengis*, made first by Sir Ifor Williams and followed by Rowland: see Williams, *Canu Llywarch Hen*, p. 70, and *EWSP*, p. 519. '[15] Gwên by Llawen kept watch last night, with his shield on his shoulder. Since he was my son he was ready. [16] Gwên by Llawen kept watch last night, with his shield against his chin. Since he was my son he did not escape. ... [18] Gwên of the mighty thighs kept watch last night, by the side of Rhyd Forlas. Since he was my son he did not retreat.'

<sup>13</sup> Prydydd y Moch, *Marwnad Maredudd ap Cynan o Wynedd*, in *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch'*, ed. by Elin M. Jones et al., *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*, V (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 123, l. 39. '(taking) joy in battle, conflict-provoking' (my trans.).

<sup>14</sup> Bleddyn Fardd, *Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gruffudd ap Llywelyn*, in *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, ed. by Rhian M. Andrews et al., *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*, VII (Cardiff: University of Wales Pres, 1996), p. 580, l. 20: 'Man who loved not the nearest way out' (trans. by Joseph P. Clancy, *The Earliest Welsh Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 168).

<sup>15</sup> *The Poems of Taliesin*, ed. by Sir Ifor Williams, trans. by E. Caerwyn Williams (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1987), poem II l. 26, p. 2. 'Battle's cloak, he'd no mind to flee' (trans. by Joseph P. Clancy, *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry AD 550-1350*, ed. by Thomas Owen Clancy (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998), p. 80).

*mab ymi* ('since he was my son') reminds the listener of Llywarch inciting his son for battle in 'Gwên a Llywarch'. Indeed, if the manuscript reading *ny diengis* is retained in 16, the verb used for 'escape' here is the same as that used by Llywarch when he threatens Gwên with shame: *O diegyd ath welif* ('If you escape, I will see you').<sup>16</sup> In glorifying his dead son, Llywarch is actually recognising that Gwên's martial virtues brought him to his death, and what Llywarch's own part in that was. His own guilt drowns out his son's praise.

Stanza 19 makes this even more clear:

19   Gwen gwydwn dy eissillut.  
      ruthyr eryr yn ebyr oedut.  
      betwn dedwyd dianghut.<sup>17</sup>

Once again, Llywarch begins by praising Gwên's warlike nature, using one of the most common animal images for warriors.<sup>18</sup> He then says that Gwên would have escaped—using the same verb as in 'Gwên a Llywarch' and in stanza 16 above—if Llywarch himself were *dedwydd*. *Dedwydd* is a word that occurs in Welsh proverb literature: it has no exact English equivalent, but signifies something between 'lucky', 'blessed', and 'good', and seems to have both a moral aspect and an aspect of chance.<sup>19</sup> The *dedwydd* is born with good

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<sup>16</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Gwên a Llywarch' st. 4, in *EWSP*, pp. 404 and 468.

<sup>17</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Marwnad Gwên' st. 19, in *EWSP*, pp. 407 and 469. 'Gwên, I knew your nature: you were of the rush of an eagle in estuaries. If I were *dedwydd* you would have escaped.' I have adjusted Rowland's translation to leave the word *dedwydd* in Welsh because there is no direct English equivalent, and the exact connotations of the word have a strong effect on how the verse is read.

<sup>18</sup> Haycock, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> This word also appears in the *englyn* poem *Claf Abercuawg*, which immediately precedes *Canu Llywarch* in the Red Book of Hergest. *Claf Abercuawg* draws heavily on Welsh gnomic poetry, including in its use of *dedwydd* and its counterpart *diriaid*, and Rowland discusses this in detail in her chapter on *Claf Abercuawg* (*EWSP*, pp. 197–99). Richard



fortune and the virtues necessary for good conduct. If Llywarch were blessed with good fortune and good conduct, if he were a more ideal person, Gwên would have escaped in exactly the way Llywarch told him not to. *Canu Llywarch* is very clear: Gwên's uncompromising heroism, once desired, is now a tragedy which his father wishes undone.

More, Gwên's heroism is here reduced to an aspect of his father's fate. Earlier in *Canu Llywarch*, towards the end of 'Cân yr Henwr', Llywarch refers to himself as doomed to a sad fate.<sup>20</sup> Taking this together with his statement that if he were *dedwydd* Gwên would have lived, and the repetition of *can bu mab ymi*, what we see here is Llywarch making Gwên's bravery and battle-readiness merely the outcome of Llywarch's own cruel destiny. This is the opposite way around from the *marwnadau* we see later, where the poet's grief serves to emphasise the dead man's good qualities, as for instance in Dafydd Benfras' agonized *marwnad* for Gruffudd ap Llywelyn where expressions of sadness inevitably lead back to further praise of Gruffudd.<sup>21</sup> Even Cynddelw's short, poignant *marwnad* for his own son Dygynnelw manages to maintain a fairly strict focus on Dygynnelw.<sup>22</sup> Not so Llywarch.

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Sharpe has argued that *Claf Abercuawg* is actually part of *Canu Llywarch* and that the speaker is Llywarch Hen, in 'Claf Abercuawg and the Voice of Llywarch Hen', *Studia Celtica*, 43 (2009), 95–121 (pp. 96 and 102–3). However, the start of *Canu Llywarch* is marked in the Red Book by a large initial capital, and there is (to my mind) a marked difference in tone and theme as well between *Claf Abercuawg* and the start of *Canu Llywarch*. It seems more likely to me that they are separate texts.

<sup>20</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Cân yr Henwr' st. 21, in *EWSP* pp. 418 and 476.

<sup>21</sup> Dafydd Benfras, *Marwnad Gruffudd ap Llywelyn*, in *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd Hanner Cyntaf y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, ed. by Nora G. Costigan et al., *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*, VI (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 451–54.

<sup>22</sup> Cynddelw, *Marwnad Dygynnelw*, in *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I*, ed. by Nerys Ann Jones et al., *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*, I (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 369.

This pattern of Llywarch's feelings taking over continues through the rest of 'Marwnad Gwên'. In stanzas 20 and 21 he tells us that he can no longer watch warriors go to battle without sadness, and refers to himself as *ryhen*, 'too-old': *gwen gwae ryhen oth etlit* ('Gwên, woe to the too-old one because of longing for you'); *gwen gwae. ryhen ryth golles* ('Gwên, woe to the too-old one who has lost you').<sup>23</sup> The emphasis is not on Gwên's worthiness to be mourned but on Llywarch's misery at outliving his son. Although stanzas 22–26 return to praising Gwên in seemingly conventional terms, this praise is always subverted. Take stanza 22:

22     Oed gwr vy mab oed disgywen hawl.  
          ac oed nei y vryen.  
          ar ryt vorlas y llas gwen.<sup>24</sup>

Noble status and noble relatives often come up in *marwnadau* as a form of praise. Taliesin's *marwnad* for Owain ab Urien calls him a man *eissylut y tat ae teit* ('of father and grandfather's make'),<sup>25</sup> and Cynddelw refers to Madog ap Maredudd as *Hil teyrn yn heyrn henweith* ('Heir of ancient iron-clad kings') in his *marwnad* for him.<sup>26</sup> Here, however, the bluntness of the third line creates a sharp juxtaposition between Gwên's life and death, so that his nobility hurtles inevitably towards his final battle in a way that feels painful and wrong. Stanzas 23 goes on to praise Gwên's martial prowess, and stanzas 24–

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<sup>23</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Marwnad Gwên' sts. 20 and 21, in *EWSP*, pp. 407 and 469.

<sup>24</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Marwnad Gwên' st. 22, in *EWSP*, pp. 407 and 470. 'My son was a warrior, he was of splendid privilege, and he was a nephew of Urien. On Rhyd Forlas Gwên was killed.'

<sup>25</sup> *Poems of Taliesin*, p. 12, poem X l. 10 (trans. by Clancy, *The Triumph Tree*, p. 89).

<sup>26</sup> Cynddelw, *Marwnad Madog ap Maredudd*, in *Gwaith Cyndellw Brydydd Mawr I*, p. 85, l. 27 (trans. by Clancy, *The Earliest Welsh Poetry*, p. 142).

26 call him the best of his gold-wearing, princely brothers.<sup>27</sup> These last three stanzas are linked by repetition of the phrase *Pedwarmeib ar hugeint* ('twenty-four sons'), in the first line, which continues in stanzas 27 and 28. In these stanzas, however, we are brought back once again to Llywarch's anguished rejection of heroism and feelings of self-blame.

27      Pedwarmeib ar hugeint yg kenueint lywarch  
          o wyr glew galwytheint.  
          [cwl] eu dyuot clot trameint.

28      Pedwarmeib ar hugeint a ueithyeint vyg knawt  
          drwy vyn tauawt lle<de>sseint  
          da dyuot [bychot] colledeint.<sup>28</sup>

Fame is generally something to admire in a dead man, as Dafydd Benfras does when he says of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, *a'i glod hyd Fynnau* ('and his fame as far as the Alps').<sup>29</sup> Yet Llywarch cannot enjoy his dead sons' fame: it is too inextricably tied to the way they sought it, which brought them to their deaths, and to his tongue which urged them on. He cannot even begin to praise their wealth, nobility, bravery and ferocity without his own feelings about how they died breaking in. Rowland, discussing this section, calls it a 'private outpouring' of grief, and stresses that the narrator here is not acting

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<sup>27</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Marwnad Gwên', in *EWSP*, pp. 407–08 and 470.

<sup>28</sup> *Canu Llywarch*, 'Marwnad Gwên', sts. 27–28, in *EWSP*. '[27] There were twenty-four sons in the family of Llywarch, brave, fierce warriors; the coming of too great fame is a fault. [28] Twenty-four sons of the nurture of my body – through my tongue they have been killed. The coming of a little is good – they have been lost.'

<sup>29</sup> Dafydd Benfras, *Marwnad Gruffudd ap Llywelyn*, in *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill*, p. 451, l. 31 (my trans.).

as a professional poet.<sup>30</sup> I would go further and say that ‘Marwnad Gwên’ is meant to show us Llywarch’s attempts to commemorate his dead son somewhat in the manner of a professional poet, and how he fails in each try as his own feelings of grief—and, crucially, guilt—take over.

CANU URIEN: ‘PEN URIEN’

We have an unusually good idea of the story underlying *Canu Urien*. According to *Historia Brittonum*, Urien was one of four British kings who fought against Theodoric of Bernicia. For three days and nights Urien besieged English forces on Lindisfarne, or *Metcaud*, but then he was assassinated on the instigation of fellow British king Morgant, who envied his prowess in battle and military leadership.<sup>31</sup> *Historia Brittonum* does not tell us what happened afterwards, but if references to Rheged’s armies being scattered and the hall of Rheged lying overgrown and in ruins are any guide, the poet of *Canu Urien* envisioned a defeat followed by destruction.<sup>32</sup>

The narrator of *Canu Urien* begins every stanza by telling us that he is carrying Urien’s head. This immediately lends a sense of wrongness to his otherwise conventional praise of Urien, and it is clear that something has gone very badly awry. The colour contrast in stanza 8 neatly expresses the tension here:

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<sup>30</sup> *EWSP*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>31</sup> *Historia Brittonum*, ch. 63, in *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. by John Morris (London: Phillimore, 1980), pp. 38 and 79.

<sup>32</sup> *Canu Urien* sts. 28–29 and 48–59, in *EWSP*, pp. 426–28.

- 8 Penn a borthaf ar vyn tu.  
penn urien llary llywei llu.  
ac ar y vronn wenn vran du.<sup>33</sup>

The contrast between first line and second is as strong as the contrast between the black crow and the white breast. Moreover, the references to crows despoiling Urien's corpse and to the severing of his head would be deeply out of place in any conventional *marwnad*. Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch, uniquely among the Gogynfeirdd, refers to 'Penn Llywelyn dec: dygyn a vra6—y'r byt | Bot pa6l haearn tr6yda6', but although he then goes into a long series of lines beginning with *Penn* 'head', they are all in praise of Llywelyn when he was alive, and none ever refers to what further defilement Llywelyn's head may have suffered on the stake.<sup>34</sup>

Over the course of the next several stanzas, Urien is praised for qualities common among the subjects of *marwnadau*: his skill in battle and his power to protect others, from fellow warriors in battle to the elderly in his kingdom. He is *cledyr kat kywlat rwyf* ('a battle-pillar, snare of the frontier');<sup>35</sup> he makes biers of Bernicia's men, just as his son Owain, in Taliesin's *marwnad* for him,

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<sup>33</sup> *Canu Urien* st. 8, in *EWSP*, p. 420. 'I carry a head at my side, the head of generous Urien – he used to lead an army; and on his white breast a black crow' (my trans.).

<sup>34</sup> Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch, *Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, in *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd a Beirdd Eraill Ail Hanner y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, p. 422, ll. 91–92. 'Head of fair Llywelyn, sharp the world's fear, | An iron spike through it' (trans. by Clancy, *The Earliest Welsh Poetry*, p. 173). This poem, like the religious poetry attributed to Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch, is highly unusual among Gogynfeirdd poetry, and seems to have been influenced by thirteenth-century devotional practices, as Catherine McKenna points out in 'The Religious Poetry Attributed to Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 29 (1980–2), 274–84 (p. 283).

<sup>35</sup> *Canu Urien* st. 11, in *EWSP*, p. 420 (my trans.).

leaves England's host dead *a leuuer yn eu llygeit* ('with light upon their eyes').<sup>36</sup> The speaker calls him *ysgwyt ar wlat* 'a shield over the land', *yr yrechwyd... uugeil* ('a shepherd over Yr Echwydd'), and *dinas y hemwred* ('a refuge for the elderly').<sup>37</sup> as Haycock points out, protective images like these are very common in *marwnadau* and praise poetry in general.<sup>38</sup> He is even referred to as 'post prydein', an exaggeration which was not unusual in *marwnadau*, as Prydydd y Moch's *marwnad* for Gruffudd ap Cynan, which calls him *Peir Prydein* ('the pillar of Britain'), shows.<sup>39</sup> But Urien's head, hanging from the speaker's hand, haunts each of these stanzas, so that the conventional praise does not sit comfortably.

In stanzas 14 and 17, we begin to see why this is:

14 Penn a borthaf ar vy ysgwyd.  
nym aruollei waratwyd.  
gwae vy llaw llad vy arglywd.

...

17 Penn a borthaf am porthes.  
neut atwen nat yr vy lles.  
gwae vy llaw llym digones.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. st. 15, p. 421; *Poems of Taliesin*, p. 12, poem X l. 14, trans. by Clancy, *The Triumph Tree*, p. 89.

<sup>37</sup> *Canu Urien* sts. 10–12, in *EWSP*, pp. 420–21 (my trans.).

<sup>38</sup> Haycock, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> *Canu Urien* st. 16, in *EWSP*, p. 421 (my trans.); Prydydd y Moch, *Marwnad Gruffudd ap Cynan*, in *Gwaith Llywarch ap Llywelyn 'Prydydd y Moch'*, p. 111, l. 4: 'lord of Britain' (my trans.).

<sup>40</sup> *Canu Urien* 'Pen Urien' sts. 14 and 17, in *EWSP*, p. 421. '[14] I carry a head on my shoulder: shame did not use to receive me. Woe to my hand, that my lord was struck. ...

There has been considerable disagreement among scholars as to whether these lines indicate that the speaker killed Urien himself or simply despoiled the body.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the case, the work of his hand clearly represents, to him, a betrayal of his lord, who once 'sustained' him with the generosity he praises above. His deep sense of shame intrudes on his commemoration of Urien, just as Llywarch's guilt does in 'Marwnad Gwên'. When he tries to praise Urien, shame draws his attention back to the head in his hand, and the head in turn draws his attention back to his shame in a vicious cycle. This is the troubled undercurrent beneath his use of traditional praise images. Indeed, the speaker's revelation here makes that praise a prelude to his painful regret, an explanation of his distress: it subordinates praise to shame.

The final stanza of 'Pen Urien' changes metre in a radical switch from *englyn milwr* (in which each line is of equal length) to *englyn penfyr* (in which each line has a different length, the first being much longer):

19 [Ry] thyrvys vym breich ry gardwys vy eis.  
vyg callon neur dorres  
penn a borthaf am porthes.<sup>42</sup>

This abrupt metrical break reflects the heartbreak in the stanza, as does the breaking of the flow of repetition (*penn a borthaf* is now down in the last line,

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[17] I carry a head which sustained me: I know it is not to my benefit. Woe to my hand, it has wrought a bitter thing.' (my trans.).

<sup>41</sup> See for instance Williams, p. liv; *EWSP*, pp. 76–83; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Death of Urien', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 32 (1996), 25–56 (pp. 44–47); Nicholas J. A. Williams, 'Canu Llywarch Hen and the Finn Cycle', in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd: Studies in Old Welsh Poetry*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich and Robert Brinley Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 234–65 (pp. 250–54).

<sup>42</sup> *Canu Urien* st. 19, in *EWSP*, p. 422. 'It has wrenched my arm, it has crushed my ribs, it has broken my heart! I carry a head which sustained me.' (my trans.).

ending this section as it began). But the speaker's heart is not the only thing that carrying the head has broken. His worldview has been shattered: he has learned that he is capable of betraying his lord. He cannot create a proper *marwnad* for Urien because he is no longer capable of it. As the man who betrayed his lord, the speaker of *Canu Urien* subverts the language of the conventional *marwnad* just by using it.

CANU HELEDD: 'MARWNAD CYNDDYLAN'<sup>43</sup>

This section comes right at the beginning of *Canu Heledd*: in fact, only one stanza precedes it, declaring that the court of Pengwern, Cynddylan's land, is on fire.<sup>44</sup> Heledd then launches into a lament for her brother, which begins with this ominous gnomic verse:

2      Vn prenn ygwydvit a gouit arnaw  
          o dieinc ys odit.  
          ac a uynno duw derffit.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This is an editorial title for the section of *Canu Heledd*. There is another poem by this name that does not travel with *Canu Heledd* in the Red Book of Hergest, although it is found in NLW 4973, Dr John Davies' Liber B of *hengerdd* (see *EWSP*, pp. 180–81), as is *Canu Heledd*. I do not discuss it here for reasons of space, and because, although it is fascinating to compare with *Canu Heledd*, it is not at all clear what exactly is going on in it or for what purpose it was written. Rowland compares the two briefly: see *EWSP* pp. 122–23.

<sup>44</sup> *Canu Heledd* st. 1, in *EWSP*, p. 429.

<sup>45</sup> *Canu Heledd* st. 2, in *EWSP*, pp. 429 and 483: 'A single tree in a forest *and hardship upon it* – if it escapes it is a rare thing. Let that which God wills come to pass.' Where the translation is italicised, I have adjusted it to better reflect the syntax of the Welsh. It is possible, despite its inclusion by editors in this section, that this stanza is not meant to be part of Heledd's lament for Cynddylan, but I am inclined to think it is, as the image of the



At this point, we do not know the significance of this stanza, but it does not bode well for the future. Heledd goes on to praise Cynddylan for his wealth and his prowess in battle for the next ten stanzas, using the kind of language we are accustomed to see in the praise poetry and *marwnadau* of the Gogynfeirdd, including images from the natural world like animals, fire and ice.<sup>46</sup> Yet there are unpleasantly pointed reminders of Cynddylan's death scattered throughout, particularly in the third lines. Several times Heledd mentions Cynddylan protecting Tren, the town he died defending, just as Llywarch speaks of Gwên keeping watch by Llawen on the night of his death.<sup>47</sup> Stanzas 10 and 12 show how Heledd can balance praise and bitter truths:

10      Kyndylan gulhwch gynnifiat llew.  
          bleid dilin disgynnyat.  
          nyt atuer twrch tref y dat.

...

12      Kyndylan powys borffor wych yt.  
          kell esbyt bywyt ior  
          keneu kyndrwyn kwynitor.<sup>48</sup>

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single tree returns in stanza 16, and appears to apply to Cynddylan in both cases. However, one could interpret it as applying to Heledd herself, alone and without family, instead.

<sup>46</sup> Haycock, p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> *Canu Heledd* sts. 3–6, in *EWSP*, pp. 429–30.

<sup>48</sup> *Canu Heledd* sts. 10 and 12, in *EWSP*, pp. 430 and 484. '[10] Cynddylan, a warrior like Culhwch, a lion, a wolf-pursuing attacker — the boar will not return to his father's town. ... [12] Cynddylan Powys, you had a splendid purple cloak, a storehouse for (feeding) guests, ?the existence of a lord. The whelp of Cyndrwyn is mourned.'

In stanza 10, Heledd praises Cynddylan's martial prowess using two staple animal images from praise poetry, the lion and the boar;<sup>49</sup> she also compares him to a legendary hero, Culhwch, just as Cynddelw does when he calls Madog ap Maredudd 'Rut ongyr Bran vab Llyr Lledyeith'.<sup>50</sup> Yet the result of all this splendid promise is that Cynddylan will never return to his patrimony—despite his skill, he will die in battle. In 12, Cynddylan is praised for his wealth and hospitality, two qualities admired in a lord. Y Prydydd Bychan calls Cynan ap Hywel *Góledic mwynuaôr kwyn* ('Wealthy leader of feast(s)'), and Dafydd Benfras warns that after the death of Gruffudd ap Cynan, 'Mae ysbyd y byd yn enbydrwydd'.<sup>51</sup> The final line, *keneu kyndrwyn kwynitor*, would not be out of place in a *marwnad*, either in its reference to Cynddylan's lineage or in its reference to mourning for him. Poets in *marwnadau* often perform mourning to show how worthy their lord is of lament, as for instance when Gruffudd ap Gwrgenau speaks of his grief for Gruffudd ap Cynan, 'O Ruffut, gwaeôrut goruolet,—y'm ken', only to spend the next seven lines describing his good qualities (presumably why he is so sorely missed).<sup>52</sup> But Heledd's mention of mourning takes on a darker aspect in light of the fact that she will spend the next several sections of *Canu Heledd* mourning 'the whelp of Cyndrwyn' in an almost brutal fashion that takes a

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<sup>49</sup> Haycock, p. 65.

<sup>50</sup> Cynddelw, *Marwnad Madog ap Maredudd*, in *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I*, p. 85: 'Red spear of Brân ap Llŷr Llediaith' (trans. by Clancy, *The Earliest Welsh Poetry*, p. 141).

<sup>51</sup> Y Prydydd Bychan, *Marwnad Cynan ap Hywel*, in *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif*, ed. by Kathleen Anne Bramley and Morfydd E. Owen, *Cyfres Beirdd y Tywysogion*, II (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), p. 57, l. 21 (my trans.); Dafydd Benfras, *Marwnad Gruffudd ap Cynan*, in *Gwaith Dafydd Benfras ac Eraill o Feirdd Hanner Cyntaf y Drydedd Ganrif ar Ddeg*, p. 427, l. 12. 'The guests of the world are in peril' (my trans.).

<sup>52</sup> Gruffudd ap Gwrgenau, *Marwnad Gruffudd ap Cynan ab Owain*, in *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif*, pp. 540–41, ll. 31–38. 'For Gruffudd, triumph's red spear, it hurts me' (trans. by Clancy, *Medieval Welsh Poems*, p. 154).

physical toll on her.<sup>53</sup> Heledd may be mourning Cynddylan, but this is not truly about him.

Things take a still darker turn in stanzas 14–16. Heledd abruptly begins to address the dead Cynddylan as if he were still alive, yet with clear knowledge of his death:

- 14 Kyndylan kymwyat wyt.  
armeithyd na bydy[d] lwyt.  
am drebwill twll dy ysgwyt.<sup>54</sup>

As in 10, Heledd plays up Cynddylan's warlike nature, calling him *kymwyat*, 'a harasser'; but here she is even more explicit about its consequences. Cynddylan does not intend to grow old and grey but to die young, and as a result his shield is shattered around Trebwill. In the next two stanzas, the significance of the 'single tree' in stanza 2 is revealed:

- 15 Kyndylan kae di y riw.  
yn y daw lloegyrwys hediw.  
amgeled am vn ny diw.
- 16 Kyndylan kae di y nenn.  
yn y daw lloegyrwys drwy dren.  
ny elwir coet o vn prenn.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See *Canu Heledd* sts. 60–62, in *EWSP*, pp. 437, 488.

<sup>54</sup> *Canu Heledd* st. 14, in *EWSP*, pp. 431, 484. 'Cynddylan, you are an harasser (of enemies). You intend that you will not be grey-haired. Around Trebwill your shield is shattered.'

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* sts. 15–16., pp. 431, 484. '[15] Cynddylan, block the slope, where the English come today. Anxiety for one man is no use. [16] Cynddylan, block the ?place, where the English come through Tren. A forest is not so called from a single tree.'

Taken with stanza 2, these stanzas suggest that Cynddylan died outnumbered, the ‘one man’ for whom anxiety was useless because he was the single tree amid a forest of enemies. Heledd is not addressing her dead brother as a mourner, but rather, as Rowland points out, reliving the scene of his death.<sup>56</sup> She instructs him to block the slope, willing the outcome to change even as she knows it can’t—not just because Cynddylan is outnumbered, but because he is bold and warlike, seeking out conflict with no thought of retreat. The qualities she has praised in him earlier bring him to his death in stanzas 14–16. Heledd’s lament for her brother is ultimately hijacked by the horrific reality of his death, in a way that would be almost unthinkable in most *marwnadau*. Far from succeeding in ‘giving a formal, dignified lament for the fallen king’, as Rowland suggests, Heledd has allowed the ‘passionate grief’ that lies beneath her praise to break out almost involuntarily.<sup>57</sup> Worse, she has failed to bring meaning to her praise of Cynddylan; instead, by showing so explicitly where the qualities she praises have led, she has made them meaningless.

## CONCLUSION

Each of these texts portrays a character in the midst of grief, trying to use the language of formal praise and lament to commemorate their dead loved ones, only for their attempts at formalised mourning to fall apart. One might ask what motivation we are to attribute to these characters: why use language that evokes *marwnadau* and praise poetry if you are then going to subvert it so completely?

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 151–52.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

Llywarch, Heledd and the speaker of *Canu Urien* are all characters who have lived through a world-changing catastrophe. In their attempts at formalised mourning, we can see a desire to maintain a bond with the world as it once was, when the 'normal' way of things still applied. They use the 'normal' language of lament for what is, to them, an abnormal situation, in the hope of re-establishing and maintaining a link with the past. For Llywarch and Heledd, this means the past in which their loved ones were victorious. Gwên and Cynddylan were bold, skilful and unyielding: the logical consequence of those qualities should have been victory. Indeed, many *marwnadau* mention the dead man's previous battles, as Y Prydydd Bychan does in his *marwnad* for Rhys Gryg.<sup>58</sup> A dead lord's success in battle is one of his most missed qualities – Cynddelw says, in his *marwnad* for Madog ap Maredudd and his son Llywelyn, 'Pei byw llary Lleisiawn ni luestai Wynedd | Ym mherfedd Edeyrniawn'.<sup>59</sup> But in the end, Llywarch and Heledd's loved ones were not successful. We see Llywarch try to spare Gwên from this reality, claiming that if he were *dedwydd* Gwên would have lived, and blaming his tongue for the deaths of all his sons. Elsewhere in *Canu Heledd*, Heledd does much the same, as in stanza 86 where she claims that God took her brothers from her, and that her own misfortune caused it. *They* never failed in battle: *ny obrynynt ffaw yr ffuc* ('They did not *earn* fame by deception').<sup>60</sup> In blaming God and her own fate, Heledd guards her brothers from any accusation of failure. No wonder she and Llywarch want to establish a link with their past worldview by praising their dead loved ones in

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<sup>58</sup> Y Prydydd Bychan, *Marwnad Rhys Gryg*, in *Gwaith Llywelyn Fardd I ac Eraill o Feirdd y Ddeuddegfed Ganrif*, p. 31, trans. by Conran, *Welsh Verse*, 3rd edn (Bridgend: Seren, 1992) pp. 159–60.

<sup>59</sup> Cynddelw, *Marwnad Madog ap Maredudd, Llywelyn ei fab a theulu Powys*, in *Gwaith Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr I*, p. 96, ll. 65–66. 'If Lleisiawn's lord lived, Gwynedd could not | Camp in the heart of Edeirniawn' (trans. by Clancy, *The Earliest Welsh Poetry*, p. 144).

<sup>60</sup> *Canu Heledd* st. 86, in *EWSP*, pp. 441, 491.

traditional terms. Yet they cannot escape the reality that the qualities they praise are what ultimately killed Gwên and Cynddylan, and their raw grief breaks out uncontrollably where it should not. Llywarch turns from lamenting Gwên to lamenting his own misery and guilt; Heledd turns her praise of Cynddylan into his doom as she relives his death. Meanwhile, the speaker of *Canu Urien* lays his praise of Urien on as thick as he can, yearning for the time when that praise sprang from a normal, positive relationship with his lord. But Urien's ever-present head in his hand makes a mockery of the language of formal praise in his mouth. He cannot avoid being reminded—and neither can we—of the ultimate outcome of his love for his lord: betrayal.

It is worth noting, at this point, that these texts are not the only Welsh poetic texts to deal with a tragic defeat, in which promising young warriors and powerful lords died. The other major example is *Y Gododdin*, a text that appears to list warriors who died in battle, possibly at a place called *Catraeth*, fighting for the kingdom of Gododdin in the sixth century. While the text is notoriously difficult to date (it survives only in a thirteenth-century manuscript), and the degree to which it is one text and not a composite is decidedly uncertain, it may possibly have been around in some form in ninth- and early tenth-century Wales, as the *englyn* poetry also seems to have been.<sup>61</sup> At first glance, its praise of dead heroes comes across as much more straightforward than that of the early *englyn* poetry, and A. O. H. Jarman certainly took this view when he compared them.<sup>62</sup> But there is still work to be done on whether it is as straightforward as it seems. The fact that it is

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<sup>61</sup> On the dating of *Y Gododdin* (and against putting it earlier than the tenth century), see for instance Oliver Padel, 'Aneirin and Taliesin: Sceptical Speculations', in *Beyond the Gododdin: Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales*, ed. by Alex Woolf (St Andrews: University of St Andrews, 2005), pp. 115–52, and Graham Isaac, 'Readings in the History and Transmission of the *Gododdin*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 37 (1999), 55–78.

<sup>62</sup> Alfred Owen Hughes Jarman, *The Cynfeirdd: Early Welsh Poets and Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1981), pp. 70–85.

describing a tragedy, and not a triumph, underlies everything in it, and there are places where the tragedy comes to the fore. The way that it handles this differently from the early *englyn* poetry makes for an interesting comparison between the two, and one with implications for the genre of the early *englyn* poetry.

Like the early *englyn* poetry, *Y Gododdin* uses language that praises the generosity, ferocity and martial prowess of its heroes; unlike the *englyn* poetry, it spends the vast majority of its time focused on those heroes, not on the one mourning them. Stanza 37 of the A-text is a good example of its typical style:

A37 Disgynsit en trwm yg kessevin.  
ef diodes gormes ef dodes fin.  
ergyr gwayw rieu ryvel chwerthin.  
hut effyt y wrhyt e lwry elffin.  
eithinyn uoleit mur greit tarw trin.<sup>63</sup>

The feelings of the speaker, particularly towards the ultimate defeat of Eithinyn, are absent here, as they are for most of the text. Most stanzas are almost entirely focused on praise. But the fact remains that the heroes praised in *Y Gododdin* are dead, and since they died in battle, they were presumably defeated. *Y Gododdin* must find its own way of grappling with this. We sometimes see terse, almost silent acknowledgements that these deaths were

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<sup>63</sup> *Y Gododdin* st. A37: this is the stanza printed as XXXVIII in Sir Ifor Williams' edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1938), on page 17. I use his edition but not his numbering: this is the 37th stanza in the manuscript, where it appears on page 10, ll. 16–19. 'He attacked in hardship, in the forefront, he cast out oppression, he set the boundary: spear-thrusting ruler, laughing in battle, so he attacks, his valour like Elffin's, famed Eithinyn, wall in conflict, bull of battle.' (my trans.).

tragic. Stanza A56 says of the warriors of Gododdin that ‘o gyvryssed gwraged gwyth a wnaethant. | llawer mam ae deigyr ar y hamrant’, and while one might assume that the weeping widows and mothers were those of their enemies, the text never rules out the idea that they caused their own wives and mothers to weep by dying in battle.<sup>64</sup> Of its hero Cynon stanza A65 says ‘dimcones loflen benn eryron. | llwyt ; ef gorev vwyt y ysgylvyon’.<sup>65</sup> This is most likely to mean that he provided them with enemy corpses to feed on, but the possibility that he fed them with his own flesh cannot be ruled out.

The tragic death of a beloved hero is a theme *Y Gododdin* and the early *englyn* poetry have in common, and indeed the line ‘ruthyr eryr en ebyr pan llithywyt’, which is almost identical to a line in ‘Marwnad Gwên’, suggests that someone was aware of this, though it is impossible to know who was referencing whom.<sup>66</sup> Why, then, does *Y Gododdin* lack the grieving, violent outbursts that we see in *Canu Llywarch*, *Canu Urien* and *Canu Heledd*? The *Gododdin*-poet carries no heads in his hand; he does not bemoan his tongue, or consider what responsibility he might have for the young men’s fate; he does not relive their deaths as if in a traumatic flashback. The *wrongness* of these early deaths is, for the most part, an undercurrent in *Y Gododdin*, not a stated fact.

The difference is a difference of genre. *Y Gododdin* genuinely is about the young men it memorialises: the undercurrent of unbearable tragedy that lurks beneath its surface comes largely from their deaths, not from the consequences for those who survive them. Like Gwên and Cynddylan, their

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<sup>64</sup> *Y Gododdin* st. A56, printed as LVIII by Williams, p. 27, in MS p. 15 ll. 1–2. ‘through battle they made women widows, many a mother with her tear on her eyelid’ (my trans.).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* st. A65, printed as LXVI by Williams, p. 32, in MS p. 17 ll. 2–3. ‘He satisfied the grip of grey eagles’ beaks, he made food for birds of prey’ (my trans.).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* st. A3, printed as III by Williams, p. 2, in MS p. 1 ll. 16–17. ‘the rush of an eagle in estuaries when there was feeding’ (my trans.).



heroism appears to doom them, and the poetry explores this, heightening the tragedy with its lofty praise of their bravery and ferocity—but that is where it stops short, following them to the point of death and no further. There are no ruined halls, deserted hearths or fleeing old men here. *Y Gododdin* is, if anything, more interested in warriors and their doomed courage than any of the *englyn* poetry is. It freezes them in the moment before their deaths, knowing what is coming but not dwelling on it.

But this is not an option for Llywarch, Heledd, or the man carrying Urien's head, because *Canu Llywarch*, *Canu Urien* and *Canu Heledd* are not truly about the dead, but about the living. What unites them as a genre, and sets them apart from both *Y Gododdin* and from the later *marwnadau* of the Gogynfeirdd, is their focus on survivors and on the aftermath in general. No matter how much the characters long to return to the past, they have to live with the unbearable present. They cannot keep their dead loved ones frozen before the moment of death; the consequences of those deaths haunt them, hijacking their attempt to make some kind of dignified commemoration. What is being portrayed here is not Gwên, Cynddylan and Urien, but the inability of their loved ones to come to terms with their deaths and their deaths' implications—defeat, loss, betrayal. As poetry about characters who suffer catastrophe, and as poetry about dead people coping with the death-throes of dead kingdoms, early Welsh *englyn* poetry shows us how suffering can affect one's relationship with the dead, and how catastrophe can affect a society's relationship with the past.

## The *Miles Christi* in the Lives of St. Guthlac

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From the introduction of Guthlac of Crowland's name to his sanctified apotheosis at death, Guthlac stands as an example to Anglo-Saxon audiences of how the *miles Christi* ('soldier of Christ') was to fight temptation in the spiritual realm. The theme of spiritual warfare and the purpose of the *miles Christi* is developed in the narratives of Guthlac through his transition from warrior-life to that of a devout anchorite who must conquer demonic enemies after conquering physical ones.<sup>1</sup> In Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* (*Vita*),<sup>2</sup> the Old English Prose *Life of Guthlac* (*OEPG*),<sup>3</sup> and Exeter Book poem

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Anglo-Saxon material on Guthlac, see Sarah Downey, 'Intertextuality in the Lives of St. Guthlac' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2004), pp. 67–185; Jane Roberts, 'An Inventory of Early Guthlac Materials', *Mediaeval Studies*, 32 (1970), 193–233.

<sup>2</sup> See Bertram Colgrave's edition of the *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* in his *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 60–170. For an alternative translation see Clinton Albertson, *Anglo-Saxon Saints and Heroes* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 1967), pp. 167–215. Latin passages from the *Vita* cited throughout have been supplied from Colgrave's edition. All translations of the Latin and Old English passages cited throughout the article are my own unless stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> An edition of the prose *Life of Guthlac* found in London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian D. xxi and Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, CXVII is in Paul Gosser's *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des hl. Guthlac* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1909). For general discussions of the relationship between the extant versions of the *OEPG* see Jane Roberts 'The Old English Prose Translation of Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*', in *Studies in Old English Prose: Sixteen Original Contributions*, ed. Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 363–79; Stephanie Wragg, 'The Early Texts of the Cult of Saint

*Guthlac A*,<sup>4</sup> Guthlac must repeatedly ward off the assaults of these enemies until he gains mastery of the temptations of the flesh and his own doubts.<sup>5</sup> This spiritual warfare is waged with the demons who strive to corrupt Guthlac and drive him from his eremitic life on the fenland *beorg*. They fail and Guthlac's occupation of the *beorg* converts it from a home of demonic temptation into a Christian stronghold and a place of Christian salvation. In converting the *beorg*, Guthlac demonstrates that the actions of the *miles Christi* are not solely spiritual, but have a tangible impact on those faithful admirers of the saint.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, with the discipline and imagery of war found in secular heroic Old English poetry applied to Guthlac, Anglo-Saxons had an example of how a Christian could master his own temptation for the benefit of the larger community while attaining heroic sanctity as a warrior of Christ.

The Guthlac narratives first show how a solitary spiritual warrior was a more effective protector of Christians than secular soldiers or those engrained in monastic communities. As a young Mercian noble, Guthlac pillages and destroys communities and his only benefit to society is his largess in returning a third of all he takes (*Vita* §§10–18/ *OEPG* 107–09).<sup>7</sup> Guthlac

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Guthlac', *English Studies* (2019), 253–72 (pp. 256–69). Old English quotations from the *OEPG* throughout this article are supplied from Gosser's edition.

<sup>4</sup> See Jane Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). Quotations from *Guthlac A* are supplied from Roberts' edition, cited by line number.

<sup>5</sup> John Damon, *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors: Warfare and Sanctity in the Literature of Early England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p. 137; Downey, pp. 88–101.

<sup>6</sup> For spiritually focused readings of Guthlac narratives, see Laurence Shook, 'The Prologue of the Old English "Guthlac A"', *Mediaeval Studies*, 23 (1961), 294–304; Paul Reichardt, 'Guthlac A and the Landscape of Spiritual Perfection', *Neophilologus*, 56 (1974), 331–38; Manish Sharma, 'A Reconsideration of the Structure of "Guthlac A": the Extremes of Saintliness', *JEGP*, 101/2 (2002), 185–200; and Benjamin Weber, 'A Harmony of Contrasts: The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book', *JEGP*, 114/2 (2015), 205–11.

<sup>7</sup> Section references for the *Vita* follow Colgrave's chapters and are denoted with §. The corresponding passage in Old English is referenced by the page number in Gosser's edition of the *OEPG*.

leaves this warring for the communal life of a coenobitic monk at Repton, where he learns how to serve God and consider how he might master his sins (*Vita* §§19–24/ *OEPG* 110–13). Yet the lax discipline of his fellow monks shows that Guthlac cannot truly fight for God in the monastery. Indeed, the coenobitic monks in the *Guthlac*-narratives act as foils to Guthlac's sanctity and emphasise how the solitary life of an anchorite is more effective in fighting temptation.<sup>8</sup> Guthlac then leaves the order of monkhood for an eremitic life in the Crowland fens (*Vita* §§24–26/ *OEPG* 112–15) where he girds himself with the spiritual armament of a *miles Christi* or *Godes cempa* ('warrior of God') in *camphad þæs ecan lifes* ('the warrior-hood of the eternal life'). In moving from a coenobitic to eremitic existence, Guthlac embodies a perception that anchorites were the most venerable order of clerics.<sup>9</sup> This follows the depiction of anchorites in the *Regula Benedicti* as more austere and accomplished in their devotion than other kinds of monks. Chapter one of the *Regula* states that:

Monachorum quattuor esse genera, manifestum est. Primum coenobitarum, hoc est monasteriale, militans sub regula vel abbate. Deinde secundum genus est anachoritarum, id est heremitarum, horum qui non conversationis fervore novicio, sed monasterii probatione diuturna, qui didicerunt contra diabulum multorum solacio iam docti

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<sup>8</sup> See the critical portrayals of coenobitic monks in the *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §§ 21, 43–44 and 46–47; *OEPG*, pp. 111, 149–51 and 154–57; *Guthlac A*, lines 412–20. See also Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 129, 145. Patrick Conner, 'Source Studies, the Old English *Guthlac A* and the English Benedictine Reformation', *Revue Bénédictine*, 103/3–4 (1993), 380–413 (p. 405), considers this a critique of unreformed monks, rather than cenobitism in general.

<sup>9</sup> For early Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards anchorites see Mary Clayton, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 147–76.

pugnare, et bene extracti fraterna ex acie ad singularem pugnam heremi, securi iam sine consolatione alterius, sola manu vel brachio contra vitia carnis vel cogitationum, Deo auxiliante, pugnare sufficiunt.<sup>10</sup>

Here anchorites are depicted as veterans of Benedictine ideals who are able to fight (*pugnare*) the devil and temptation alone (*singularis/solus*).<sup>11</sup> Guthlac's own experience follows this passage from the *Regula* closely. Guthlac becomes an anchorite only after he has lived as a coenobitic monk at Repton, and it is in his solitary fight after leaving the cloister that Guthlac is able to 'fight' for Christ and become a *miles Christi*. As a *miles Christi*, Guthlac fights the devils of the Crowland waste (*heremi*) with spiritual arms so that the whole Christian community can be freed from temptation (*vitia carnis vel*

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<sup>10</sup> *La Règle de Saint Benoît*, ed. Jean Neufville, 2 vols, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972), I, pp. 436–38. 'It is clear that there are four kinds of monks. The first are of the cenobites, that is from the cloister, fighting under a rule or abbot. Then the second kind is of the anchorites, that is of the hermits, of those who are no longer in the novitiate fervour of their habit, but have been tested for a long time in the monastery, who, having already been taught, learned to fight against the devil for the solace of many brethren; and go well trained from the battle-line of their brethren to single combat of the desert, fearless without the consolation of another but with the help of God, they have sufficient strength to fight single-handed or forearmed, against the vices of the flesh or of [wicked] thoughts.' For Old English glosses of Latin *Regula*, see *The Rule of S. Benet: Latin and Anglo-Saxon Interlinear Version*, ed. Henri Logeman (London: N. Trübner, 1888), pp. 9–10.

<sup>11</sup> Manning and Hill have demonstrated how military language, especially Latin *miles/militare* or *pugnare*, and Old English *campian/cempa* or *gewinn* were appropriated by monastic writers to refer to monastic life or service, Joyce Hill, 'On the Semantics of Old English *Cempa* and *Campian*', *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983), 273–76; Joyce Hill, 'The Soldier of Christ in Old English Prose and Poetry', *Leeds Studies in English*, 12 (1981), 57–80 (pp. 59–69); Eugène Manning, 'Le Signification de "militare-militia-miles" dans la Règle de Sant Benoit', *Revue Bénédictine*, 72 (1962), 135–38.

*cogitationum*).<sup>12</sup> It is this aspect of Guthlac's life that the *Guthlac A* poet and the composer of the homiletic extract of the *OEPG* in the Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, CXVII (Homily XXIII), considered the most crucial in their retellings of Guthlac, since they solely focus on Guthlac's actions as a *miles Christi* and ignore all other aspects of Felix's narrative.<sup>13</sup> *Guthlac A* defines the soldier of God as follows:

Ða þe her Cristes æ  
lærað and læstað and his lof rærað,  
oferwinnað þa awyrgdan gæstas, bigytað him wuldres ræste.<sup>14</sup>  
(ll. 23b–25)

The *militēs Christi* are those that enact Christ's teachings and conquer cursed spirits so that others can come to God's salvation free from the stain of sin. The overthrow of demonic temptation is part of the *miles Christi*'s performance of Christ's teaching, suggesting that the ultimate act of faith is through metaphorically soldiering. The hypermetricity of line 25a and double alliteration in the first half-line on *oferwinnað* and *awyrgdan*, suggest that the poet wished to punctuate the focus the audience's attention on the soldier of God's *raison d'être* which earns him glory (*wuldres*).<sup>15</sup> The emphasis

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas D. Hill, 'Drawing the Demon's Sting: A Note on a Traditional Motif in Felix's Vita Sancti Guthlaci', *Notes and Queries*, 23/9 (September, 1976), 388–90; Frances Lipp, 'Guthlac A: An Interpretation', *Mediaeval Studies*, 33 (1971), 60–61.

<sup>13</sup> The Vercelli Homily on Guthlac has been edited by Donald Scragg in *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 381–92. See also Downey, pp. 140–59.

<sup>14</sup> *Guthlac A*, p. 83. 'Those who teach and perform Christ's law here and raise up his praise, conquer those accursed spirits and get for themselves the repose of glory.'

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Coker, 'Voicing the Supernatural in Anglo-Saxon England' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 2019), pp. 9–14, 193–95, 215–22, analyses the use of hypermetrics in *Guthlac A*. See also Mark Griffith, 'Extra Alliteration on Stressed

on teaching as part of the *miles Christi*'s fight and Guthlac's spiritual conquest of the Crowland barrow further suggest that it is the struggle of a solitary one (*Guthlac A* line 27b) that benefits all Christians.<sup>16</sup>

The *OEPG* and *Vita* portray Guthlac's establishment on Crowland with terms for a spiritually martial occupation.

Felix's *Vita*

*OEPG*

Erat ergo annorum circiter viginti sex, cum se inter nubilosos remotioris eremi lucos, cum caelesti adjutorio, veri Dei militem esse proposuit. Deinde praecinctus spiritualibus armis adversus teterrimi hostis insidias, scutum fidei, loricam spei, galeam castitatis, arcum patientiae, sagittas psalmodiae, sese in acie firmans, arripuit. Tantae enim fiduciae erat, ut inter torridas tartari turmas sese contempto hoste interiiceret [...] Nam sicut egregium Doctorem gentium Damascum pergentem, quem ante

Hæfde he þa on ylde six and twentig wintra þa he ærest se Godes cempa on þam westene mid heofenlicre gife geweorðod gesæt. Ða sona wið þam scotungum þara werigra gasta þæt he hine mid gastlicum wæpnum gescylde, he nam þone scyld þæs Halgan Gastes geleafan, and hyne on þære byrnan gegearowode þæs heofonlican hihtes, and he him dyde heolm on heafod clænere geþanca, and mid þam strælum þæs halgan sealmsanges a singallice wið þam awerigedum gastum sceotode and

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Syllables in Old English Poetry: Types, Uses and Evolution', *ASE*, 47 (2020), 69–176 (pp. 88–90).

<sup>16</sup> See Thomas D. Hill, 'Hebrews, Israelites and Wicked Jews: and Onomastic Crux in Andreas 161–67', *Traditio*, 32 (1976), 389–90; Thomas D. Hill, 'The Middle Way: *Idel-Wuldor* and *Egesa* in the Old English *Guthlac A*', *Review of English Studies*, 30/118 (1979), 182–87 (p. 182); Graham Jones, 'Ghostly Mentor, Teacher of Mysteries: Bartholomew, Guthlac and the Apostle's Cult in Early Medieval England', in *Medieval Monastic Education*, ed. George Ferzoco (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 136–52 (p. 137); Damon, pp. 144–46.

secula evangelium Filii sui nuntiare  
praedestinavit, de tenebrosi  
Iudaeorum erroris caligine caelesti  
voce deduxit; sic et sanctæ  
memoriæ virum Guthlacum, de  
tumido aestuantis seculi gurgite, de  
obliquis mortalis ævi anfractibus,  
de atris vergentis mundi faucibus,  
ad perpetuæ beatitudinis militiam,  
ad recti itineris callem, ad veri  
luminis prospectum perduxit.<sup>17</sup>

campode. And nu hwæt ys swa  
swiþe to wundrianne þa diglan  
ures Drihtnes, and his  
mildheortnyse domas; hwa mæg þa  
ealle asecgan? Swa se æþela lareow  
ealra þeoda Scs Paulus se apostol  
þone ure Drihten ælmihtig God  
forestihtode godspellianne his folce;  
he wæs ær þon ehtere his þære  
halgan cyrcan, and mid þan þe he to  
Damascum ferde þære byrig, þæt he  
wæs of þam þystrum gedwolum  
abroden Iudea ungeleafulnyse mid  
þam swege heofonlicre stefne; swa  
þonne þære arwurðan gemynde  
Guðlac of þære gedrefednyse  
þissere worulde wæs gelæded to  
camphade þæs ecan lifes.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §27. ‘When he was about twenty-six years of age, he set forth with the help of heaven to be the soldier of the true God among the shady places of the remote wilderness. Then, girding himself with spiritual arms against the snares of the most wicked enemy, he took up the shield of faith, the breastplate of hope, the helmet of chastity, the bow of patience, the arrows of psalmody, making himself strong for the battle-line. Indeed, so great was his faith that, despising the foe, he hurled himself against the torrid troops of Tartarus [...] For just as [God] with a heavenly voice had led forth the great teacher of the Gentiles when he was on his way to Damascus out of the gloomy mist of the error of the Jews, him whom had been predestined before all worldly realms to preach the Gospel of the Son, so [God] led Guthlac, a man of saintly memory, from the raging abyss of this turbulent time, from the winding routes of this mortal age, from the black maws of this declining world to the war for eternal bliss, to the path of the correct journey and vision of true light.’

<sup>18</sup> *OEPG*, pp. 116–17. ‘When he was twenty-six years old, the warrior of God first became established in that distant waste with heavenly grace. Then immediately he shielded himself with spiritual arms against the arrows of those wicked spirits; he took the shield of faith of



This passage equates Guthlac's move to Crowland with the epiphany of St. Paul, who was stuck in the 'dark errors of Jewish disbelief' (*tenebrosi Iudæorum erroris/pystrum gedwolum ... Iudea ungeleafulnysse*). Guthlac's link to Paul was previously emphasised in the *OEPG* through linking Paul's persecution of Christians (*he wæs ærþon ehtere his þære halgan cyrcan*),<sup>19</sup> with Guthlac's own persecution of his enemies as a secular warlord (*Ða wæs ymbe nigon winter þæs þe he þa ehtrnysse begangende wæs se eadiga Guthlac*).<sup>20</sup> The comparison of Paul's conversion to Guthlac's move to Crowland as an anchorite (and not to Guthlac's earlier transition from worldly pursuits into monkhood) suggests that Felix and the *OEPG* compiler saw the anchorage as the holiest order and true remission of the 'tribulation of this world' (*gedrefednysse þissere worulde*).<sup>21</sup> The reference to Paul's dispelling of 'dark errors' also portrays the *miles Christi* as one who fights against temptation and enemies of the faith for the benefit of the wider community. Guthlac's complete shift to 'the military service of the eternal life' is signified through the donning of spiritual armour, a trope ultimately derived from Paul's letter to the Ephesians 6.10–17.<sup>22</sup>

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the holy spirit; and donned the byrnie of heavenly hope on himself; and he placed the helmet of pure thoughts on his head; and with the darts of holy psalmody he shot and fought those wicked spirits continually. And now what is there so much to wonder at than the secret might of our Lord, and the judgments of his mercy; who may tell all of them? Just as the noble teacher of all nations, St. Paul the apostle, whom our Lord Almighty God foreordained to preaching the gospel to his people; he who was before a persecutor of his holy church, and when he journeyed to the city Damascus he was delivered from the dark errors of the Jews' disbelief by the sound of a heavenly voice; so too Guthlac of worthy memory was led from the tribulation of this world to the military service of the eternal life.'

<sup>19</sup> *OEPG*, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> See Lipp, 48–49.

<sup>22</sup> John Hermann, 'The Recurrent Motifs of Spiritual Warfare in Old English Poetry', *Annale Mediævale*, 22 (1982), 7–35.

The *Guthlac*-narratives adapt the generic military concept of *campfad* and *militia* for a spiritual context aligned with the *Regula*'s portrayal of the anchorite as a fighter. Yet, where the *Regula* describes coenobitic monks as those piously 'fighting' in a way similar to an anchorite, *OEPG* and *Vita* seem to distinguish between non-fighting communal churchmen and solitary spiritual fighters.<sup>23</sup> The superiority of hermits is evident through the portrayal of Guthlac as a soldier more valuable to God once he is on Crowland, and not while he is in the monastic community at Repton where Guthlac is merely called the *famulum Christi* or *Cristes þeow*, 'the servant of God' (*Vita* §§19–24/ *OEPG* 110–13). In emphasising Guthlac's spiritually martial nature once he inhabits his *ancersetl* through the title of 'warrior of Christ' (*miles Christi/cempa Cristes*) the *Guthlac*-narratives made Guthlac a suitable model for Anglo-Saxon aristocrats who 'tended to regard Christianity in terms of their warrior code.'<sup>24</sup> The heroic nature of Guthlac's devotion is manifest in his fights with demonic assailants and defense of the Crowland hermitage.

The *Guthlac*-narrators present the saint heroically mastering his own temptation, which in turn drives demonic influences away from the larger Christian community. In accomplishing this mission Guthlac demonstrates how the military discipline and virtues of secular soldiery could be applied to spiritual battles.<sup>25</sup> The *milites Christi* defeat devils using the spiritual armaments, which Guthlac dons as he settles on Crowland. Although the description of spiritual armour in the *OEPG* omits reference to the 'bow of

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<sup>23</sup> *La Règle de Saint Benoît*, ed. Neufville, I p. 436. For analyses of martial aspects of coenobitic monasticism see also: Christopher Jones, 'Envisioning the *Cenobium* in the Old English *Guthlac A*', *Medieval Studies*, 57 (1995), 262–71, and Katherine Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 92–99.

<sup>24</sup> Albertson, p. 16. See also Gordon Hall Gerould, *Saints' Legends* (Boston; New York: Riverside Press Cambridge, 1916), pp. 60–62, 80; Smith, *Monastic Culture*, pp. 73–79, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, 'Envisioning', p. 267; Albertson, p. 24.

patience' (*arcum patientiae*) that is mentioned in Felix's *Vita*, the Old English expands the description of each piece of spiritual war gear to emphasize the holy nature of *miles Christi*. As such the *scutum fidei* ('shield of faith') becomes *scyld þæs Halgan Gastes geleafan* ('the shield of the faith of the holy spirit'); the *loricam spei* ('breastplate of hope') becomes the *byrnan [...] heofonlican hihtes* ('byrnie of heavenly hope'); the *galeam castitatis* ('helmet of chastity') becomes the *heolm [...] clænera gepanca* ('helmet of pure thoughts'); the *sagittas psalmodiæ* ('arrows of psalmody') become the *strælum þæs halgan sealmsanges* ('arrows of holy psalmody'). The Old English expansions sanctify the weapons as unequivocally faith-based at the same time as the texts present the *gastlicum wæpnum* in an explicitly martial tone.<sup>26</sup>

The depiction of faith in martial terms came to Anglo-Saxon hagiographers from many avenues. Beyond the notion of spiritual armour found in Ephesians, there are numerous references to spiritual warfare in Scripture.<sup>27</sup> For example, Christian devotion is characterized as a fight in 1 Tim 1.18 saying *ut milites in illis bonam militiam* ('so that you with [prophesies] might fight the good fight'); 1 Tim 6.12 says *certa bonum certamen fidei* ('fight the good fight of faith'); 2 Tim 4.7 says *bonum certamen certavi* ('I have fought the good fight'). The *miles Christi* motif likewise appears in 2 Tim 2.3 *labora sicut bonus miles Christi Iesu* ('work just as the good soldier of Jesus Christ'). Felix and writers of the *Guthlac*-narratives worked within a hagiographical tradition that knew and used these martial motifs from Scripture.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See also *Guthlac A*, lines 177a–81a.

<sup>27</sup> John Hermann, *Allegories of War: Language and Violence in Old English Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), pp. 8–32; Downey, pp. 42–44; Andy Orchard, 'Lege Feliciter, Scribe Felicius: The Originality of the *Vita S. Guthlaci*', in *Guthlac: A Saint for Midland England*, ed. Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Shaun Tyas, 2020), pp. 25–54 (pp. 46–47).

<sup>28</sup> Damon, pp. 63–65, 74–79; Hill, 'Soldier of Christ', pp. 65–69.

The metaphor of warfare for spiritual struggles was a theme that hagiographers could have learned from other patristic texts as well. Hermann has particularly emphasised the role of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, with its graphic depictions of virtues slaughtering sins, as a foundational example of how Christian and Anglo-Saxon writers might envision the struggle against temptation akin to physical struggles.<sup>29</sup> The concept of temptation and spiritual reward as the fruits of victory in battle can be seen in Augustine's assertion in *De agone Christiano* ('On the Christian Struggle') that *corona victoria non promittitur nisi certantibus* ('the crown of victory is not granted save through conflicts').<sup>30</sup> This invokes the idea that spiritual *corona victoria* could only be achieved through spiritual combat reminiscent of physical battle.

In Anglo-Saxon hagiographical texts, motifs of spiritual warfare from patristic texts melded with native Germanic heroism to commemorate and develop the idea of the *miles Christi*. The glorified model of the *miles Christi*, presented as both Germanic hero and Christian saint waging spiritual combat against temptation, mirrored the tradition of personifying virtues and sins as violent warriors. As Hermann argued, 'by enlisting cultural traditions which valorize literal violence in the service of the essentially pacific struggle Christians are ordinarily called upon to wage, Old English poets are able to transform the mundane into the mythical.'<sup>31</sup> The framing of Guthlac's

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<sup>29</sup> John Hermann, 'Some Varieties of Psychomachia in Old English I', *The American Benedictine Review*, 34/1 (1983), 74–86; John Hermann, 'Varieties of Psychomachia II', *The American Benedictine Review*, 34/2, (1983), 188–222. See also Andy Orchard, 'Conspicuous Heroism: Abraham, Prudentius, and the Old English Verse *Genesis*', in *Heroes and Heroines in Medieval English Literature*, ed. Leo Carruthers and André Crépin (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 45–58; Gernot Wieland, 'The Origin and Development of the Anglo-Saxon Psychomachia Illustrations', *ASE*, 26 (1997), 169–86.

<sup>30</sup> *De agone Christiano*, ed. Joseph Zycha (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1900), p. 101; see too W. Bolton, 'The Background and Meaning of *Guthlac*', *JEGP*, 61/3 (1962), 595–603 (pp. 597–98). Augustine was perhaps influenced by Revelations 2.10.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann, 'Motifs', pp. 20–24, 31–34; Hermann, 'Psychomachia II', pp. 205–09.

internal struggle with temptation as a larger battle against the forces of Satan is played out in the saint's conversion of Crowland for Christian use and defeat of demonic forces.

While other saints have intangible demonic enemies or temptations, Guthlac's enemies are demons with corporeal power,<sup>32</sup> and in the words of Mayr-Harting, 'Crowland attracted devils as sea-islands attract puffins.'<sup>33</sup> *Guthlac*-narratives frame Crowland as an ideal place for the eremitic saint to take up the spiritual arms of a *miles Christi* against the demons,<sup>34</sup> where the *Regula*'s metaphorical assertion that an anchorite will fight demons alone in the desert could be made literal.<sup>35</sup> The saint's and demons' fight is centred on the *tumulus*, *beorg*, or *hlæw* that Guthlac settles. The *Guthlac*-narratives seem to suggest that this structure be read as both an actual 'barrow-mound' as well as a metaphorical 'mountain' representing Guthlac's spiritual ascension.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Alvin Lee, *The Guest-Hall of Eden: Four Essays on the Design of Old English Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 103, 114–15.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991), p. 230. See: Justin Noetzel, 'Monster, Demon, Warrior: St. Guthlac and the Cultural Landscape of the Anglo-Saxon Fens', *Comitatus*, 45 (2005), 105–32 (pp. 105–20), as well as Michael Chisholm 'Crowland in St. Guthlac's Time', in *Guthlac: A Saint for Midland England*, ed. Jane Roberts and Alan Thacker (Shaun Tyas, 2020), pp. 316–25, for discussions of the historical landscape of Crowland (lit. 'land between the river-bend') in Lincolnshire as well as the place of the fenlands in Anglo-Saxon literary imaginations.

<sup>34</sup> For a general discussion on landscapes in anchoritic hagiographies, see Stephanie Clark, 'A More Permanent Homeland: Land Tenure in *Guthlac A*', *ASE*, 40 (2011), pp. 75–102 (pp. 76–79).

<sup>35</sup> Guthlac's struggles are particularly influenced by Bartholomew's, Antony's, and Paul the Hermit's fights with the demons. Alfred Siewers, 'Landscapes of Conversion: Guthlac's Mound and Grendel's Mere as Expressions of Anglo-Saxon Nation Building', *Viator*, 34 (2003), pp. 1–39 (p. 18); Jones, 'Ghostly Mentor', pp. 139–48.

<sup>36</sup> For overviews of the various interpretations of the *beorg* in the *Guthlac*-narratives, see Maj-Britt Frenze, 'Holy Heights in the Anglo-Saxon Imagination: Guthlac's *beorg* and Sacred Death', *JEGP*, 117/3 (2018), 315–42 (pp. 327–35); Lindy Brady, 'Colonial Desire or Political Disengagement? The Contested Landscape of *Guthlac A*', *JEGP*, 115/1 (2016),

Semple has shown how Anglo-Saxons treated barrow mounds on boundaries with superstition, associating the mounds with paganism or diabolic presences.<sup>37</sup> Just as the placement of Christian burial grounds or monasteries sought to physically redefine such landmarks, so Guthlac's struggle with the demons over for control of the *beorg* provides an example of how the piety of a solitary *miles Christi* could convert unholy or fiendish places into Christian havens while simultaneously attaining spiritual perfection.

After Guthlac's settlement on Crowland, he is beset by demons who attempt to remove him from his purpose as well as the barrow.<sup>38</sup> In the battle over the *beorg* that Guthlac inhabits, both the demons and Guthlac follow the same plan of attack that the devil in *Juliana* describes for tempting souls.<sup>39</sup> Guthlac, the holy warrior hard in resistance (*eadig oretta, ondwiges heard*), goes to the barrow armed with spiritual weapons (*Guthlac A* lines 176–78a). The devils attempt to drive Guthlac astray with the arrows of temptation but, to adapt the words of Belial in *Juliana*, *ellenrofne gemetton modigne metodes cempan* ('they meet a courageously brave soldier of God'). Meanwhile, the saint uses his own arrows of the psalmody to besiege the demonic strongholds or *beorgas*. As a lone warrior against many, Guthlac conquers his many perils

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61–78 (pp. 71–77); Kelly Wickham-Crowley, 'Living on the Ecg: the Mutable Boundaries of Land and Water in Anglo-Saxon Contexts', in *A Place to Believe In: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, ed. Clare Lees (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 85–110 (pp. 96–99).

<sup>37</sup> Semple employed a mix of archeological, place-name, and literary evidence in her article 'A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England', in *World Archaeology*, 30/1 (1998), 109–26.

<sup>38</sup> Laurence Shook, 'The Burial Mound in *Guthlac A*', *Modern Philology*, 58/1 (1960), 1–10 (pp. 8–9).

<sup>39</sup> See *Juliana* in *The Exeter Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 113–33.

(*þær se cempa oferwon frecnessa fela*, *Guthlac A* lines 180b–81a).<sup>40</sup> Felix had previously stressed this fact through the term *solitaria vita* (‘the solitary life’, *Vita* §§24, 28, 50) used to describe Guthlac’s life after he decides to leave the monastery and become a *miles Christi*.<sup>41</sup> These references to Guthlac’s solitude reinforce the idea that the soldier of God must fight alone to overthrow the many perils that beset the wider community.

Although the narrator or poet frames temptation as spiritual warfare with heroic diction, Guthlac appears to conceive his struggle as removed from any violence.<sup>42</sup> For example, in *Guthlac A* Guthlac clearly states that he abstains from spilling blood:<sup>43</sup>

No ic eow sweord ongean  
mid gebolgne hond oðberan þence,  
worulde wæpen, ne sceal þes wong gode  
þurh blodgyte gebuen weorðan,  
ac ic minum Criste cweman þence  
leofran lace. Nu ic þis lond gestag,  
fela ge me earda þurh idel word  
aboden habbað. Nis min breost-sefa  
forht ne fæge, ac me friðe healdeð

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<sup>40</sup> Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, p. 32 argues that *Guthlac A* emphasizes the solitary nature of the saint. See Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Narrative Literature*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001), pp. 105–14, for an analysis of the varying number of devils Guthlac fights and the relationship between the singular *miles Christi* and the multifarious nature of demonic temptation.

<sup>41</sup> Roberts, ‘Prose Translation’, pp. 374–75.

<sup>42</sup> Angela Abdou, ‘Speech and Power in Old English Conversion Narratives’, *Florilegium*, 17 (2000), pp. 195–212 (p. 205); Damon, pp. 131–46.

<sup>43</sup> Bolton, p. 601; Lee, p. 106.

ofer monna cyn se þe mæгна gehwæs  
weorcum wealdeð.<sup>44</sup> (ll. 302b-12a)

In this passage, Guthlac reinforces his nonviolence by swearing off the use of physical weapons and violent conquest.<sup>45</sup> Guthlac then states that the conversion of the *beorg* will not be through bloodshed (*þurh blodgyte*) but through following the example of Christ, who keeps peace over mankind (*frīðe healdeð ofer monna cyn*). This suggests that the highest form of power cannot be held through force or physical violence. Spiritual warfare transcends mundane violence, just as Guthlac has transcended the worldly pursuits of his youthful raiding to become a *Godes cempa*. Guthlac's renunciation of weapons contrasts the depiction of secular heroes in the *Guthlac*-narratives who rely on the sword and 'worldly weapons' (*worulde wæpen*) wielded with an 'enraged hand' (*gebolgne hond*). Guthlac's refusal to become enraged likewise distances him from the demons. Elsewhere in *Guthlac A* *gebolgan* is used to describe demons, who say that *beoð þa gebolgne* (line 287a) when they attack Guthlac and are then *bolgenmode* (line 567b) when they bring Guthlac towards Hell. The enraged or agitated mindset of the devils contrasts the saint's own pursuit of Christ's 'dearer sacrifice' (*leofran*

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<sup>44</sup> *Guthlac A*, p. 92. 'I don't mean to bear a sword, a worldly weapon, with an enraged hand against you. This good plain shall not be inhabited through the gushing of blood, but I aim to please my lord Christ with a dearer sacrifice. Now that I have ascended this land you have offered many dwellings through your idle words. My innermost mind is not afraid or doomed, but He keeps me in peace over mankind, He who wields all power over all works.'

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Enid Bridges, *Generic Contrast in Old English Hagiographical Poetry*, *Anglistica* 22 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1984), 117-26.



lace)<sup>46</sup> towards ‘peace’ (*frið*) and associates the heroic rage marked by *gebolgan* with damnation.<sup>47</sup>

The conflict between the violent instability of worldly temptation and the peaceful *stabilitas* of the saint permeates the *Guthlac*-narratives.<sup>48</sup> In facing various temptations, Guthlac shows how the *miles Christi* is unwavering in his purpose and that he cannot be driven from the barrow or corrupted in his ways. The power of saintly *stabilitas* enables Guthlac to banish the devils from Crowland. When devils attack Guthlac in the guise of armed Britons, they are unable to harm Guthlac even though they assault him with their *stræla*.<sup>49</sup> The saint then dispels them with a recitation of Psalm 67.

Felix’s *Vita*

OEPG

Velut prophetico ore sexagesimi He þa sona unforhtlice þa stræle  
septimi Psalmi primum versum þara awerigdra gasta him fram  
psallebat: Exurgat Deus [et asceaf, and þone sealm sang:  
dissipentur inimici eius],<sup>50</sup> et Exurgat deus et dissipentur, et  
reliqua. Quo audito, dicto reliqua. Sona swa he þæt fyrmeste  
velocius, eodem momento,  
omnes dæmoniorum turmæ,

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<sup>46</sup> For discussion of the pun on Christ’s *lac* and Guthlac’s name see Lipp, p. 54; Fred Robinson, ‘The Significance of Names in Old English Literature’, *Anglia: Journal of English Philology*, 86 (1968), 14–58 (pp. 46–48, 54–57).

<sup>47</sup> Alaric Hall, ‘Constructing Anglo-Saxon Sanctity: Tradition, Innovation and Saint Guthlac’, in *Images of Medieval Sanctity*, ed. Debra Higgs Strickland (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 207–35 (pp. 220–31).

<sup>48</sup> For an overview of the theme of *stabilitas* in the *Guthlac*-narratives, see Weber, pp. 205–11.

<sup>49</sup> OEPG, pp. 135–37.

<sup>50</sup> Colgrave, p. 111, notes that only three of the *Vita* manuscripts, C<sub>1</sub>, Bn, and G, preserve a longer quotation of the Psalm.

velut fumus, a facie ejus fers sang þæs sealmes, þa gewiton hi  
evanuerunt.<sup>51</sup> swa swa smic fram his ansyne.<sup>52</sup>

The description of Guthlac pushing away the demonic *stræla* is new in the *OEPG*. In adding this detail, the *OEPG* demonstrates Guthlac's use of the *scylde þæs halgan geleafan* to ward off temptation. Guthlac does not protect himself physically but with immaterial faith that has a tangible force for the demons. So too does the term *stræl* become dualistic, referring both to the physical javelins that the devils appear to be carrying as well as to the metaphorical javelins of temptation or *costunge streale*.<sup>53</sup> However, it is important that Guthlac does not physically touch the demons himself. Instead of using tangible force against demons or unbelievers, Guthlac, the soldier of God, uses the steadfastness of his devotion, reflected in: the *scylde þæs halgan geleafan*, the recitation of the psalms, and his *mildheortness*, which apotropically counter his spiritual attackers. In so doing, he shows contempt for the demons, as well as the physical instruments of war.

The only armaments that Guthlac uses to fight off the demons are the psalmody and the sign of the cross.<sup>54</sup> The *OEPG* says that the saint

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<sup>51</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, § 34. 'As if with a prophetic mouth he began to sing the first verse of the sixty-seventh psalm, 'May the Lord arise [and let his enemies be scattered]', and the rest. When they had heard this, in the same moment, quicker than words, all of the hordes of demons vanished from his face like smoke.'

<sup>52</sup> *OEPG*, pp. 136–37. 'Fearless, he then immediately pushed away the javelins of those wicked spirits from him, and sang the psalm: *Exurgat Deus et dissipentur, et reliqua*. As soon as he had sung the first verse of the psalm, they departed just like smoke from his face.'

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>54</sup> For use of the cross in *Guthlac* poems of the Exeter book, see Jane Roberts 'Guthlac of Crowland and the Seals of the Cross', in *Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), pp. 113–28 (p. 125). For the use of the cross as a weapon see David Johnson, 'The *Crux Usualis* as Apotropaic Weapon in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Place of the Cross*, ed. Karkov, pp. 80–95.

‘continually shot and fought with wicked spirits’ (*singallice wið þam awerigedum gastum sceotode and campode*) using the psalms. Furthermore, it is with the recitation of psalms that Guthlac dispels the devils before his mastery of temptation.<sup>55</sup> When the devils, in the form of wild beasts, attempt to drive Guthlac from Crowland, he protects himself with the ‘sign of the cross’ and ‘shield of holy faith’:

Felix’s *Vita*

*OEPG*

Sanctus itaque Christi famulus,  
armato corde signo salutari.<sup>56</sup>

He þa se halga wer Guþlac hine  
gewæpnode mid þan wæpne þære  
Cristes rode, and mid þam scylde  
þæs halgan geleafan.<sup>57</sup>

The Old English is more explicit than the *Vita* in identifying the sign of salvation (*signo salutari*), as the ‘cross of Christ’ (*Cristes rode*). The stress on the cross is carried through the *OEPG* chapter as Guthlac banishes demons with the sign of the cross and words, where the *Vita* shows the saint using only words.<sup>58</sup> So too does the *OEPG* add the *scylde þæs halgan geleafan*, in reference to the armour of faith presented earlier in the story.

The saint’s spiritual weapons have direct impact in metaphysical struggles. While the devil’s darts cannot pierce the saint once properly armoured, the saint can dissipate the demons like smoke. The dissipation of the demons follows the structure of Psalm 67: *Exsurgat Deus, et dissipentur*

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<sup>55</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §§29 and 34; *OEPG*, pp. 119–22 and 135–37.

<sup>56</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §36. ‘And so the saintly servant of Christ, having armed his heart with the sign of salvation.’

<sup>57</sup> *OEPG* pp. 139–40. ‘Then he, the holy man Guthlac, armed himself with the weapon of Christ’s cross and with the shield of holy faith.’

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, ‘Seals of the Cross’, p. 115.

*inimici ejus; et fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie ejus. Sicut deficit fumus, deficient.*<sup>59</sup> The Psalm is martial in nature and carries the idea of God dispelling a believer's enemies, while protecting their possession of ordained inheritance.<sup>60</sup> In the *Guthlac*-narratives the enemies of God are inconsequential and have lost their effect on the saint. They are thus immaterial *fumus/smic* ('smoke'), able to be banished with spiritual acts of courage.

As Guthlac solidifies his faith and becomes less vulnerable to worldly sin or doubt or the assaults on his worldly presence, he conquers the demons. After Guthlac proves to the demons that they are unable to drag him into hell (*Vita* §31/ *OEPG* 127–33) two of the demons lament their defeat:

Felix's *Vita*

*OEPG*

'Vires nostras ubique per te fractas lugemus, et inertiam nostram adversus valetudinem tuam ploramus. Non enim te tangere, aut tibi appropinquare audemus.' <sup>61</sup>	Wit wepað forþon þe uncer mægn eall þurh þe ys gebrocen, and we þe nu ne moton to cuman, ne to þe nane spræce habban; ac on eallum
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<sup>59</sup> *Biblia sacra: iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, volumes 9–10*, ed. Boniface Fischer (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975), pp. 156–57. 'May God arise and his enemies be dispersed, and may they who hated him flee from his face. Just as smoke wafts away, may they dissipate.'

<sup>60</sup> Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Guthlac's Crossings', *Quaestio Insularis*, 2 (2001), 1–26 (pp. 18–21).

<sup>61</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §33. 'We lament our powers that are broken by you everywhere, and we bemoan our weakness against your power, for we do not dare to touch you or approach you.'

þingum þu unc hæfst gebysmrod,  
and ure miht eall oferswyþed.<sup>62</sup>

The perspectives of the demonic speakers in the *Vita* and *OEPG* vary. The devils in the *Vita* focus on their hesitancy to get near Guthlac, saying that they do not dare approach him (*non [...] tibi appropinquare audemus*). The devils in the *OEPG* present their defeat as a military one. They bemoan their humiliation and claim that their ‘might is completely overpowered’ (*miht eall oferswyþed*). This reworking in the Old English story both removes the inconsistency from the *Vita*, for the demons will approach Guthlac twice more in the story, and demonstrates that the demons perceive their defeat along secularly heroic lines. In the *OEPG*, the devils signal that their defeat will be complete. Where the devils bewail their lesser strength in comparison to Guthlac’s in the Latin text (*inertiam nostram adversus valetudinem tuam ploramus*), the devils in the *OEPG* say that they no longer have any strength at all.

The *OEPG* then introduces the fact that the devils are henceforth unable to speak with Guthlac. The next time demons appear, they speak in Brittonic, a language known to Guthlac because he spent time in Wales as a young man but foreign to many Anglo-Saxons, who appear to have maligned Brittonic culture.<sup>63</sup> Guthlac wards off their assaults and banishes them with

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<sup>62</sup> *OEPG*, p. 135. ‘We two weep because both of our entire might is broken through you, and we cannot now come to you, nor have any speech with you, but you have humiliated us in all things and both of our might is completely overpowered.’

<sup>63</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §34; *OEPG*, pp. 135–36. For analyses of the anti-Celtic nature of the *Guthlac*-narratives see Siewers, pp. 10–11; N. J. Higham, ‘Guthlac’s *Vita*, Mercia and East Anglia in the First Half of the Eighth Century’, in *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia*, ed. David Hill (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), pp. 85–90 (pp. 88–89); Morn Capper, ‘St Guthlac and the ‘Britons’: a Mercian Context’, in *Guthlac*, ed. Roberts and Thacker, pp. 180–213.

the recitation of Psalm 67, as noted above. In the next and final appearance of the devils (*Vita* §36/ *OEPG* 139–40), they have no human speech at all but bleat and roar as animals. Guthlac arms himself with the shield of faith and then banishes the devils with his own words. He says:

Felix's *Vita*

*OEPG*

‘O miserrime satana, manifestæ sunt vires tuæ. Nonne nunc miserarum bestiarum hinnitus, grunnitus, crocitusque imitaris, qui ante æterno Deo te simile tentasti? Idcirco impero tibi in nomine Jesu Christi, qui te de cælo damnavit, ut ab hoc tumultu desistas.’ Nec mora dicto citius, universa phantasmata vacuas in auras recesserunt.<sup>64</sup>

‘Eala þu earma wiðerwearda gast, þin mægn ys gesyne, and þin miht ys gecyþed; þu nu earma, wildeora and fugela and wyrma hiw ætywest, þu iu þe ahofe þæt þu woldest beon gelic þam ecan Gode. Nu þonne ic bebeode þe on þam naman þæs ecan Godes, se þe worhte and þe of heofones heannysse awarep, þæt þu fram þisse. ungeþwærnyse gestille.’ Ða sona æfter þon ealle þa ætywnysse þara awerigdra gasta onweg gewaton.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §36. “Lo, most miserable Satan, your powers are made manifest. Do you not now imitate the whinnying, the grunting and the croaking of miserable beasts, you who before attempted to liken yourself to the eternal God? Therefore I command you in the name of Jesus Christ who banished you from heaven, that you must desist from this tumult.’ Without delay, quicker than words, the whole apparition receded into the empty air.’

<sup>65</sup> *OEPG*, p. 140. “Alas, you wretched rebellious spirit, your power is seen and your might is made known; now you show the form of wretched wild beasts and birds and creeping things, you who once lifted yourself up that you might be equal to the eternal God. Now then I command you, in the name of the eternal God, who made you, and cast you down from the height of heaven, that you cease from this trouble.” Then immediately after that all the appearances of the accursed spirits went away.’

When Guthlac drives away the demons, he commands Satan to cease his ‘tumult’ (*tumultu*) or ‘discord’ (*ungeþwærnysse*), and immediately the spirits disappear. This ultimate banishment displays Guthlac’s authority over the devils, because it is an order, not an attack or assault, with which the saint banishes the demons.<sup>66</sup> Guthlac’s use of the verbs of command *imperare* and *bebeodan* demonstrates his victory on the spiritual battlefield as well as authority over the barrow. Moreover, as Downey has noted, Guthlac banishes these demons through his own words instead of using a psalm.<sup>67</sup> Guthlac has occupied the role of God in Psalm 67, as he arises and expells his enemies. In this we see salvation reflected in one’s power to speak, not in one’s ability to fight physically.<sup>68</sup> Guthlac’s ability to command the devils with his own words demonstrates his ascension to sainthood and the devils’ complete defeat.

O’Brien O’Keeffe notes that the demons in other eremitic saints’ lives, such as the *Vita S. Anthonii*, are perpetually tormenting the saint, whereas in the *Guthlac*-narratives they ‘become a discrete phenomenon of place’.<sup>69</sup> The final defeat of the demons is made clear in the *OEPG*’s summary of Guthlac’s spiritual fight in chapter 35.

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas Hill, ‘Drawing the Demon’s Sting: a Note on a Traditional Motif in Felix’s *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*’, *Notes and Queries*, 23/9 (September 1976), 388–90.

<sup>67</sup> Downey, pp. 32–33; Abdou, pp. 203–10.

<sup>68</sup> For discussion on the difference between the saintly and demonic voice in *Guthlac A* see Abdou, pp. 207–209; Adin Lears, ‘*Sod̥* and Sense: Language Problems and Affective Solutions in Anglo-Saxon Treatments of the Guthlac Legend’, *Viator*, 44/3 (2013), 63–84 (pp. 67–75).

<sup>69</sup> O’Brien O’Keeffe, p. 9. See also Dendle, pp. 104–06.

Felix's *Vita*

*OEPG*

Post non multum tempus, cum vir  
vitæ venerabilis Guthlacus contra  
insidias lubrici hostis sæpe  
certando triumphabat; ecce  
zabulus, vires suas fractas  
comperiens, novas versutias  
adversus eum sub toxico pectore  
versare cœpit.<sup>70</sup>

Mid þy se eadiga wer Guðlac swa  
gelomlice wið þam awerigedum  
gastum wann and campode, þa  
ongeaton hi þæt heora mægn and  
weorc oferswyþed wæs.<sup>71</sup>

The *OEPG* presents the defeat of demonic power as complete (*heora mægn and weorc oferswyþed wæs*), while the *Vita* suggests the devil is still able to tempt Guthlac, albeit in more guileful ways (*novas versutias adversus eum sub toxico pectore versare cœpit*). The *Vita* even stresses the devil's continued guile in the alliterative paronomasia between *versutias* ('guile') and *versare* ('to turn'). However, in the *OEPG*, the repeated use of *oferswyþ*, 'overpower', for the devil's might in both the devil's lament of Guthlac's victory at the mouth of hell (§33/134–35), as well as this final note of the devils' overthrow, frames the decline of demonic influence on Crowland within an envelope pattern. The demons will not turn to new temptations or change their tact, but are powerless to do anything further. The earlier demonstration of Guthlac's nonviolent power to counter demonic aggression has culminated in the total defeat of demonic might, to the extent they do not even have the power to lament their final downfall.

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<sup>70</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §35. 'Not much time afterwards, when the man of venerable life Guthlac was often triumphing in the fight against the snares of the deceitful foe; behold, the devil, realizing that his own strength was broken, began to turn new guile against [the saint] within his poisonous breast.'

<sup>71</sup> *OEPG*, p. 137. 'Since the blessed man Guthlac so frequently fought and battled against the cursed spirits, they perceived that their power and work was overcome.'



In *Guthlac A*, Guthlac breaks the barrows —*beorgas bræce* (line 209a)—where devils had previously dwelt, making the devils exiles. This expulsion of the demons recalls Christ’s own victory over demonic temptation in the desert.<sup>72</sup> Both Christ and Guthlac show that demons are exiled or completely defeated after they confront a sanctified being.<sup>73</sup> The poem says that: *wæs seo æreste earmra gæsta costung ofercumen. Cempa wunade bliþe on beorge, wæs his blæd mid god* (ll. 437–39a).<sup>74</sup> The *miles Christi*’s mission is accomplished. Demonic temptation has been rooted out and overthrown; the wilderness of Crowland has been tamed; the *beorg* has been transformed from the den of devils to a place of pilgrimage (*Vita* §§37–49, 52–53/ *OEPG* 140–60, 170–73/ *Guthlac A* lines 742–51); the lone warrior of God has created a space by which all Christians benefit.<sup>75</sup>

This thematic emphasis on the role of the *miles Christi* is presented to audiences in the introduction of Guthlac’s very name. The *Vita* and the *OEPG* composer provide this explanation for ‘Guthlac’:

Felix’s *Vita*

*OEPG*

<p>Hoc est Guth et Lac, quod Guðlac se nama ys on romanisc, Romani sermonis nitore personat Belli múnus: forþon þeah he mid Belli-Munus: quia ille cum vitiis woruldlice geswince menige bellando æternæ beatitudinis earfoðnysse adreah, and þeah mid</p>	<p>Belli múnus: forþon þeah he mid Belli-Munus: quia ille cum vitiis woruldlice geswince menige bellando æternæ beatitudinis earfoðnysse adreah, and þeah mid</p>
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<sup>72</sup> *Guthlac A*, lines 200–25; Luke 4. 1–13; Matthew 4. 1–11; Mark 1. 12–3; Lee, p. 104.

<sup>73</sup> Hill, ‘Devil’s Sting’, pp. 388–90.

<sup>74</sup> *Guthlac A*, p. 96. ‘the temptation of the wretched spirits was first overcome. The warrior dwelled happily on the barrow, his reward was with God’.

<sup>75</sup> Weber, p. 210. For reading of Guthlac as a builder, *bylta* (*Guthlac A* lines 148b, 733a), who creates path to heaven see Nancy Jiang, ‘Exploring the Positive Exilic Hero in *Christ and Satan* and *Guthlac A*’, *Quaestio Insularis*, 17 (2016), 1–19 (pp. 16–18); Lee, pp. 105–08; Shook, ‘Burial Mound’, p. 6; Noetzel, pp. 123–29.

præmia, cum triumphali infula gecyrrednysse þa gife þære ecan  
perennis vitæ percepisset.<sup>76</sup> eadignysse mid sige eces lifes  
onfengc.<sup>77</sup>

Guthlac's name, literally 'the offering' or 'play of battle', initially refers to the secular tradition, but foreshadows the saint's later role in spiritual warfare.<sup>78</sup> The name suggests how the saint appropriates heroic *mores* and martial ideologies for Christian salvation throughout his life. Yet the *OEPG* adds a clause to stress that Guthlac transitioned with his conversion (*mid gecyrrednysse*) from obtaining the secular rewards of worldly toil (*woruldlice geswince*) to the spiritual rewards he gains as a saint. The *OEPG* and *Guthlac A* continually repeat the idea that one must abandon the world to attain the 'glory of everlasting life' (*sige eces lifes onfengc*). They argue that while the spiritual struggle against temptation is a heroic pursuit, sainthood and secular violence are incompatible.

Old English narratives are largely uninterested in Guthlac's life from the point when he defeats the devils until his saintly death. The second Old English poem concerning Guthlac in the *Exeter Book*, *Guthlac B*, is based on chapter 50 of Felix's *Vita* and mostly accounts for Guthlac's death, and little of the saint's earlier life.<sup>79</sup> After the devils' defeat, the Vespasian compiler of

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<sup>76</sup> *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, §10. 'That is 'Guth' and 'Lac', which resounds in the lustre of the Roman speech as 'Gift of War'; since he received the prizes of eternal bliss with the triumphal band of everlasting life by warring against sins.'

<sup>77</sup> *OEPG*, p. 107. 'The name 'Guthlac' is in the Roman tongue, *Belli munus*, because although he endured many tribulations with worldly toil, he also received the gift of eternal blessedness with the victory of eternal life from his conversion.'

<sup>78</sup> Hill, 'Wicked Jews', p. 389; Bolton, pp. 595–603; Damon, p. 145.

<sup>79</sup> For discussions on this poem and liturgical interest in Guthlac's death, see Peter Lucas, 'Easter, the Death of St. Guthlac and the Liturgy for Holy Saturday in Felix's *Vita* and the Old English *Guthlac B*', *Medium Ævum*, 61/ 1 (1992), 1–16; Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 36–49.

the *OEPG* moves quickly to Guthlac's death, abbreviating the subsequent episodes that Felix relates in the *Vita* and subverting the saint's later miracles or interactions with Mercian nobility to emphasise Guthlac's fight against the demons as well as his holy death. Similarly, the Vercelli homilist and *Guthlac A* poet do not relate any aspects of the narrative beyond the struggle against demonic forces in converting the *beorg*.<sup>80</sup> By focusing their narratives on the saint's combat with the devils and neglecting the other sections of Guthlac's anchoritic life in the two versions of the *OEPG* as well as *Guthlac A*, it seems that Guthlac's role as a *miles Christi* was of primary interest for Anglo-Saxon audiences.<sup>81</sup>

The *Guthlac*-narratives developed their concept of the *miles Christi* through emphasising Guthlac's transition from physical warfare to spiritual conflict. When Guthlac remits his life as a secular warlord, he is introduced to the concept of spiritual warfare as a monk and recognizes that he could obtain Christian glory fighting temptation as a 'warrior of Christ'. In order to immerse himself in sanctified soldiery, Guthlac removes himself from all communities to seek the wastes of Crowland where he struggles against temptation. While using the militaristic metaphors of the soul's armour and *psychomachia* established in Scriptural literature to heroicise Guthlac, the *Guthlac*-narratives are careful to demonstrate the saint's removal from actions that might be misconstrued as physically violent. In doing so, the narratives suggest that only those who elevate themselves from secular orders to the *godcundlic camphad* (*Vita* §27/ *OEPG* 116–17) are able to reach the 'holy order' (*haligne had*, *Guthlac A* line 94).

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<sup>80</sup> Samantha Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: the Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 229–63; Jane Roberts, *Guthlac of Crowland, a Saint for Middle England* (Norwich: Fursey Pilgrims, 2009), p. 25; and Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, pp. 29–32; Dendle, pp. 106–14; Scragg, pp. 381–82.

<sup>81</sup> Downey, pp. 93, 140–59.

In the ‘holy order’ Guthlac ‘fought not for worldly things but lifted his mind toward heavenly glory’ (*ne won he æfter worulde, ac he in wuldre ahof modes wynne*, *Guthlac A* lines 399–400a). The alliterative linking of Guthlac’s separation from the world to heavenly glory through *worulde ... wuldre ... wynne* condenses Guthlac’s purpose into a single line; that one should not struggle in the world as Guthlac had done as a youth, but lift one’s mind toward heaven. As his remission of worldly concerns is emphasised through the paronomasia on *worulde*, ‘world’, and *wuldre*, ‘heaven’, Guthlac demonstrates how he has made a heaven on earth for the larger Christian community, which should fix its mind and strive in the higher spiritual realm. By following Guthlac’s example and giving up all ties to secular as well as monastic communities, those aspiring *milites Christi* may also overcome temptation and dwell blissfully on the *beorg* of their own conversion, knowing that a *Cempa wunade blipe on beorge, wæs his blæd mid god* (*Guthlac A* ll. 437–39a).

*In similitudinem fertae*: Mythologization of Burial Mounds in Early Medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin Literature<sup>1</sup>

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During the fifth through eighth centuries CE, several prehistoric barrows and earthworks throughout Ireland were reopened and early medieval burials were inserted.<sup>2</sup> O'Brien argues that later medieval populations saw these structures as ancestral burials and wished to establish continuity with their past, while claiming territory in the present through mortuary interaction with ancient sites.<sup>3</sup> In addition to being visible in material archaeology, processes of (re)interpreting pre-existing burial mounds via etiology, narrative construction, and identity creation operate in Latin and vernacular literature from medieval Ireland. The present paper will argue both that burial mounds themselves constitute links between worlds and faiths in an early Irish insular context, and that their literary representations occupy a lexical borderland with regards to the languages and semantic range of vocabulary used to describe them. We shall examine a

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<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Sarah Anderson, Janet Kay, and Nataliya Yanchevskaya at Princeton, Mark Williams, to Kevin Murray for drawing my attention to several citations, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, James Miller and Eleanor Smith for comments on earlier versions of this paper, Anna Chacko, and the CCASNC 2019 committee. Any remaining errors are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth O'Brien and Edel Bhreathnach, 'Irish Boundary *Ferta*, their Physical Manifestation and Historical Context', in *Tome: Studies in Medieval Celtic History and Law in Honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards*, ed. by Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), pp. 55–59.

<sup>3</sup> O'Brien and Bhreathnach, pp. 55–59.

number of terms for ‘burial mound’ and ‘grave’ in medieval Irish and Latin, along with the literary contexts in which they appear in order to elucidate relationships between landscape, language, and views of the past in medieval Ireland.

Arguably the most important and specific word for ‘barrow’ in medieval Irish is *síd* (plural *síde*), denoting a mound (usually a prehistoric burial) inhabited by supernatural beings, many of whom comprise the Túatha Dé Danann. In Ó Cathasaigh’s eyes, the Irish word and its Welsh equivalent *gorsedd*’s secondary meaning, ‘peace’, derive from their primary sense of ‘otherworldly mound’ or ‘otherworld’ in general.<sup>4</sup> While *síd* etymologically means ‘seat’ (< Proto-Indo-European (PIE) \**sed-*, *sēdos*),<sup>5</sup> and its cognates in Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit sometimes refer to the ‘seat of the gods’,<sup>6</sup> for the Insular Celtic-speaking populations of Britain and particularly Ireland, this otherworldly connotation leads not to far-off celestial habitations, nor human temples, but to the prehistoric mounds of the insular world. However, there may also be mortuary connotations inherent in the word. Given that other words for grave including Old Irish *lige*, *lecht* borrowed from Latin *lectus*,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, ‘The Semantics of *Síd*’, *Éigse*, 17.2 (1977), 137–55 (p. 154); Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘*Kaer Sidi* and Other Celtic Otherworld Terms’, in *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. by Patrick Sims-Williams, pp. 53–78 (first publ. as ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, in *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture: A Festschrift for Eric P. Hamp*, ed. by Ann Therese E. Matonis, and Daniel F. Melia (Van Nuys, California: Ford & Bailie, 1990), pp. 57–81).

<sup>5</sup> Ó Cathasaigh, p. 154; Joseph Vendryes, *Lexique Étymologique de L’Irlandais Ancien, Lettres RS* (Paris: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1974), pp. 105–06.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Latin *sēdes*, Greek ἕδος, and Sanskrit *sádas*; the last is discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> Vendryes, *De Hibernicis Vocabulis Quae a Latina Lingua Originem Duxerunt* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1902), p. 99.

and Old English *leger* come from the PIE root *\*legh-* ‘lie’,<sup>8</sup> it may be plausible, if tentative, to suggest that ‘seat’ or ‘sitting’ took on a similar mortuary valence to ‘lying’. This meaning may have been at some point applied to mound in the sense of burial, and thus to the peace of death.

There are, however, more compelling reasons to suggest mortuary connotations for the root or its descendants, as we encounter a few other instances of *\*sed-*, *sēdos* yielding meanings of ‘grave’ or ‘abode of the dead’. Firstly, there are three recorded instances of Latin *solium*, from the same PIE *\*sed-*, *sēdos* root, meaning ‘stone coffin’ as opposed to merely ‘throne (of the gods)’, ‘rule’, or even ‘tub’, in texts including Suetonius’s biography of Nero, and Curtius Rufus’s *Historiae Alexandri Magni Macedonis*.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, in Sanskrit, PIE *\*sed-*, *sēdos* produces the root *sad-*. Its derivative *sādas* can mean ‘abode’, as in the dwelling place of the gods, of *ṛta* ‘cosmic order’ or ‘truth’, or, most revealingly, of Yama, the god of death; likewise, *sannā* can mean ‘dead’.<sup>10</sup> Thus, perhaps the otherworldly or mortuary associations of *\*sed-*, *sēdos* were inherent in the PIE root itself, or, more likely, developed concurrently in several daughter languages. *Síd* in medieval Irish or its earlier Insular Celtic or Common Celtic progenitors might at some point have been

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Darling Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms of the Principal Indo-European Languages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 834; J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 226, 296.

<sup>9</sup> ‘solium’, in *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879). Cf. C. Suetonius Tranquillus, *Nero*, §50, in *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Opera, vol. I: De Vita Caesarum Libri VIII*, ed. Maximilian Ihm (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), p. 268, and Q. Curtius Rufus, *Historiae Alexandri Magni Macedonis*, X.10.9, ed. by Edmund Hedicke (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), p. 388.

<sup>10</sup> Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindiarischen*, 2 vols, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1996), II, pp. 692–93; *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, Lieferung 23 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1972), pp. 472–74.

related to the abode of the dead, either through IE ancestry or similar, parallel development as other IE languages.

However, we also encounter terms such as *fert*, *lecht*, *ríam*, and *cnocc* in medieval Irish, and *tumulus* and *sepulcrum* in Latin to reference a range of similar structures with subtly different connotations. Over the course of several centuries of literary development, producing such texts as Hiberno-Latin Patrician hagiography, vernacular religious poetry including *Féilire Óengusso* and *Slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúai*, and longer sagas *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and *Acallam na Senórach*, mythological *síde* gradually become sepulchers for their inhabitants as Ireland is Christianized. Yet, the distinction between mythologizing prehistoric burial mounds as supernatural residences and portraying them as graves is rarely clear-cut, and reflects the equally complex relationships between (imagined) past and present, and between landscape and identity formation. We shall start by examining depictions of and vocabulary used to describe mounds in early Hiberno-Latin Patriciana before addressing later vernacular texts.

#### TÍRECHÁN'S *COLLECTANEA* & MUIRCHÚ'S *VITA SANCTI PATRICII*

The seventh-century Bishop Tírechán's *Collectanea* lists the locations of a number of mounds and grave sites featured in the life of St. Patrick, employing a range of terminology to describe them in both Latin and Irish. The most discussed and relevant section for our purposes occurs when Patrick and his retinue come upon the daughters of King Láigaire, one of the saint's chief pagan opponents in both Tírechán's *Collectanea* and Muirchú's *Vita Sancti Patricii*. Patrick and his clerics encounter the girls beside the well of Clébach at the hill of Crúachain before sunrise, who consider them to be 'illos



uiros side aut deorum terrenorum aut fantassiam’.<sup>11</sup> Williams argues that we should take *aut deorum terrenorum* as a gloss on *uiros side* as evidenced by its comparable meaning and same genitive plural case, despite the fact that Latin *aut* usually differentiates mutually exclusive options, while *vel* or even *id est* typically separate synonyms.<sup>12</sup> We would add that while Tírechán’s Latin is not perfect, he never uses *vel* in the *Collectanea*, preferring *aut*, which appears in eight places, five of which are in the sentence in question in §26. Either way, however, it tells us that Tírechán or his later audience of glossators associated the pre-Christian gods of Ireland with the earth (*terrenorum*), *fantasia*, and specifically the evidently supernatural *síd* mounds.

The episode’s setting, Ráth Cruachan, was the traditional royal seat of Connacht and the site of a complex comprised of Neolithic through Early Medieval earthworks, including the titular *ráth* and enclosure.<sup>13</sup> While Tírechán does not mention any pre-existing structures (beyond the place-name itself), his subsequent use of *fert* indicates the construction of a new earthwork. The girls die shortly after being baptized,

sepilierunt eas iuxta fontem Clebach et fecerunt fossam rotundam in similitudinem fertae, quia sic faciebant Scotici homines et gentiles, nobiscum autem relic... uocatur, id est residuae puellarum. Et immolate

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<sup>11</sup> Tírechán, *Collectanea (Col.)*, §26.3, in *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, ed. by Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1979), p. 142). ‘men of the *síd* or earthly gods or an apparition’ This is my translation, following Jaqueline Borsje’s and Mark Williams’s suggestions that the daughters are the subject and Patrick and company are the object of the sentence (apud Mark Williams, *Ireland’s Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 40–41). All translations from Tírechán and Muirchú are Bieler’s unless otherwise noted.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, *Ireland’s Immortals*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

est ferta Deo et Patricio cum sanctarum ossibus et heredibus eius post se in saecula, et aecessiam terrenam fecit in eo loco.<sup>14</sup>

The girls may not encounter genuine men of the *síde*, but they themselves are soon confined to a type of mound, a *fert* or *relic*—the latter is a Latin loan word, and can refer to relics in the sense of saints’ relics, bodies (of the living or dead), and graves, pagan and Christian alike.<sup>15</sup> In one breath, Tírechán’s structure is *in similitudinem fertae*, ‘after the manner of a fert’, while in the next it *is* a *fert*, which is handed over to Patrick to build his church. The structure slips between terms and by extension, faiths, while the construction of Patrick’s church on the location allows for continuity of tradition and perhaps terminology. This transition may be paralleled in the significantly later Early Modern Irish saga *Altram Tige Dá Medar*, found in the fifteenth-century Book of Fermoy, where the Túatha Dé Eithne leaves the *síd*, dies shortly after becoming Christian, and is buried in a *fert*, with no comment as to the terminology used for such a grave.<sup>16</sup>

The semantic difference between *síd*—a supernatural habitation, and *fert*—a grave, then, is complex. *Fert* glosses *tumulus* in Philargyrius’s scholia on Vergil’s *Eclogues* V.42 in the tenth-century Codex Laurentinus, Plut.

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<sup>14</sup> *Col.*, §26.20–21, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 144. ‘they buried them beside the well of Clébach, and they made a round ditch after the manner of a *fert*, because this is what the heathen Irish used to do, but we call it *relic*, that is, the remains of the maidens. And the *fert* was made over to God and Patrick with the bones of the holy virgins, and to his heirs after him for ever, and he made an earthen church in that place.’ (trans. with my adaptations).

<sup>15</sup> eDIL, ‘reilic’, <dil.ie/34955>.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Altram Tighi da Meadar (The Fosterage of the House of Two Goblets)’, ed. by Margaret E. Dobbs, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 18 (1929), p. 12. Hambro argues for a fifteenth-century date for the text, rather than interpreting it as a modernization of an earlier tale; see Cathinka Hambro, ‘Waiting for Christian Fish on Milk from India: A Textual and Contextual Analysis of *Altram Tige Dá Medar* (‘The Nurishment of the House of Two Milk Vessels’)’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oslo, 2013), pp. 7–8.

XLV. Cod. 14.<sup>17</sup> The *Eclogues'* *tumulus* belongs to the shepherd Daphnis, who instructs,

Spargite humum foliis, inducite fontibus umbras,  
pastores, mandat fieri sibi talia Daphnis;  
et tumulum facite, et tumulo superaddite carmen.<sup>18</sup>

We cannot say from examining a later gloss that Tírechán was familiar with this commentary on Vergil and would have thus associated *fert* or *tumulus* with Daphnis, but taking *fert* in *Collectanea* §26 as *tumulus* or at least as 'boundary mound or dyke' would be in keeping with both the later gloss and Tírechán's use of Latin *fossa*.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the *fontibus* that Daphnis chooses for his burial mirror the 'fontem qui dicitur Clebach in lateribus Crochan' where Patrick meets Láigaire's daughters.<sup>20</sup> *Umbras* signifies 'shadows' in Vergil, but it can equally mean 'shades' or 'ghosts', also known as *fantassiae*. The time at which the encounter takes place, *ante ortum solis*, before the rising of the sun, is likewise amenable to shadows.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse*, ed. by Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, vols. 1, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), II, pp. xvii, 46. The manuscript is generally thought by Stokes, Strachan, and Rudolf Thurneysen to be of continental origin with Old Irish glosses comparable to the Irish in the Book of Armagh.

<sup>18</sup> *Eclogues*, V.42, in *Virgil Opera*, ed. by Roger Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 13. 'Sprinkle, shepherds, the ground with leaves, and spread shadows over fountains, Daphnis orders such be done for him, and make a *tumulus*, and on the *tumulus* add as well a poem.' (my trans.).

<sup>19</sup> eDIL, '1 fert', <dil.ie/21749>.

<sup>20</sup> *Col.*, §26.1, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 142: 'a fountain which is called Clébach on the slopes of Cruachu' (my trans.).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* It must be admitted that it is not certain how much Vergil was available to the seventh-century Irish, as opposed to merely commentary on Vergil; Muirchú seems to have been familiar with *Aeneid* VIII.369 and Vergil the Grammarian writing in the mid-seventh

Interestingly, it is this episode that prompts Tírechán's vernacular vocabulary. Elsewhere, he prefers *sepulcrum* (eleven uses), or occasionally *tumulus* (two uses), even when dealing with the pagan dead. Thus, in Dichuil, Patrick comes to, 'sepulcrum magnum magnitudinis mirae ingentemque longitudine'.<sup>22</sup> This description clearly pertains to a mound, tall and wide as it is, and its inhabitant, the *vir magnus* Macc Maicc Cais Maic Glais, is decidedly supernatural, yet it is neither *síd* nor *fert* (nor even *tumulus*). Patrick must shortly thereafter move a cross from the *sepulcrum* of a self-professed pagan to that of his Christian neighbor: 'Et exilít Patricius de curru suo et tenuit crucem et euellabat de gentili tumulo et posuit super faciem babtizati'.<sup>23</sup> In this episode, Patrick re-establishes proper Christian continuity by moving the appropriate commemorative funeral marker. At the same time, a larger sense of mortuary continuity is embedded in the landscape itself, where pagans and Christians share a larger burial complex, even if presumably the word *tumulus* implies their physical graves are made to different specifications. Being Christian at one's time of death does not seem to preclude speaking from beyond the grave, as a lonely priest laments his deserted lot in another holy man's dreams until his remains are removed from their abandoned *sepulcrum*.<sup>24</sup>

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century knew *Eclogues* III.90, or at least a commentary on it (Michael Herren, 'Classical and Secular Learning Among the Irish Before the Carolingian Renaissance', *Florilegium*, 3 (1981), pp. 124–25). The parallel we draw here is at least as much for the purpose of illustrating the semantic weight of *fert* as a gloss on *tumulus*, and what kind of supposed intertextual connections a slightly later Irish reader of Tírechán might have drawn, as asserting which texts Tírechán actually knew.

<sup>22</sup> *Col.*, §40.2, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 154: 'a huge *sepulcrum* of astounding breadth and excessive in length'.

<sup>23</sup> *Col.*, §41.3, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 156: 'And Patrick leaped from his chariot and took hold of the cross and pulled it from the pagan *tumulus* and placed it over the head of the baptized man'.

<sup>24</sup> *Col.*, §16, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 136.

*Sepulcrum* also appears in reference to a Neolithic mortuary complex in §12, when Láigaire claims he cannot convert,

nam Neel pater meus non sinivit mihi credere, sed ut sepeliar in cacuminibus Temro quasi uiris consistentibus in bello (quia utuntur gentiles in sepulcris armati prumptis armis) facie ad faciem usque ad diem erdathe.<sup>25</sup>

Tara is one of the most extensive archaeological sites in Ireland, and was pre-eminent among the many Irish mounds and hills associated with claims of kingship.<sup>26</sup> The fact that Tírechán's gentiles are buried *in cacuminibus*, on 'ridges' or 'peaks', strengthens the barrow association, both with Hiberno-Latin authors' use of *sepulcrum* and with pagan graves. *Tumulus*, or even *fert* would have been just as appropriate a word as *sepulcrum*, given the long and varied history of Tara's occupation and use, acknowledged by Tírechán's treatment and Láigaire's declamation.

*Fert* would also make sense in light of its occurrence in the medieval Irish legal tradition. Charles-Edwards points out that in the early legal text *Din Techtugad*, claims to land were established by riding over boundary *ferta*; mounds marked property boundaries, especially when they constituted

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<sup>25</sup> *Col.*, §12.2, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 132. 'for my father Níall did not allow me to accept the faith, but bade me to be buried on the ridges of Tara, I son of Níall and the sons of Dúnlán in Maistiu in Mag Liphí, face to face (with each other) in the manner of men at war (for the pagans, armed in their tombs, have their weapons ready) until the day of *erdathe*'.

<sup>26</sup> Gabriel Cooney, 'Icons of Antiquity: Remaking Megalithic Monuments in Ireland', in *The Lives of Prehistoric Monuments in Iron Age, Roman, and Medieval Europe*, ed. by Marta Díaz-Guardamino and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) pp. 55–76; *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, ed. by Edel Bhreathnach (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005); Edel Bhreathnach and others, *Mapping Death*, INSTAR Mapping Death Project (2010) <<http://www.mappingdeathdb.ie>> [accessed 4 February 2019].

ancestral burials.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned earlier, O'Brien discusses the reuse of *ferta* for early medieval burials, arguing that this process legitimized land possession.<sup>28</sup> The archaeological findings also legitimize Tírechán's report that Irish pagans were buried in pre-existing prehistoric structures, or natural landscape features mirroring man-made mounds. Tírechán does not use the word *fert* to describe the landmarks Láigaire mentions, but he does use it for a similar sort of ancestral complex, the *hiferti virorum Feicc*,<sup>29</sup> which are discussed at greater length by Muirchú.

Muirchú's *Vita Patricii* uses the vernacular *fert* on three occasions: twice in reference to the burial mounds of the men of Fíacc outside Tara,<sup>30</sup> and once to denote the *fertae martyrum* at the regal site of Emain Macha turned seat of Patrick's Armagh diocese.<sup>31</sup> *Fert*, as it appears in Muirchú, does not have a *síd*-like supernatural or pagan valence, as in Tírechán. It is tempting to see the recurring reference to the men of Fíacc as a kind of fixed and pleasantly

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Charles-Edwards, 'Boundaries in Irish Law', in *Medieval Settlements: Continuity and Change*, ed. by Peter H. Sawyer (London: Arnold, 1976), pp. 83–87 (p. 86); O'Brien and Bhreathnach, pp. 53–54; *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, ed. by Daniel A. Binchy (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978), I.205.22–213.37. For the use of earlier *tumuli* as Anglo-Saxon assembly points cf. Sarah Semple, 'A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England', *World Archaeology*, 30.1 (2010), 109–26 (p. 113). For Welsh *comparanda* cf. Charles-Edwards, 'Gorsedd, Dadl, and Llys: Assemblies and Courts in Medieval Wales', in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Aliko Pantos and Sarah Semple (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 95–105.

<sup>28</sup> O'Brien and Bhreathnach, p. 55. For a discussion of the transition between burial in family cemeteries and church sites, as well as developing church attitudes towards regulating of burial practices see O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in Ireland During the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD', in *The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches*, ed. by Nancy Edwards (Leeds: Maney, 2009), pp. 135–54.

<sup>29</sup> *Col.*, §8.2, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 130.

<sup>30</sup> Muirchú, *Vita Patricii*, §§I.14, 16, in *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, ed. by Ludwig Bieler (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1979), pp. 84, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Muirchú, §I.24, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 108.

alliterative phrase (*ferti virorum Feecc*), given its presence in *Tírechán* as well. *Fíacc's* mounds are assuredly incorporated into the landscape of pre-Christian Ireland, as they constitute a nocturnal destination for Láigaire, his druids, and champions to contend with Patrick's priestly pyrotechnics.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps *Fíacc's* pagan associations warrant vernacular terminology; however, the *fertae martyrum* in §I.24 would seem to do the exact opposite. *Fert*, then, in the hagiographical tradition applies more to burial structures, where the emphasis is on the *burial*, than to supernatural or unilaterally pagan edifices.

What should we make of this use of the vernacular for select accounts, even though both writers' other subject matter affords ample opportunity? The parlance of 'burial mound' is varied across the two Patrician works examined here, both between near synonyms within individual languages, and between Latin and Irish. We may not have enough sources from sixth- and seventh-century Ireland to conclude firmly the degree to which individual style develops in the otherwise often formulaic genre of hagiography, but we can suggest that different pressures, especially Armagh's claim to episcopal primacy as a result of its Patrician connections, might have motivated vernacular word choice for types of topography intimately involved in the legitimizing early Irish kingship. If *fert* has specific connotations of ancestral and royal burial, its use may be intended to emphasize the continuity of a site like Emain Macha's political status from royal seat to episcopal center, thereby bolstering Armagh's prestige.

*FÉLIRE OENGUSSO AND SLÁN SEISS, A BRIGIT CO MBÚAI*

In *Félire Oengusso*, a work ascribed to the early ninth-century bishop, Óengus of Tallaght, several pre-existing sites are explicitly replaced. Most of

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<sup>32</sup> Muirchú, §§I.16–8, in *Patrician Texts*, pp. 86–90.

these pre-existing sites were historically linked to kingship and mythological visitations and are archaeologically Neolithic mounds. Thus we hear, ‘Atbath borg tromm Temra la tairthim a flathe, col-lín corad sruithe maraid Ard mór Machae’<sup>33</sup> and ‘genti bidbaid bertar, ní trebtar ar-rátha’.<sup>34</sup> It is the monument itself that has died as a result of its princes’ demise and abandonment, but the structure is not called a tomb, whose importance as a marker of sovereignty increases with those buried there (as indeed Láigaire’s burial instructions indicate in Tírechán). Furthermore, these ‘genti bidbaid’ are carried away, at least in spirit, not left in their *ráths*, and are thereby removed from direct continuity with their pre-Christian landscape.

Likewise, the poem claims, ‘Borg Aillinne úallach/atbath lia slog mbágach, is mór Brigit búadach, is cáin a rrúam dálach’<sup>35</sup> and ‘Borg Emna ro tetha, acht mairte a cloche: is rúam iarthair betha Glenn dálach dá locha’.<sup>36</sup> Emain Macha’s lithic remnants stand, dating to the first century BCE and earlier, but it is not even considered a sepulcher.<sup>37</sup> The *rúam*, or cemetery, that has displaced these areas in prominence has its parallel in the description of Babylon as Thaddaeus and Simon’s *rúam* later in the *Martyrology of Óengus*.<sup>38</sup> Lest we believe *rúam* denotes an unambiguously Christian

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<sup>33</sup> *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, ll. 165–8, ed. and trans. by Whitley Stokes (London: Harrison and Sons, 1905), p. 24: ‘Tara’s mighty burgh perished at the death of her princes: with a multitude of venerable champions the great Height of Machae (Armagh) abides’.

<sup>34</sup> *Féilire Óengusso*, ll. 175–6, ed. and trans. by Stokes, p. 24: ‘guilty pagans [are] carried off, their *ráths* are not dwelt in’.

<sup>35</sup> *Féilire Óengusso*, ll. 189–92, ed. and trans. by Stokes, p. 25: ‘Aillenn’s proud burgh has perished with its warlike host: great is victorious Brigit: fair is her multitudinous *rúam*’.

<sup>36</sup> *Féilire Óengusso*, ll. 193–6, ed. and trans. by Stokes, p. 25: ‘Emain’s burgh it hath vanished, save that its stones remain: the *rúam* of the west of the world is multitudinous Glendalough’.

<sup>37</sup> Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 470.

<sup>38</sup> *Féilire Óengusso*, p. 219.



churchyard, or an exclusively monastic settlement, the *Metrical Dindshenchas* use the word to describe the burial of Carmun, an invading spell-caster, allegedly interred by the Túatha Dé Danann, 580 years before Christ.<sup>39</sup> The sort of semantic ambiguity in vocabulary for ‘cemetery’ follows the fluctuating boundaries between *tumulus* and *sepulchrum*, or *síd* and *fert*.

The larger motif at work in the *Martyrology of Óengus* is that of ruin, largely born out of the scriptural tradition. The mention of Babylon nods to an assemblage of Biblical *comparanda* for ruined cities from Lamentations, Jerimiah, and Revelations, as well as Late Antique Latin poems describing decaying or destroyed settlements, as Hume notes in an Anglo-Saxon context when considering potential influences on ruins in Old English poetry.<sup>40</sup> Vergil would also provide plenty of evocative descriptions of sacked Troy; indeed, both Vergil and Dares Phrygius have much later, eleventh- or twelfth-century Middle Irish literary adaptations. The terminology and many of the locations in the *Martyrology*, however, are deeply entrenched in the landscape of medieval Ireland.

In the ninth-century *Slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúai* the unruly landscape is also claimed by Brigit.<sup>41</sup> Kildare and surrounding environs are Brigit’s, whatever their antiquity, paralleling Patrick’s claims to former pagan sites such as Tara and Emain Macha in Tírechán. *Ferta* mark the poem’s landscape, and are described in one section: ‘Benna Iuchna, álaind port, imma ndessid ilar fert’.<sup>42</sup> In the end, the saint’s *rúam* is added to the patchwork of *fert*, ‘A

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<sup>39</sup> *The Metrical Dindshenchas* III, ed. by Edward Gwynn, 5 vols, Todd Lecture Series 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1903–35), pp. 2–8.

<sup>40</sup> Katherine Hume, ‘The “Ruin Motif” in Old English Poetry’, *Anglia: Journal of English Philology*, 94 (1976), pp. 341–47.

<sup>41</sup> For dating, see *Hail Brigit: And Old-Irish Poem on the Hill of Alemn*, ed. by Kuno Meyer (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co., 1912), pp. 10–11.

<sup>42</sup> *Hail Brigit*, §19, ed. and trans. by Meyer, p. 16. ‘The Peaks of Iuchna, delightful place, around which many *fert* sit’ (trans. by Meyer with my adaptations).

Brigit ‘sa tír atchíu, is cách a úair immudrá, rogab do chló for a chló ind rí, is tú fordatá. [...] táthut bith[f]laith lasin Ríg cen a tír i fail do rúaim’.<sup>43</sup> The poem, like *Féilire Óengusso*, is specific in its locales and celebratory in its victorious holy woman, claiming the entirety of the land ‘on which each one in turn has moved about’ for the saint, but it still reminds its audience that, as mutable as mortal (or mortuary) landscapes are, all permanence ought to rest above.

*TÁIN BÓ CÚAILGNE AND THE ACALLAM NA SENÓRACH*

The ambiguity between the types of structures indicated by *fert* and *síd* in Latin Patrician works spills over into longer vernacular narratives, besides those texts examined above. In both Recension 1 (*TBC-I*) and the Book of Leinster (*TBC-LL*) recension of *Táin Bó Cúailgne* Cú Chulainn sleeps in the *fert* in Lerga when recovering from his wounds while Lug fights on his behalf,<sup>44</sup> despite the latter’s otherworldly origins and stated connection to the *síde*.<sup>45</sup> Later in *TBC-LL*, Cú Chulainn is said to be recovering from his wounds in *Fert Sciach* after fighting Fer Diad, although we do not know if he is physically inside this mound or merely in a location named for a nearby mound.<sup>46</sup> *Fert* also refers to human graves in *TBC-LL* when Fergus tells

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<sup>43</sup> *Hail Brigit*, §§25–6, ed. and trans. by Meyer, p. 18. ‘Oh Brigit whose land I behold, on which each one in turn has moved about, thy fame has outshone the fame of the king—thou art over them all. [...] Thou hast everlasting rule with the king apart from the land wherein is thy *rúam*’.

<sup>44</sup> *Táin Bó Cúailgne from the Book of Leinster (TBC-LL)*, l. 1385, ed. and trans. by Cecile O’Rahilly (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970), pp. 38, 198; *Táin Bó Cúailgne: Recension I (TBC-I)*, l. 2112, ed. and trans. by Cecile O’Rahilly (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), pp. 65, 183.

<sup>45</sup> *TBC-I*, l. 2124, ed. by O’Rahilly, p. 65.

<sup>46</sup> *TBC-LL*, l. 4595, ed. by O’Rahilly, p. 127.

Medb that Cú Chulainn is responsible for, ‘dáig atbíth cach fert 7 cach lecht, cach lia 7 cach ligi fuil adíu go airther nHérend, is fert 7 is lecht, is lia 7 is ligi do degláech 7 do degóc arna tuttim ra degthóesech na buidne út.’<sup>47</sup> Yet, in *TBC-I*, the human Fráech’s corpse is carried off to a *síd*, not a *fert*, by a band of green-garbed women.<sup>48</sup>

The double terminology of tomb and otherworldly abode within the Irish tradition is further complicated in the late twelfth- to thirteenth-century *Acallam na Senórach*, a work that draws on material from earlier Patrician texts, including *Tírechán*. In a sort of converse of Fráech’s burial in the *síd* in *TBC-I*, the Túatha Dé seem to have their own *fert*. When Finn helps the sons of Midir hold off the rest of the Túatha Dé under Bodb Derg, Donn shows him the *fert* and the *lechts* of his people on the green outside their *síd*, reminiscent of the phrasing in the *Táin*.<sup>49</sup> Vendryes opines that while *lecht* refers to the burial itself where the corpse is lying, *fert* refers to the mound built over the grave; thus it is reasonable for the two words to appear together as a collective description.<sup>50</sup> After many are killed in the ensuing battle in the

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<sup>47</sup> *TBC-LL*, ll. 4579–83, ed. and trans. by O’Rahilly pp. 126, 263. ‘for every *fert* and every grave (*lecht*), every stone and every tomb (*ligi*) from here to the eastern part of Ireland is a *fert* and a grave (*lecht*), a stone and a tomb (*ligi*) for some goodly hero or for some brave warrior who fell by the valiant leader of yonder band’.

<sup>48</sup> *TBC-I*, ll. 856–7, ed. by O’Rahilly, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Acallamh na Senórach’, ll. 5113, ed. by Whitley Stokes, in *Irische Texte mit Wörterbuch*, vol. IV.1, ed. by Whitley Stokes and Ernst Windisch (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1900), pp. 1–438, ix–xiv.

<sup>50</sup> Vendryes, ‘Bibliographie’, *Études Celtiques*, 2 (1937), 152–56 (p. 154, n. 1). J. P. Mallory suggests that *fert* can apply to both the enclosing bank or ditch structure built around a grave mound and the grave mound itself (J. P. Mallory, *In Search of the Irish Dreamtime: Archaeology and Early Irish Literature* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), pp. 261–63). There is no reason to assume the meaning of the word must have remained stagnant over the entire medieval Irish period, and it is also possible that prehistoric enclosure ditches and mounds that had eroded and been overgrown with time looked similar enough to a

*Acallam*, however, the dead Túatha Dé are carried back into their *síde* of origin.<sup>51</sup> Thus, while we encounter both *fert* and *lecht*, we do not actually see any of the Túatha Dé interred there. The distinction between monumental graves and *síde* is subject to breaking down along with the boundaries between sagas' geographic and temporal worlds.

*Ferta* can be opened, much like the *sepulchrum* in Tírechán, where Patrick encounters Macc Maicc Cais Maic Glais.<sup>52</sup> In the *Acallam*, Patrick opens several burials, where, in addition to, or instead of souls being saved, treasure is unearthed. At Loch Linngáeth (Lough Croan), the saint asks Caílte whose grave (*fert*) lies on the hill (*tulach*) beneath them.<sup>53</sup> Caílte reveals that Airnélach, who dies from shame when he cannot pay a poet, and Sálbuide, a poet, share the southern mound. Upon revealing that the latter's tomb includes chains of silver, Benén states, 'Do ba maith linn [...] na seoit-sin d' faghbail. [...] Tucas nemh ar a náire don fhir ó chianaib. [...] 7 tabair nemh ar a shéduibh don óclach ele ud'.<sup>54</sup> Patrick replies affirmatively as Caílte opens the *fert*. While this episode strongly echoes analogues found in Tírechán, the idea that wealth—much less pagan wealth—might buy an otherwise unbaptized, unconfessed soul the kingdom of heaven is, to say the least, as Dooley and Roe opine, 'rather stretching Patrick's powers of intercession'.<sup>55</sup> The episode flirts with darker connotations of grave robbery, all the more for

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medieval audience to merit the same terminology. In any case, the word in both Vendryes's and Mallory's reckoning is associated with a sizeable earthwork used for burial.

<sup>51</sup> 'Acallamh na Senórach', ll. 5188, in *Irische Texte*, p. 119.

<sup>52</sup> *Col.* §40, in *Patrician Texts*, p. 154.

<sup>53</sup> 'Acallamh na Senórach', ll. 1064–85, in *Irische Texte*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>54</sup> 'Acallamh na Senórach', ll. 1088–92, in *Irische Texte*, p. 31: 'We would be most happy [...] to get his treasure. [...] You gave Heaven to [Airnélach] for his honor just now. [...] give this other man Heaven for his treasure'. (*Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, trans. by Ann Dooley and Harry Roe (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999) pp. 34–35).

<sup>55</sup> Dooley and Roe, p. 233.

Cáilte's personal knowledge of the mound's owner, even if Sálbuide's soul is ultimately saved, perhaps to cancel the debt of theft. The narrative is similar to that in Tírechán mentioned above, and upon which it may very well have been modeled, but where Tírechán preferred Latin *sepulchrum* to a vernacular term, the *Acallam* has not only *fert*, but indicates that the structure has been built atop a hill, tying it to the pre-existing topography of the area.

Questions of grave robbing and disposal of grave goods return when Conall requests the opening of the Cairn of Garb Daire, though perhaps more sinisterly given the supernatural objects removed:

& ro tochlad in carn, 7 frith Garb Daire ann cona arm-gaisced, 7 frith slabrad Logha meic Eithlenn ann, 7 frith in sciath imlan amal tucad ré thaeb h-é, 7 tucad na h-airm imshlán anís, 7 tucad in cend [...] 7 tucad Cáilte na h-airm-sin do Chonall, 7 ro bóí in slabrad aici féin da thabairt do naem Patraic, 7 ro muired in fert ar sin, 7 tancatar sun anund iarsin.<sup>56</sup>

Later, however, Cáilte gives the chain to the King of Ireland, instead of leaving it to the saint.<sup>57</sup> In this case, instead of merely plundering the valuables of a poet's grave, presumably with the intention of donating them to the church, it is a warrior's (and lamented former friend of Cáilte's) mound that is disturbed and whose corpse is stripped. This is a departure from the way Patrick treats pagan burial mounds in Tírechán's *Collectanea* and earlier in the

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<sup>56</sup> 'Acallamh na Senórach', ll. 2074–83, in *Irische Texte*, p. 59. 'when the cairn was dug up, Garb Daire was found with all his weapons. The chain of Lug, son of Eithlenn, was also found there, as well as his shield, as perfect as when it had been placed by his side. His weapons were brought up, as was his head. [...] Cáilte gave those weapons to Conall, but he kept the chain himself to give to Saint Patrick. They closed the mound and went back to the hall.' (trans. by Dooley and Roe, p. 64).

<sup>57</sup> 'Acallamh na Senórach', ll. 2376–7, in *Irische Texte*, p. 67.

*Acallam*. The structure is variously called a *carn* and a *fert*, seemingly synonymous words in this episode, both clearly denoting a raised grave mound.

In a crowning irony, of course, in the *Acallam*, the people of the *síde* will ultimately be buried for good inside their own mounds, effecting a final transfer from *síd* to *fert*-like edifices, when Patrick, ‘cuirfid Tuaith Dé Danann i nd-étnaib cnocc 7 carrac acht muna fhaice trú tadhál talman do thaidbsi, achtmadh in t-airfidech-so’.<sup>58</sup> Note that *cnocc*, in the *Metrical Dinshenchas* references the Neolithic mound at Knowth, located near a similar structure termed *Fert Cuile*.<sup>59</sup> This idea that the *síde* themselves are becoming *ferta* for their inhabitants fulfills the transformation prefaced by the episode with Láigaire’s daughters in Tírechán where the girls’ tomb adds to the expanding mortuary landscape, Eithne’s departure and death in *Altram Tige Dá Medar*, or even the integration of the *ferta* themselves into the Christianizing system of *rúama* in *Slán seiss, a Brigit co mbúai*.

## CONCLUSION

The Irish word *carn* or ‘cairn’ makes a good closing example of the ambiguity in meaning and commemorative context analyzed above. Like *tumulus*, *fert*, or *cnocc*, *carn* runs the semantic gamut from heap of stones and earth, to burial, to supernatural structure. Thus, in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, the marauders build a pillar stone (*cloich*) where they plan to raid, and a *carn*

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Acallamh na Senórach’, ll. 7535–7, in *Irische Texte*, p. 210. ‘will put the Túatha Dé Dannan into the steep slopes of hills and rocks, though you may occasionally see, in an apparition, one of the doomed visiting earth’ (trans. by Dooley and Roe, p. 210).

<sup>59</sup> *Metrical Dindshenchas III*, ed. by Gwynn, pp. 44–6.

where they plan to cause large-scale destruction.<sup>60</sup> In the *Acallam*, as we noted above, Patrick and Caílte excavate Garb Daire, who is buried in a *carn* with his shield, weapons, and the chain of Lug.<sup>61</sup> In *Serglige Con Culainn*, Lóeg reports to Cú Chulainn, concerning Labraid's home in Mag Mell, that he found Labraid seated on a *carn*.<sup>62</sup> Labraid's *carn* contains the typical hallmarks of the fabulous otherworldly *síde* of medieval Irish literature and is in fact also referred to as both *síd* and *cnocc*.<sup>63</sup>

A richly layered, location-specific portrait of the early Irish landscape emerges, where saints like Patrick are as likely as their kingly counterparts to claim divine and political powers through associations with particular geographic features. Additionally, the less than Christian, ancient past that might inhabit such locations is not unilaterally demonic or antagonistic. Instead, mounds occupy a linguistic and theological boundary between stages for druidic or otherwise otherworldly magic and spaces in which to enact conversions. The pre-Christian Ireland depicted is a later reconstruction of a past that never existed as such, but it is also a highly syncretized past where saints may be mistaken for 'earthly gods', and crosses accidentally placed on pagan graves. Interactions between the boundaries of synthetic past and narrative present, as well as between those of opaquely supernatural and overtly mythological associations of the *síd*, only grow more complex in the vernacular texts. Ultimately, the syncretic patchwork of physical landscape, continuity, and cultural memory in Early Medieval Ireland is mirrored by a linguistic patchwork of topographic terminology in contemporaneous texts.

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<sup>60</sup> *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, ll. 621–2, ed. by Eleanor Knott, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 8, (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1936), p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> 'Acallamh', ll. 2074–83, in *Irische Texte*, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> *Serglige Con Culainn*, ed. by Myles Dillon, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 14 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1953), p. 16.

<sup>63</sup> *Serglige Con Culainn*, p. 15.

# A Tale of Two Houses: Identity Creation in the Ninth-Century Hagiography of Léhon and Redon Abbeys<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

In Brittany, a region of Europe where almost every church, episcopal or monastic, was able to trace its history back to a founding in the fifth- and sixth-century ‘Age of Saints’, the monastic communities of Redon and Léhon Abbeys faced a similar problem: how to create an identity for themselves when they had only been established in the second quarter of the ninth century. This identity encompasses not only attempting to unite the members of the monastic community but also to situate the monastery within already existing identities present in Brittany and the Carolingian empire more broadly. Through the surviving works of contemporary hagiography, it is possible to explore how at least one member of each community conceived his monastery’s identity, and how in his writings he both expressed and defined this. Comparison of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* and *Vita Maglorii* presents therefore a particularly rich opportunity to explore identity creation in ninth-century Brittany.

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THE HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS HOUSES

*Redon*

The history of Redon Abbey is better recorded than that of any other Breton religious house from the Carolingian period. As a result, it has received much scholarly attention and the development of the abbey over the ninth century is relatively easy to trace. The two major sources for the abbey are the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* and the eleventh-century Cartulary of Redon. There also survives the later *Vita Conuuoionis*, but although this includes information from the now lost parts of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, it mostly refashions and repeats material from this older text.<sup>2</sup> Most of our knowledge of the abbey's history is drawn from the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, and whilst at points this text can be flexible with the truth, it offers a contemporary history of the abbey.<sup>3</sup> Although the beginning of Book I of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* is missing, the pertinent points are still clear. Conwoion, the monastery's first abbot, having lobbied the support of the imperial *missus* Nominoë and with his monks instructed in Benedictinism by the hermit Gerfred from Glanfeuil Abbey, four times sought an audience with the Emperor Louis the Pious, and on the third, between Christmas 834 and Easter 835, perhaps due to Breton loyalty in 830, the Emperor granted the abbey estates and a charter.<sup>4</sup> After this the abbey went from strength to strength, — Smith calls it 'a centre for the dissemination of Carolingian ecclesiastical culture' — first acquiring the bones of the lesser-known St Hypotemius, bishop of Angers, by theft in 842/3 and then the body

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<sup>2</sup> *The Monks of Redon: Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium and Vita Conuuoionis* (GSR), ed. and trans. by Caroline Brett (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2–11.

of St Marcellinus, pope and martyr, as a gift from Pope Leo IV in 849.<sup>5</sup> Although in its damaged form Book III of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* appears to end in a rather bleak fashion, with the Viking attack on Redon of 853/4, the preface to book III is relatively optimistic that this attack was a one-off from which the monastery was saved, and the monastery continued until in 919 the monks were eventually forced to flee due to Viking raids and the collapse of Breton governance.<sup>6</sup> Thus, when the author of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* refers to ‘nos monachi’ it should be understood that he does so as part of a thriving Benedictine monastery with extensive land holdings and a significant place in the world of Carolingian Brittany.<sup>7</sup>

### Léhon

The history of Léhon is less well documented than that of Redon. Unlike at Redon, there are no surviving Carolingian charters, and the historian is reliant upon hagiography alone. We are fortunate that a collection of Maglorian texts survive; however, most are of little use for reconstructing the history of the abbey. The majority of the *Vita Maglorii* is naturally concerned with Maglorius’s life and ostensibly set in the sixth century (although references to chronology are almost non-existent), long before the founding of Léhon, although the final chapters include an account (unfortunately not particularly detailed) of the translation of Maglorius’s relics to Brittany and

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<sup>5</sup> Julia Smith, *Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 76; GSR II.9–10; Brett, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph-Claude Poulin, *L’hagiographie bretonne du haut Moyen Âge: Répertoire raisonné* (Paris: Thorbecke, 2009), p. 93; Smith, *Province and Empire*, pp. 198–201; Julia Smith, ‘*Aedificatio sancti loci: The Making of a Ninth-Century Holy Place*’, in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Mayke de Jong, Frans Theuws and Carine Van Rhijn (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 361–96 (pp. 370–1).

<sup>7</sup> GSR II.8.

the foundation of Léhon.<sup>8</sup> The late-ninth- or early-tenth-century *Aedificatio basilicae apud Lehonium* and the *Miracula post translationem* also survive, the former telling of the building of Léhon's church from a ruined Roman temple and the latter of three later healing miracles at Léhon, but neither provides historical detail.<sup>9</sup> From considerably later — Guillotel estimates it reached its current form between 1160 and 1181, although perhaps containing older material — exists the *Translatio Parisios* which recounts the monks tenth-

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<sup>8</sup> By the Bollandist's division, six hagiographical documents concerning Maglorius survive from this period. It is only the first three (called by Poulin the *Vita Maglorii*, *Miracula in Sargia* and *Translatio a Sargia*) which concern us, since they are by the same author, identifiable from his stylistic points, such as his consistent use of ablative absolutes, and *cumque* and the subjunctive, to begin new sentences. Poulin maintains the Bollandist's division of this author's work into three texts. However, there is no convincing reason to divide them into three texts rather than to treat them as a single work, and this split is rather a legacy of Van Hecke and the Bollandists originally editing the *Vita Maglorii* from an abridged witness. Instead, based on manuscript evidence, they appear originally to have been one text. Neither the *Miracula in Sargia* nor the *Translatio a Sargia* circulate independently. In the three medieval witnesses to the *Translatio* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Manuscrits lat. 15436, BnF Arsenal 1032 and BnF lat. 6003) it follows directly on from the main text of the Life, and for the two witnesses to the *Miracula* (BnF lat. 15436 and BnF Arsenal 1032) the interrelationship is even clearer. In both witnesses ten chapters of the *Miracula* are copied before the account of Maglorius's death found in the abridged forms of the Life and the remaining three chapters of the *Miracula* after, interweaving the supposedly distinct texts. It seems most likely that these three components originally formed one work, since two other abridgements of the *Vita Maglorii* are attested, these three works share an author and manuscript tradition, and together they form a unified narrative which culminates with Maglorius's acquisition by the monks of Léhon. Although without a textually critical study of the witnesses these comments are inevitably provisional, I intend to treat the Bollandist's three texts (*Vita Maglorii*, *Miracula in Sargia* and *Translatio a Sargia*) as one, referred to as the *Vita Maglorii* (*VMag*). Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, pp. 200–18.

<sup>9</sup> François Kerlouégan, 'Le temple du Haut-Bécherel (Corseul) et la vonstruction de l'église abbatiale de Lehon selon la *Vie de saint Magloire*' in *Homagges à Lucien Lerat*, ed. by Hélène Walter (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1984), pp. 361–9 (p. 363).

century flight to Paris.<sup>10</sup> Although these sources are flawed, the following is what can be deduced concerning Léhon's history.

Maglorius was a British bishop and cousin of St Samson who, having moved from Britain to Brittany, was consecrated (arch)bishop of Dol as Samson's successor, before retiring to the island of Sark to found a monastery where he eventually died.<sup>11</sup> Whether or not this is 'true', and especially whether it is of any use to the study of the sixth century, is of no consequence here; the monks of Léhon in the ninth-century appear to have accepted this as a reliable account of their saint, as did other Breton religious communities which also used the *Vita Maglorii* as a source.<sup>12</sup> The history of the Léhon community itself begins in the reign of Nominoë (831–851) when, according to the *Vita Maglorii*, Nominoë promised a group of ascetic monks land for a monastery if they were to acquire relics. They then journeyed to Sark, where they stole Maglorius's relics from the *monachi* of a church there. Following a dramatic sea chase, the monks of Léhon returned safely to Brittany and established Léhon Abbey. Although La Borderie suggested a foundation date of about 850, any attempt to date it within Nominoë's reign is hindered by the lack of detail given, though later in Nominoë's reign when he was more powerful outside of his heartland of the Vannetais is possible.<sup>13</sup> After this, information on Léhon is once again sparse, although the community interacted with Redon as in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* a monk of

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<sup>10</sup> Hubert Guillotel, 'L'exode du clergé Breton devant les invasions scandinaves', *Mémoires de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne*, 59 (1982), 269–315 (p. 293).

<sup>11</sup> The familial relationship between Samson and Maglorius is likely to be due both to the literary and ecclesiastical influence of the cult of Samson and to Léhon's geographic proximity to Dol.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the *Vita secunda Melanii* draws from it. Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, pp. 258–9.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur de La Borderie, 'Fondation de l'abbaye de Lehon (IX<sup>e</sup> siècle)', *Revue de Bretagne et de Vendée*, 32 (1888), 241–57 (p. 242).

Léhon called Brithoc visits Redon to learn more about Benedictinism, which might be why Chédeville and Guillotel describe Léhon as an annex of Redon, despite lacking any supporting evidence.<sup>14</sup> Then, as Viking raids intensified in the lead up to the collapse of Breton government in the 910s, the *Translatio Parisios* records that the community fled to Francia, being granted a place to establish themselves in Paris by Hugh the Great, where the community flourished as the Abbey of Saint-Magloire de Paris.<sup>15</sup> While the records do not survive to suggest that Léhon was as financially prosperous as Redon, it was certainly not an insignificant house, and the author of the *Vita Maglorii* was writing for an abbey that existed in the same sort of environment as Redon.

## THE TEXTS

### *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*

The *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* differs significantly both in style and substance from most Breton hagiography from the Carolingian period, probably due to considerably more Frankish political influence at Redon than any other monastery in Brittany. With regards to genre, the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* tells not the biographies of the two patron saints of Redon, Hypotemius and Marcellinus, despite the author having access to the *Liber Pontificalis*, which he could have used as the basis of a *vita* of Marcellinus, but instead focuses on the posthumous miracles of these saints.<sup>16</sup> This runs counter to Smith's observation that Breton saints deviate from Brown's idea of saints being the 'very special dead' who worked *uirtus* through corporeal relics,

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<sup>14</sup> GSR III.3; André Chédeville and Hubert Guillotel, *La Bretagne des saints et des rois, V<sup>e</sup>–X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rennes: Ouest France, 1984), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Chédeville and Guillotel, p. 381.

<sup>16</sup> Brett, p. 66.

explicable due to Hypotemius and Marcellinus's origins outside Brittany and the Carolingian influences in eastern Brittany.<sup>17</sup> Following Lupus of Ferrières, who called posthumous miracles more worthy of recording than living ones, the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* recounts many posthumous miracles, despite observations that 'Breton records of posthumous miracles are sparse'.<sup>18</sup> But, while Book III of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* may have such foci, Book I and II read more as a house history, recording the deeds and miracles carried out by the members of Redon community as the abbey grew. This is notable since almost every Breton house was focused around a saint from the 'Age of Saints', resulting in hagiography normally being set in the distant past, rather than the author's own century.<sup>19</sup> The works from which the author borrowed are not limited, but nor are they remarkable: Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*, the *Liber Pontificalis*, Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae*, Bede's *In Lucae Evangelium Expositio* and *Homelia I in Quadragesima*, and Virgil.<sup>20</sup> As for the actual style, Brett describes it as 'little which is individual', even by the standards of hagiography, and the text, although being very correct, is also grammatically quite simple.<sup>21</sup> Other than using the word 'apodix' to mean prostitute — which is glossed in the text itself — the vocabulary avoids use of hispericisms, and generally avoids more than brief phrases of homiletic

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 70; Julia Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany, c. 850–1260', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 309–43 (p. 320).

<sup>18</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written', p. 335; Lupus Servatus, 'De s. Wigberto, presbytero, confessore', ed. by Étienne Baluze, in *Acta Sanctorum Augusti*, ed. by Joanne Carnandet, 6 vols, (Paris and Rome: Bollandists, 1867), III, 132–7 (p. 134).

<sup>19</sup> Smith, 'Oral and Written', p. 313.

<sup>20</sup> Brett, pp. 65–8; Neil Wright, 'Knowledge of Christian Latin Poets and Historians in Early Mediaeval Brittany', *Études Celtique*, 23 (1996), 163–85 (p. 185).

<sup>21</sup> Brett, pp. 63, 69–70.

material.<sup>22</sup> Thus the format of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* is unusual, and the style free of the ‘britannica garrulitas’ complained of by Vitalis of Fleury.<sup>23</sup>

Although the author of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* is anonymous, it is still possible to discern a reasonably large amount about him from his work. Firstly, it is clear that he was a monk of Redon. Not only does he make comments about his work being intended for friends, but he also refers to the community at Redon as ‘nos monachi’.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, he claims to have witnessed himself some of the miracles recorded in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*. This makes the hagiographer unique among Breton authors from this period for actually having known one of his subjects, Conwoion, and helps with the question of dating the Life, a work made more difficult by the author’s omission of dating phrases.<sup>25</sup> All the internally datable miracles which he claims to have witnessed occurred after about 850, and it thus seems probable that it was around then that the author joined the monastery.<sup>26</sup> This gives at the very least an approximate date of the second half of the ninth century, but it is possible to narrow it down further. Although it no longer survives, in the preface to Book III he promises an account of the death of Abbot Conwoion, giving a *terminus post quem* of 868.<sup>27</sup> Providing a *terminus ante quem* has proved more difficult, and Brett cautiously gives only the possible lifespan of a man alive in 850, but Poulin proposes that it was composed before the coronation of Charles the Bald as Emperor on Christmas

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<sup>22</sup> GSR I.9; Brett, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> Vitalis of Fleury, ‘De s. Paulo, episcopo apud Amoricos’, ed. by Daniel Papebroch, in *Acta Sanctorum Martii*, ed. by Joanne Carnandet, 3 vols, (Paris and Rome: Bollandists, 1865), II, 111–9 (p. 111), ‘Breton garrulity’.

<sup>24</sup> Brett, p. 69; GSR II.8.

<sup>25</sup> Brett, pp. 9, 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Day, 875.<sup>28</sup> Since Charles the Bald is referred to throughout the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* as *rex*, not *imperator*, it may have been written before his imperial coronation, but this argument relies upon the author using Charles's newer title rather than continuing to call him by the more familiar *rex*. However, the author of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* is generally quite accurate in his use of official titles, never loosely referring to Nominoë as *rex* as the *Vita Maglorii* does, and, as an imperial foundation, Redon would have particularly strong reasons for emphasising the status of one of their patrons. Moreover, the 870s, just after the loss of their leader Conwoion, would have been a suitable time to record the shared identity of the community. Although the author of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* may be anonymous, some of where and when he was writing can be reconstructed.

The *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* survives in five manuscripts and three early printed editions, all derived from the oldest witness, Bibliothèque nationale de France nouv. acq. lat. 662, an eleventh- or twelfth-century manuscript.<sup>29</sup> Medieval copying of the text seems to have occurred only at Redon, and circulation appears to have been minimal.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the witnesses to the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* are incomplete and fragmentary, and as a result the beginning and end of the text are missing. Since Books II and III have one, it seems likely that there was once a preface to Book I, and possibly another chapter, as the text begins with the monastery already founded.<sup>31</sup> Also, Book I, Chapter 1 breaks off mid-narrative, suggesting more damage to the text, and although the author mentions the death of Conwoion in the preface to Book III, this is never narrated, indicating either incompleteness or — more likely due to the other losses —

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<sup>28</sup> Brett, p. 9; Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, p. 92.

<sup>29</sup> Brett, p. 20.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.



further damage.<sup>32</sup> Editorially, the text of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* is easily accessible, with Brett's 1989 edition and translation presenting both a thorough introduction and critical edition of the text.

### *Vita Maglorii*

Stylistically, the *Vita Maglorii* is considerably different from the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, being much more homiletic and containing blocks of exegesis which explain the significance of the saint's miracles to the audience of the *vita*. For example, when Maglorius's body arrives in Brittany and makes a formerly bitter apple tree's fruit sweet (as per Geary's model of a translation-accepting reception miracle), the author includes a lengthy explanation in the first-person plural of how, as with the tree, Maglorius can turn the listening 'lutei et peccatores' from the 'pristinae vitae acerbitate' to the sweetness of monastic life.<sup>33</sup> As well as this, evidence from within the Life suggests that it was, at one point, used for readings, though in its entirety it seems too long for that to be its only purpose. One of the manuscripts, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS lat. 15436, contains at the end of most of its chapters part of a doxology (*in saecula saeculorum. Amen*), which Kerlouégan and La Borderie accept as part of the original text, but about which one should be wary, since BnF lat. 15436 is a legendary and the preceding two texts (*Vita Sancti Severini Treverensis* and *Actus Sancti Lucae Evangelistae*) also end *in saecula saeculorum. Amen*, suggesting this to be a later interpolation.<sup>34</sup> However, regardless of whether one accepts these endings as

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 155; *VMag*, fol. 72<sup>r</sup>, col. 2, ll. 21, 31–2, 'corrupt ones and sinners', 'bitterness of a former life'.

<sup>34</sup> 'Miracles de saint Magloire et fondation du monastère de Lehon. Textes inédits, latins et français, publiés avec une commentaire historique', ed. by Arthur de La Borderie, in

original, there are other indicators that the text was designed to be read; within the text there are both direct address to the brothers of the monastery and a statement that today is the feast day of Maglorius.

Poulin suggests that the *Vita Maglorii* was written in the 860s, based upon its relationship to the *Vita secunda Samsonis* and Bili's *Vita Machutis*.<sup>35</sup> The *Vita Maglorii* refers to a *gesta* of St Samson, which presumably is the *Vita secunda Samsonis* since the *Vita Maglorii* incorporates material from this, and since Sowerby has dated the *Vita secunda Samsonis* to post-859, the *terminus post quem* must be around 860.<sup>36</sup> Considerably more tenuously, Poulin proposes a *terminus ante quem* of before Bili's *Vita Machutis*, which can be dated to around 870.<sup>37</sup> In order to make Malo a cousin of Samson, Bili creates a new aunt of Samson, rather than using the aunt and uncle in the *Vitae Samsonis* (as the *Vita Maglorii* does), possibly indicating that Bili knew the *Vita Maglorii* and that those relatives were already utilised.<sup>38</sup> However, it is possible that Bili learnt this information orally rather than from the *Vita Maglorii*. Since the *vita* makes no mention of the flight to Paris in 920 it is most likely that it predates this, and as a result assigning a date of late-tenth or very-early-eleventh century with a possibility of the 860s seems more reasonable.

The *Vita Maglorii* is preserved in ten surviving witnesses, of which Poulin believes that five manuscripts, all copied in Paris, are enough to reconstruct the original text. Three recensions of the text survive, two short

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*Mémoires Côtes-du-Nord*, 2nd series, IV (1890), 224–363; Kerlouégan, 'Le temple du Haut-Bécherel', p. 363.

<sup>35</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, p. 207.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211; Richard Sowerby, 'The Lives of St Samson: Rewriting the Ambitions of an Early Medieval Cult', *Francia*, 38 (2011), 1–31 (p. 12).

<sup>37</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, p. 169; Smith, 'Oral and Written', p. 332.

<sup>38</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, p. 211.

and one long, but since the shorter recensions are not uniform in material excluded, it is reasonable to follow Poulin and assume that they are abridgments, rather than the longer text being an expansion.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, despite nineteenth-century editions, the editorial state of the Life is dire, and it has been remarked that even among the badly edited world of Breton hagiography the *Vita Maglorii* is in particular need of a critical edition.<sup>40</sup> It was edited in 1861 by Van Hecke, who followed Mabillon's edition, itself taken from BnF lat. 11951, but this edition is of only one of the abridgements.<sup>41</sup> The *Miracula in Sargia* and the *Translatio a Sargia* were edited by La Borderie in 1890, following BnF lat. 15436 with additional readings from BnF lat. 6003 for the *Translatio*, but this edition has considerable lacunae in it due to La Borderie's dubious editorial principles, omitting sections he found too 'pieuses' and 'banales'.<sup>42</sup> In order to piece these editions together, Poulin has assembled an extremely helpful table, and BnF lat. 15436 — being both one of the best witnesses, though it omits the prologue (remediable by BnF lat. 5283), and having been digitalised — can be used to complete the unedited parts of the text.<sup>43</sup> References to the *Vita Maglorii*, when edited, have been given according to Van Hecke's or La Borderie's editions and chapter-division and with a folio number for BnF lat. 15436 (or in the case of the preface, BnF lat. 5283) throughout. When an unedited section of the Life is quoted from BnF lat. 15436, column and line references are also given for ease of reference.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>40</sup> Wright, p. 167, n. 20.

<sup>41</sup> 'De s. Maglorio, episcopo Doli in Armorica', ed. by Joseph Van Hecke in *Acta Sanctorum Octobris*, ed. by J. Van Hecke, B. Bossue, V. De Buck and E. Carpentier, 12 vols, (Paris and Rome: Bollandists, 1869), X, 772–93; Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, p. 206.

<sup>42</sup> La Borderie, 'Miracles de saint Magloire', pp. 224–363, 225, 'pious' and 'banal'.

<sup>43</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, pp. 227–30; <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9066670j/f58>> [accessed 31st August 2019].

MIRACLES

One significant way in which the *Vita Maglorii* and the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* create identities for their respective religious houses is through their use of miracles; presenting the monks as recipients of the same saintly *uirtus* and portraying their respective saints as part of a larger cultural identity. Evidently, part of the inclusion of miracles in these texts is for the same purpose as they serve in all hagiographical texts — proving the saint’s close relationship with God and thus serving as ‘an authentication of sanctity’, and with posthumous miracles proving the saint able to ‘join heaven and earth at the grave’ — but within this necessity for miracles in general there is nuance in the specifics.<sup>44</sup> In addition to showing that the saint was one of Jesus’ disciples, following his instructions to ‘heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils’, they also served to demonstrate the nature and character of the saint.<sup>45</sup> Not only are there many different possible miracles and even types of miracle which the saint could have worked (Bartlett lists, in addition to a variety of healing miracles, punishments, contemporary visions, prophetic visions, deliverance from prison, and protection from danger), the differences in how, and for whom, a saint interceded in heaven presented the opportunity to create a local identity, particularly in the case of miracles where the saint directly helped his followers.<sup>46</sup> Admittedly these statements bear the caveat that hagiographers were not entirely free to include what they liked in their works; not only were they writing for their own

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orleans 800–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 16; Brown, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 10.8; Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 334.

<sup>46</sup> Bartlett, pp. 343–4.

communities, an audience already familiar with the saint, but these two authors also claimed to be writing history.<sup>47</sup> The Redon author actively describes his work as a more suitable riposte to the annals of the Roman emperors and the Léhon author says he writes ‘iuxta historiam’.<sup>48</sup> This is a particularly notable point for the description of the translation of Maglorius in the *Vita Maglorii* and all of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, since the contemporary nature of the miracles means that there were probably still living witnesses to the miracles, reducing the extent to which the authors could change the narrative. Nevertheless, hagiographers still had relative freedom in their choice of miracles. They decided which parts of an oral tradition to fix in writing, making good use of the hagiographical *topos* that there were too many miracles to record and that they had thus held silent about most of them. On one occasion the author of the *Vita Maglorii* even claims to have learnt of a miracle revealed by the Holy Spirit, which might to a more sceptical audience sound synonymous with having invented it himself.<sup>49</sup> It was thus possible for the hagiographers of Redon and Léhon to use the miracles in their texts to create an identity for their communities.

### *Saintly Patronage*

A similar way in which the miracles are employed in both the *Vita Maglorii* and the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* is not only to prove that their saints were holy, but that their saints were intimately involved with and deeply concerned for the wellbeing of those under their protection; namely

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<sup>47</sup> Felice Lifshitz, ‘Beyond Positivism and Genre: “Hagiographical” Texts as Historical Narrative’, *Viator*, 25 (1994), 95–113.

<sup>48</sup> *GSR* II preface; *VMag* fol. 58<sup>r</sup>, col. 1, ll. 6–7. ‘according to history’.

<sup>49</sup> *VMag* (ed. La Borderie, ch. 9, p. 234), fol. 68<sup>r</sup>; Merdrignac, ‘The Process and Significance of Rewriting Breton Hagiography’, in *Celtic Hagiography and Saints’ Cults*, ed. by Jane Cartwright (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 177–97 (p. 177).

their monks. Even though the monks featured in the *Vita Maglorii* are often of the Sark community, the lack of distinction between the Sark and Léhon monks creates the impression of one community, with the patronage shown to Maglorius's monks on Sark also applicable at Léhon. Through the saint functioning as shared patron, a 'living protector', the monastic community was brought together under the same protection, and miracles in the *Vita Maglorii* and *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* served to prove to the monks that their chosen holy individuals were able to gain *intercessio gloriosa* from God in order to assist them.<sup>50</sup> These miracles, both healing, where the saints intervene to assist certain individuals, and protective, where the saint protects his own from an external threat, thus unite the devotees of either one particular saint or a small group of related saints.

Healing miracles are common to almost all hagiography, and in this the *Vita Maglorii* and *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* are no exceptions. Although their healing miracles tend to focus less on the monastic community, often involving outsiders coming to the saint or shrine for a cure, both contain examples of the monks receiving cures.<sup>51</sup> In the *Vita Maglorii*, Maglorius heals one of his deacons who, having spent too long contemplating a beautiful prostitute whom he saw on the way to mass the previous day, had been struck dumb and feeble.<sup>52</sup> This healing of a monk from his deserved illness has parallels to a miracle in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* where the scribe Doethgen, having attempted to run away, is paralysed before being returned to Redon and healed.<sup>53</sup> Although these illnesses are a result of sin, they

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<sup>50</sup> Head, p. 13; *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 28, p. 791), fol. 69<sup>r</sup>. 'glorious intercession'.

<sup>51</sup> E.g., in the *VMag* the healing of Count Loiescon of leprosy and of the mute daughter of Nivo, and in the *GSR* the curing of the *machtiern* Ratuuli and the healing of the dumb Iouuoret.

<sup>52</sup> *VMag* (ed. La Borderie, ch. 9–10, pp. 234–5), fol. 68.

<sup>53</sup> *GSR* II.6.

demonstrate the saints' role as intercessor with God for the forgiveness of the monks' sins, and thus that the saint is concerned for them. But there also exists in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* a clearer miracle in which the recently departed monk Conhoiarn returns in a vision to the monk Anouoret, 'qui ob infirmitatem atque imbecillitatem a cunctis "infirmus monasterii" uocitabatur', to heal him.<sup>54</sup> By this miracle it is made explicit that the monks of Redon are bound together as one community, living and dead, through the divine *uirtus* which they receive as a result of their holy figures. Healing miracles therefore have the ability to create a shared faith in the assistance of the community's holy figures.

Even more so than healing miracles, protective miracles are focused on the community and the community's current concerns, and as a result serve to create an image of the monks sharing a common protector against the many harms from beyond the cloister wall. Since they are defended together as one entity, the monks are thus unified as one community. Two of the same protective miracles feature in both texts. One concerns disgruntled heirs whose relatives had donated what they see as their inheritance to the monasteries, the other Viking attacks.<sup>55</sup> That the same threats to the monastery feature (and are resolved by divine intervention) in both texts indicates that they were pressing contemporary concerns, and contemporary charters of Redon demonstrate that Vikings were a serious menace for the community in the second half of the ninth century.<sup>56</sup> The *Vita Maglorii* describes two Viking attacks on Sark, one (highly anachronistic) attack

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<sup>54</sup> GSR II.4, 'who because of his weakness and helplessness was called by all "the monastery invalid"'.  
<sup>55</sup> *VMag* (ed. La Borderie, ch. 5-6, 11, 12-3, pp. 232-3, 236, 236-8), 67<sup>r</sup>, 69<sup>r</sup>-69<sup>v</sup>; GSR III.9.

<sup>56</sup> Wendy Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p. 22.

during Maglorius's life and the other following his death, both of which he repels via miracles, and the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* records how, whilst Sidric's Viking fleet was active on the Loire, it was repelled from the monastery by fierce winds and that the sixteen Vikings who broke into the monastery and attempted to drink the communion wine were immediately struck down. Angry local landowners and Viking raids were factors over which the monks of Redon and Léhon had little or no control, and the knowledge that their saints had acted to protect their communities in the past from such threats, and would presumably do so again, must have provided reassurance and served to unify the community under a shared patron.

However, although the two authors use healing and protective miracles from monastic patrons similarly, there is a subtle but significant difference in the nature of the miracles and of the saints carrying out the *uirtus*, and thus the identity created. In his Life, Maglorius is presented as a considerably more physical saint than the saints of Redon are in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*. Although in both cases many of the miracles are carried out while the saints are alive, of the posthumous ones recorded by the Redon author all feature the saints appearing as a vision or dream, whereas Maglorius more often makes a corporeal visitation, even in two cases appearing 'quasi corporaliter' while still alive.<sup>57</sup> A particularly suitable comparison can be made with reference to miracles involving the heirs of donors, since these feature in both texts. In both narratives the heirs manage, by threats or deceit, to obtain some financial wealth from the monasteries, but the nature of their punishment differs. Whereas in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* the heirs are slain campaigning against Charles the Bald (which the author makes clear is a direct result of their threat to Redon), in the *Vita Maglorii* Maglorius himself appeared to the thief 'et cuspide baculi librato ictu visibilter per mediam

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<sup>57</sup> *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 21, p. 789), fol. 64<sup>v</sup>. 'as if in body'.



frontem percussit', killing him.<sup>58</sup> This miracle, through the similarity in context, demonstrates the difference in protection offered by Redon and Léhon's saints, with Maglorius being considerably more physical.

Furthermore, the *Vita Maglorii* is focused around Maglorius and his miracles, while the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium*, lacking a primary saint, is more focused on the general sanctity of Redon and those who are associated with it.<sup>59</sup> In the *Vita Maglorii* no one save Maglorius carries out a miracle, despite other named saints featuring in it; the closest any of them come to working a miracle is the author's statement that Samson 'plura atque maiora quam prius [...] exerceret miracula' and directing his audience to the *gesta* of Samson if they wished to know more.<sup>60</sup> However, in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* it is the monastery of Redon and those associated with it who are holy; Smith counts thirty-two occurrences of variants on *sanctus locus*, and it is the prayers of the whole community — not just Conwoion — that cure Ratvili.<sup>61</sup> Even minor monks receive miracles directly from God without the intervention of a saint, such as Riouuen and Condeluc the gardener.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the monks collectively are referred to as 'sancti fratres'.<sup>63</sup> Even though Poulin categorises the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* as hagiography of Conwoion, and Chédeville and Guillotel describe the work as building to Book III and the miracles of Hypotemius and Marcellinus, which they call 'tout à la gloire du monastère de Redon', as a work it defies being so easily categorised as the

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<sup>58</sup> *VMag* (La Borderie, ch. 13, p. 237), fol. 69<sup>v</sup>. 'and visibly punched through the middle of his forehead with a powerful blow from the point of his stick'.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, 'Aedificatio sancti loci'.

<sup>60</sup> *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 3, p. 783), fol. 57<sup>v</sup>. 'performed many more and greater miracles than before'.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, 'Aedificatio sancti loci', p. 383.

<sup>62</sup> *GSR* II.2–3.

<sup>63</sup> *GSR* II.2.

hagiography of one or two saints.<sup>64</sup> Instead it appears to be the hagiography of the saints of Redon, be they popes or gardeners. This distinction may in part be due to the different literary constraints — the *Vita Maglorii* is a biographical work and thus has one figure as its focus — but it may also be due to the works intending to create different identities through their miracles. While the *Vita Maglorii* presents the community as ‘the monks of Maglorius’, be that at Sark, Léhon or Paris, the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* presents the community as ‘the monks of Redon’, not one saint. But regardless whether their group identity was centred on one saint or on the sanctity of a larger group, both authors used the miracles recounted in their texts to present their monasteries as clearly defined communities, united under the protection of saintly patrons.

#### *Wider Identities*

Yet, although the hagiographers of Redon and Léhon both use miracles to prove that their community is favoured by holy patrons in a similar, but not identical, manner, the miracles also serve to connect the communities to wider identities. Through the existing tradition from which the miracle is drawn and the individuals featured in the miracle, the authors join their texts into a cultural environment, and thus position their community in a wider identity.

#### *Universal Church*

In the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* the identity formed by the miracles in Book III is that of Redon as part of the Universal Church, emphasising its position among the famous shrines of Christendom and as a place where

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<sup>64</sup> Poulin, *L'hagiographie bretonne*, pp. 85–97; Chédeville and Guillotel, p. 290. ‘all to the glory of the monastery of Redon’.

supplicants from across Europe received healing, presenting a contrast to the *Vita Maglorii*, where only Bretons receive any miracles.<sup>65</sup> Head theorises that during the ninth century there was an active policy of translating Roman relics to the regions of the Carolingian Empire in order to supplant local saints, and thus ‘to direct men’s loyalty to Rome’.<sup>66</sup> It is therefore unsurprising to find Leo IV gifting the relics of Pope Marcellinus to the chief imperial monastery and proponent of Benedictinism in Brittany, since he was a vigorous promoter of the papacy as ‘the organ responsible for everything that affects the Universal Church’.<sup>67</sup>

But rather than resisting this influence, Redon appears to have actively embraced it, possibly encouraged by the benefits of imperial patronage, and the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* reflects and furthers this.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, these connections with the rest of European Christianity are visible and, in Book III, actively emphasised in order to present Redon as part of the Universal Church. This takes the form of recording two lengthy pilgrim narratives. The first is that of a deacon of Spoleto who, having accidentally stabbed his friend, was bound in chains in Rome and then, having come to the tomb of Marcellinus at Redon, was freed from them by a miracle.<sup>69</sup> The second is that

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<sup>65</sup> Julia Smith, ‘Culte impérial et politique frontalière dans la vallée de la Vilaine: le témoignage des diplômes carolingiens dans la cartulaire de Redon’, in *Landévennec et le monachisme breton dans le haut Moyen Âge*, ed. by Marc Simon (Landévennec: Association Landévennec 485–1985, 1986), pp. 129–39 (p. 137).

<sup>66</sup> Head, p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> François Kerlouégan, ‘Un indice de relations entre les abbayes de Redon et Landévennec à la fin du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle?’ in *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque. I-Religion*, ed. by Marie-Madeleine Mactoux and Evelyne Geny (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1988), pp. 179–82 (p. 322); Walter Ullman, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, 3rd edn, (London: Methuen and Company, 1970), pp. 174–5.

<sup>68</sup> Pierre Riché, ‘En relisant “L’histoire des saints de Redon”’ in *Landévennec et le monachisme breton*, ed. by Marc Simon, pp. 13–18 (p. 16); Smith, ‘Culte Impérial’, p. 133.

<sup>69</sup> GSR III.1.

of Frotmund, who, having killed his uncle, was ordered to journey between the holy places bound in chains, eventually receiving absolution at Redon.<sup>70</sup> In these miracles not only is the cure detailed, but also the large distances which pilgrims travelled in order to reach Redon, with the regions the deacon of Spoleto journeyed through being recounted. Frotmund's journey is even more detailed, with his two trips to Jerusalem, wandering in the Egyptian desert, and time in North Africa and Armenia being narrated. Part of this is an interest in places such as the Holy Land (and that at Cana, 'as Frotmund himself told us later, they drank from the same wine [as from the wedding feast]'), but it also partially stems from a delight that an individual who visited such sites as the tomb of Cyprian, 'where many great works and miracles are revealed by the Lord', found healing at Redon from Marcellinus.<sup>71</sup> Through including, in addition to the healing of both Bretons and local Franks such as Abbot Gauslin of Glanfeuil Abbey, the narratives of pilgrims who had come from Italy and journeyed as far away as Jerusalem, the author of the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* goes beyond Smith's theory that he was creating for the monastery an identity of neither Frank nor Breton and instead appears to be creating an identity for Redon as part of the Universal Church.<sup>72</sup>

### *Local*

But while the Redon hagiographer chose to use the miracles in the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* in order to emphasise its place as part of the Universal

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<sup>70</sup> GSR III.8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 'et de ipso uino, ut ipse Frotmundus nobis postea retulit, biberunt', 'ubi multae uirtutes et multa miracula a Domino saepius ostenduntur'.

<sup>72</sup> Julia Smith, 'Confronting Identities: The Rhetoric and Reality of a Carolingian Frontier', in *Integration und Herrschaft: Ethnische Identitäten und Soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter*, ed. by Walter Pohl and Maximilian Diesenberger (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2002), pp. 169–82 (p. 182).

Church, the Léhon hagiographer creates a particularly local depiction of Maglorius through the choice of recipients of the miracles, the use of types of miracles often found in other Breton Lives, and the borrowing of miracles from other Lives. Although this may have been due to the author's hazy conception of the world beyond Brittany rather than his intent — he appears politically unaware, only having a concept of a 'Brittanorum natio' when referring to Maglorius's birthplace — it nevertheless contributes to his monastery's character.<sup>73</sup> It has long been held that Breton hagiography acted as a closed literary genre, drawing only from itself, and although this has been tempered by an understanding of how some authors such as Bili drew from Continental sources, the *Vita Maglorii* is especially Brittany-centric, even by Breton hagiography's standards.<sup>74</sup> In the *Vita Maglorii* scarcely any non-Bretons are mentioned (the exceptions being the stock characters, Germanus, Childebert, and an anonymous Frankish king, whom Merdrignac thinks might also be Childebert again) and only Breton individuals are the recipients of miracles.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, very little attention is paid to Maglorius's time in Britain itself, unlike Samson in the model for almost all Breton hagiography (the *Vita prima Samsonis*), and nor does he leave Brittany or the Channel Islands (which are presented as part of the Breton speaking world) once he has arrived from Britain. This degree of focus on Brittany is abnormal even for Breton Lives; in the *Vita prima Samsonis* Samson visits Ireland and the Frankish court, in Bili's *Vita Machutis* Malo voyages with St Brendan and

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<sup>73</sup> *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 1, p. 782), fol. 57r, 'the race of the Britons'.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph-Claude Poulin, 'Recherche et identification des sources de la littérature hagiographique du haut Moyen Âge: L'exemple breton', *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France*, 71 (1985), 119–29 (p. 119); Smith, 'Oral and Written', pp. 333–4.

<sup>75</sup> Bernard Merdrignac, 'Horizons insulaires et transactions foncières dans les Miracles de saint Magloire', in his *Les saints bretons entre légendes et histoire* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), pp. 153–66 (p. 165).

visits Tours, Luxeuil, and Saintonge, and in Wrmonoc's *Vita Pauli Aureliani* Paul Aurelian visits Paris.<sup>76</sup> Through ignoring the world beyond Brittany, exemplified by the author's ignorance of or indifference to the place where some monastic pupils land after they have been washed out to sea, simply calling it *alia ripa*, the hagiographer of the *Vita Maglorii* creates a text unusual in its local focus.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, some of the miracles that feature in the *Vita Maglorii* are of a type that feature predominantly in Breton, Welsh and Irish hagiography, contributing to the Life's local focus. One miracle type that the author is particularly keen on is that identified by Bray as 'Ring of Polycrates', also found in the Lives of Paul Aurelian, Cadog, Brigid, Cainnech, Finnian and Moling, which Merdrignac identifies as especially 'Celtic'.<sup>78</sup> In this the saint, having tossed an object into the sea, has it returned to them when a fish that had swallowed it is caught. As well as two direct examples of this involving lost knives, there are also two similar miracles, one in which a fisherman, having fallen overboard, was returned safely to shore in the manner of Jonah and a second in which, in order to determine how many fish the monks should catch Maglorius marks a fish before throwing it back into the sea and fishing until it is caught again.<sup>79</sup> These reflections and interpretations of the 'Ring of Polycrates' miracle type serve to demonstrate that the *virtus* of Maglorius was similar to that of Irish and Breton saints with whom the author was familiar, supporting the local character of the *vita*. But an even clearer example of the author modelling miracles of Maglorius on a particular Breton saint, Samson, exists. From the reference to the *gesta* of Samson, it is clear that

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<sup>76</sup> Poulin, *L'Hagiographie Bretonne*, pp. 324–5, 156, 274.

<sup>77</sup> *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 21, p. 789), fol. 64<sup>v</sup>, 'another shore'.

<sup>78</sup> Dorothy Bray, *A List of Motifs in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica 1992), p. 103; Merdrignac, 'Horizons insulaires', p. 160.

<sup>79</sup> *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 16, p. 787), fol. 62<sup>r</sup>.

the author of the *Vita Maglorii* had access to and used a Life of Samson (probably the *Vita secunda Samsonis*) in his text, and since Samson, as Maglorius's mentor, plays so important a role in the *Vita Maglorii* (the author at one point even calls Maglorius Elisha to Samson's Elijah), it is unsurprising that miracles are borrowed from that Life as well.<sup>80</sup> Rauer identifies hagiographical dragon fights as a common trope of Breton and Norman hagiography, and, in particular as a speciality of Samson; he fights four dragons in the *Vita secunda Samsonis* and one of the Continental masses for St Samson explicitly associates him with dragon slaying.<sup>81</sup> It is thus unsurprising that when in the *Vita Maglorii* Maglorius fights a serpent, the fight meets all but five of Rauer's nineteen hagiographical tropes for dragon fighting.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, both Samson and Maglorius are visited by angels announcing journeys to them (Samson to Brittany and Maglorius to Heaven) whilst keeping the Easter vigil alone, and although the Léhon hagiographer does not directly quote the Lives of Samson, his source — the archetype of Breton hagiography — is clear.<sup>83</sup> In the serpent fight, angelic vision and the caught-fish miracles Maglorius demonstrates himself to be comparable to other Breton saints, and in doing so reveals the Léhon author's limited horizons. Unlike the Redon hagiographer, the models of sanctity to which he compares Maglorius are local saints, as a result placing the community's

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<sup>80</sup> Poulin, *L'Hagiographie Bretonne*, p. 208; *VMag* (Van Hecke, ch. 4, p. 783), fol. 58<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Christine Rauer, *Beowulf and the Dragon: Parallels and Analogues* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), pp. 60, 93, 108; Christopher Hohler, 'Some Service Books of the Later Saxon Church', in *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia*, ed. by David Parsons (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1975), pp. 60–83 (p. 75).

<sup>82</sup> Rauer, pp. 61–73. All of the tropes Rauer identifies as especially Breton or Norman are fulfilled.

<sup>83</sup> *La vie ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol*, ed. and trans. by Pierre Flobert (Paris: Brepols, 1997), pp. 210–2; *VMag* (ed. Van Hecke, ch. 27, p. 790–1), fol. 68<sup>v</sup>.

saint within a local milieu. Through the use of miracles, the hagiographers of both Redon and Léhon seek to define themselves. This takes the form of creating an identity for the monastery itself as shared recipients of miracles from the same saint and also of fitting their communities into wider cultural traditions, be they of the Universal Church in the case of Redon or that of their neighbouring Breton saints in the case of Léhon.

## CONCLUSION

Both the *Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium* and the *Vita Maglorii* are texts from which much about the identities of the monasteries of Redon and Léhon can be deduced. The hagiographers use miracles to create a group identity for their religious houses through the monks being shared recipients of saintly *uirtus* and through using types of miracles to place their saint within a broader hagiographical tradition, thereby uniting the community and fitting their recently established monasteries into an already existing ecclesiastical framework. But despite similarities in many of the methods which the hagiographers of Redon and Léhon use to solve the common problem they faced — needing a monastic identity in a religious world in which most monasteries already had a clear-cut identity — the identities which they chose to create were in many ways quite distinct. For while Léhon, through their choice of saint and the typical Breton *vita* they wrote about him, emphasised their role as a Breton monastery, with a cousin of Samson as their saint, Redon instead stressed its position as part of the Universal Church, with, among others, a Frankish bishop and a Roman pope as theirs. For both the monks of Redon and Léhon, their hagiography acted as ‘a powerful vehicle for constructing and conveying a sense of identity.’<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Smith, ‘Confronting Identities’, p. 174.



*Poetic Men-talities: Rímur Poets vs. the Maiden King*<sup>1</sup>

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Featuring bloodthirsty female rulers, conniving suitors, fantastical treasure and feats of magic in faraway lands, sagas starring the figure of the ‘maiden king’ were unsurprisingly popular with audiences from the time of their composition in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries until well into the post-medieval period. Although they were largely dismissed, along with other, later forms of saga-writing by early saga scholarship, as an ‘intellectual narcotic’ to help Icelanders deal with the miserable reality of the fourteenth century,<sup>2</sup> this view has begun to change in recent years, in part due to their intriguing position as texts which respond to trends in literature from both Continental Europe and earlier Germanic legend. This convergence of influences is seen clearly in the figure of the maiden king, an ambivalent character who seems to have both delighted and dismayed medieval Icelandic audiences. Approximately a dozen maiden-king sagas are known from

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<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, grant number AH/L503897/1.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Schlauch, *Romance in Iceland* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), p. 11.

medieval Iceland,<sup>3</sup> the vast numbers of extant manuscripts testifying to their enduring popularity.<sup>4</sup>

At some point during the fourteenth century, towards the end of the period in which new maiden-king sagas seem to have been composed, a new literary form began to develop in Iceland. Turning away from the composition of lengthy prose narratives, Icelandic authors began to fix their attention on poetry as a means of conveying narrative. The resulting form was known as *rímur* (sg. *ríma*, lit. ‘rhyme’), so called because of its metres’ dependence on end-rhyme in addition to the alliteration and internal rhyme seen in the earlier skaldic and eddic metres. The earliest extant *ríma* is found in *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol.), from the very end of the fourteenth century, and no other *rímur* are extant from before the late fifteenth century, when the *Kollsbók* manuscript (Cod. Guelf. 42.7 4°, c. 1480–90) was compiled. Over the course of the sixteenth century, several more large compilations of *rímur* were created, most notably *Hólsbók* (AM 603 4°, sixteenth century), *Staðarhólsbók* (AM 604 a–h 4°, c. 1540–60), *Selskinna* (AM 605 4°, c. 1550–1600) and *Krossnessbók* (Holm. Perg. 22 4°, 1550–1600).<sup>5</sup> Due to the compilatory nature of these manuscripts, dating individual *rímur*-cycles is

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<sup>3</sup> The imprecision comes from the fluid boundaries of the *topos*. In this article, I have followed Marianne Kalinke’s assessment of which sagas ‘count’ as maiden-king sagas, giving the following list: *Dínus saga drambláta*, *Gibbons saga*, *Hrólf’s saga Gautrekssonar*, *Hrólf’s saga kraka*, *Klári saga*, *Mágus saga jarls*, *Nítíða saga*, *Partalopa saga*, *Sigrarðs saga frækna*, *Sigurðar saga þøgla* and *Viktors saga ok Blávuss*. Marianne E. Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance in Medieval Iceland*, *Islandica*, XLVI (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Though it should be noted that the vast majority of these manuscripts are from the post-medieval period. *Hrólf’s saga kraka*, for example, has no extant manuscript which predates the seventeenth century.

<sup>5</sup> The dates of these manuscripts are taken from handrit.is, with the exception of that of *Kollsbók*, which is from Ólafur Halldórsson, ‘Inngangur’, in *Kollsbók*, *Íslenzk Handrit*, V (Reykjavík: Handritastofnun Íslands, 1968), p. xxxvi.

somewhat difficult, but following the most recent comprehensive effort to date the poems based on their stage of language development by Haukur Þorgeirsson,<sup>6</sup> perhaps fifty-nine cycles can be said to be medieval.<sup>7</sup>

*Rímur*-poets were not, on the whole, known for their originality, and almost all *rímur* have a source text on which they are closely based.<sup>8</sup> Chivalric and legendary sagas, the categories in which the maiden king flourished, were particularly popular among medieval *rímur*-poets, accounting for thirty-nine out of fifty-nine pre-Reformation *rímur*-cycles. Yet the maiden kings themselves seem not to have been of great interest, playing a substantial role in only three pre-Reformation *rímur*. This article explores the ways in which *rímur*-poets treated maiden kings when adapting their sagas, arguing that the differences seen are primarily the result of genre distinctions, rather than any major difference between the social groups involved in producing and consuming sagas and *rímur*.

The character archetype of the ‘maiden king’ was first discussed at length in Erik Wahlgren’s 1938 thesis ‘The Maiden King in Iceland’.<sup>9</sup> The figure appears in a number of legendary and chivalric sagas, especially in the indigenous *riddarasögur* – chivalric sagas composed within the Norse-speaking world, rather than being translated from the French or Middle English. There are also several examples of maiden kings (or close equivalents)

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<sup>6</sup> Haukur Þorgeirsson, ‘Hljóðkerfi og bragkerfi. Stoðhljóð, tónkvæði og önnur úrlausnarefni í íslenskri bragsögu ásamt útgáfu á rímum af Ormari Fraðmarssyni’ (unpublished PhD, University of Iceland, 2013), pp. 248–57.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of the present article, the Icelandic medieval period is defined as ending in 1550, the year in which the Reformation is generally held to have begun in the country with the death of Jón Arason, the last Catholic bishop of Hólar, and his sons.

<sup>8</sup> Notable exceptions include the two parodic medieval *rímur* *Skíðaríma* and *Fjósa rímur*, though both of these remain full of intertextual references, even if no direct source is known for their narratives.

<sup>9</sup> Erik Wahlgren, ‘The Maiden King in Iceland’ (unpublished PhD, University of Chicago, 1938).

in sagas that claim to be translated from Continental romances, the most notable of which is *Klári saga*. This saga seems to be one of the earliest to feature a maiden king, and its portrayal of Serena strongly influenced subsequent depictions of maiden kings.<sup>10</sup> However, although the prologue claims that the saga was translated from a Latin poem ‘found’ in France by the Norwegian cleric Jón Halldórsson, Shaun Hughes has recently argued that it may in fact be a Norse composition. The claim that it was translated from Latin closely resembles the common *riddarasaga* trope of legitimising their story by giving it an ancient pedigree, and Hughes compares it to the accounts in *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, *Vilhjálm’s saga sjóðs* and *Sigurðar saga fóts* of how these sagas were discovered inscribed on various walls around Europe and Mesopotamia.<sup>11</sup>

Parallels to the maiden king have also been identified in literature from around the world.<sup>12</sup> One frequently cited counterpart is the figure of Atalanta, who appears in the first- or second-century *Bibliotheca* of pseudo-Apollodorus, a collection of tales from Greek mythology. Atalanta is a virgin huntress who refuses to marry any man unless he can defeat her in a footrace. During a race against her eventual husband, she easily outstrips him at first, but is distracted by golden apples that he has placed in her path for this

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<sup>10</sup> Marianne E. Kalinke, ‘*Clári Saga*, *Hrólfs Saga Gautrekssonar*, and the Evolution of Icelandic Romance’, in *Riddarasögur: The Translation of European Court Culture in Medieval Scandinavia*, ed. by Karl G. Johansson and Else Mundal, *Bibliotheca Nordica*, 7 (Oslo: Novus Forlag, 2014), pp. 273–92 (p. 283).

<sup>11</sup> Shaun F. D. Hughes, ‘*Klári Saga* as an Indigenous Romance’, in *Romance and Love in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iceland. Essays in Honour of Marianne Kalinke*, ed. by Kirsten Wolf and Johanna Denzin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 135–63.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, ‘From Heroic Legend to “Medieval Screwball Comedy”? The Origins, Development and Interpretation of the Maiden-King Narrative’, in *The Legendary Sagas. Origins and Development*, ed. by Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012), pp. 229–49.

purpose, allowing him to win and therefore to marry her.<sup>13</sup> The parallels to maiden kings such as Seditiana (in *Sigurðar saga þogla*),<sup>14</sup> Philotemía (in *Dínus saga dramláta*) and Fulgida (in *Viktors saga ok Blávuss*), all of whom are tricked by their suitors by means of valuable – sometimes explicitly golden – objects, are readily apparent. Likewise, the tale of Princess Al-Datma from the *Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, who challenges her suitors to single combat and defeats them all in humiliating ways until the story's protagonist arrives on the scene, bears close similarities to warrior maiden kings such as Þornbjörg/Þórbergr in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*.<sup>15</sup> Yet it is in the indigenous *riddarasögur* of Iceland that the maiden king reached the peak of her popularity.

In addressing the question of *why* a character type like that of the maiden king was so appealing to an Icelandic audience,<sup>16</sup> a number of explanations have been advanced. These arguments can be broadly broken down into two groups, the first of which concerns the development of the motif, and the second of which addresses the role such figures played in shaping discourses

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<sup>13</sup> Psuedo-Apollodorus, *The Library / Apollodorus*, trans. by James George Frazer, The Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; William Heineman Ltd., 1954), I, pp. 399–401.

<sup>14</sup> Also called 'Sedentiana' in the saga redaction found in AM 152 fol.

<sup>15</sup> *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights*, trans. by Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons, 3 vols (London: Penguin, 2008), II, pp. 589–91.

<sup>16</sup> The original audiences of maiden-king sagas almost certainly included non-Icelandic Norse-speakers; for example, according to *Lárentíus saga*, Jón Halldórsson, the translator or composer of *Klári saga* was raised by a Dominican order in Norway, and it is possible that *Klári saga* was first introduced to a Norwegian, rather than Icelandic audience. However, the vast majority of extant manuscripts of maiden-king sagas seem to have been produced in Iceland, and it therefore seems likely that these tales had a peculiar grip on the Icelandic imagination of the time. See Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur. III. Árna Saga. Lárentíus saga Biskups. Söguþáttur Jóns Halldórssonar biskups. Biskupa ættir*, Íslensk Fornrit, 17 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1998), p. 445.

around gender and sexual behaviour in the societies in which they were composed and performed.

In the first group, Marianne Kalinke and Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, among others, have argued that portrayals of the maiden king were strongly influenced by the depictions of shieldmaidens and valkyries in earlier eddic and legendary material.<sup>17</sup> In particular, Jóhanna traces a direct line of development from the figure of Brünhild in the *Nibelungenlied* tradition, through the Brynhildr of *Völsunga saga*, to the figure of Þornbjörg/Þórbergr in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*. Brünhild is depicted as sole ruler of Iceland, who challenges her suitors to one-on-one contests of strength for her hand, with death as the reward for those who fail, and Brynhildr is likewise reluctant to marry until she meets the matchless Sigurðr. Jóhanna argues that Þornbjörg/Þórbergr should be seen as a halfway stage in the development of the maiden king motif, combining the aspects of physical/martial confrontation seen in the shieldmaiden *topos* with the humiliation sequence of *Klári saga* to result in a maiden king who wages war against the would-be suitor before being defeated and humiliated in battle by means of Ketill's insults and *klámhogg* ('shaming blow').<sup>18</sup> Kalinke places more weight on the continental influence, pointing out that the bridal-quest motif which forms the main plot of most maiden-king sagas is also a feature of Continental romances popular in the fourteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Carol Clover goes one step further and argues that female characters, including maiden kings, who adopt some of the trappings of masculinity in order to become their fathers' heirs are a holdover from a legal reality in Iceland in which women could in effect become legal sons by such means, although this interpretation has not been

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<sup>17</sup> Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'Heroic Legend', pp. 232–33; Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance*, p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, 'Heroic Legend', p. 233.

<sup>19</sup> Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance*, pp. 203–4.

widely adopted and most scholars see maiden kings as a purely literary archetype.<sup>20</sup>

When it comes to the role played by maiden-king sagas in the societies that produced them, scholarly consensus seems to be that these tales responded to changing models of gendered behaviour in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Henric Bagerius, for example, points to the fact that these sagas almost always include a scene or scenes in which the maiden king is sexually humiliated or violated as evidence of an ongoing dialogue about appropriate sexual behaviour in a society that was increasingly looking towards courtly models of behaviour.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Sif Ríkharðsdóttir argues that maiden-king sagas show a change in Icelandic literary interests away from discussing the deeds of men, instead putting scrutiny on relationships between women and men.<sup>22</sup> Bjørn Bandlien's study of changing conceptions of heterosexual love over the course of the Icelandic Middle Ages suggests that the maiden-king *topos* was part of an ongoing discussion regarding the importance of consent in marriage.<sup>23</sup> The figure of the maiden king can therefore be seen to respond to contemporary anxieties of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by amplifying themes already present in Icelandic literature – especially that of the misogynous, martial woman.

Such figures were – and to an extent *are* – anxiety-provoking, with even the least transgressive of them defying the pattern of good, socially-conscious behaviour which requires willing entry into heterosexual monogamy. The

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<sup>20</sup> Carol Jeanne Clover, 'Maiden Warriors and Other Sons', *JEGP*, 85.1 (1986), 35–49.

<sup>21</sup> Henric Bagerius, 'Romance and Violence. Aristocratic Sexuality in Late Medieval Iceland', *Mirator*, 14.2 (2013), 79–96.

<sup>22</sup> Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, 'Meykóngahefðin í riddarasögum. Hugmyndafræðileg átök um kynhlutverk og þjóðfélagsstöðu', *Skírnir*, 184 (2010), 410–33.

<sup>23</sup> Bjørn Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion. Love and Marriage in Old Norse Society*, trans. by Betsy van der Hoek, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 279–94.

defining feature of the maiden king is her refusal to marry, most often coupled with an assertion that she can rule alone and a husband would be detrimental to her standing. Such a refusal is a distinct flaw in the bridal-quest genre to which the majority of maiden-king sagas belong, where, as the name suggests, marriage is the end-goal of the narrative. Such reluctance is also presented as a flaw when it appears in male characters, and indeed what precipitates the bridal-quest in a number of narratives (e.g. *Jarlmanns saga ok Hermanns*, *Mágus saga jarls* and *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*) is a scene in which the protagonist is reminded by his retainers that while he might have many virtues, he cannot be considered an ideal king until he has found himself a wife and (it is strongly implied) ensured the succession of his line. Yet whereas the male protagonists are willing to recognise their single status as a flaw to be remedied, maiden kings are not. This is, perhaps, unsurprising: as Marianne Kalinke points out, a king's power can only be increased by the acquisition of a wife and therefore the potential for an heir, whereas for a sole female ruler to marry would mean a significant reduction in her status and power to that of a mere consort, as indeed proves to be the case at the conclusion of many maiden-king narratives.<sup>24</sup> No maiden king is allowed to remain unmarried at the end of her saga, and a number of scholars who have worked on these texts point out the message this sends about the potential

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<sup>24</sup> Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance*, p. 81. This loss of status is explicitly noted by the maiden king of *Partalopa saga*: *hon vildi ongvan mann láta vera sér ríkara ef hon mætti ráða, ok sá hon þat sem var at sá mundi keisari verða yfir allri Grekkja er hennar fengi ok sá mundi ríkari verða en hon* ('she did not want to allow any man to be more powerful than her if she could control it, and she saw this truly, that the one whom she married would become emperor over all of Greece, and that one would become more powerful than her'). I have normalised the quotations for ease of reading; all translations are my own unless otherwise stated. *Partalopa saga*, ed. by Lise Præstgaard Andersen, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ. Series B, 28 (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1983), p. 8.



dangers to societal stability posed by powerful, unmarried women, as well as the obvious means by which to reduce that threat.<sup>25</sup>

Other maiden kings not only transgress models of correct sexual or romantic behaviour, but also blur – or in some cases step right over – the boundaries of gender. Not only do they refuse the attentions of male suitors, but by taking on explicitly male attributes, they make it clear that the reason their kingdom has no need of a king is because it already has one. At this point it seems useful to draw a distinction between *gender identity*, i.e. a person's internal sense of their own gender, and *gender presentation* or *social gender*. These latter two terms overlap to some extent, although there is a qualitative difference between the way a person chooses to externally manifest their gender (*gender presentation*) and the way such a performance of gender is interpreted by the society in which they operate (*social gender*).<sup>26</sup> To the limited extent that it is possible to discuss the gender identity of fictional characters at all, the majority of maiden kings seem comfortable with the label of 'woman' – they just also want the label of 'king'. The negotiation of this kingly role therefore forms part of their negotiation of their social gender. There are exceptions, which will be discussed in more detail below, but by and large, maiden kings are women who adopt elements of a male social gender in order to strengthen their position, while maintaining a female identity.

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. Bandlien, p. 294; Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, pp. 427–30.

<sup>26</sup> This conceptualisation of gender is of course indebted to Judith Butler's theory of gender as something produced through social performance (Judith P. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999)), but owes even more to work, both scholarly and informal, by trans activists and scholars such as Julia Serano (Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2016)).

In many cases, this is due to the highly gendered nature of power in these narratives. For example, in *Partalopa saga*, the maiden king explicitly states that the title of empress is beneath her status as sole ruler, and that only the title of king adequately reflects her majesty: ‘þótti henni þat mikil minnkan at heita síðan keisarina þar er áðr hét hon meykóngr yfir Partalopa ok mǫrgum qðrum hofðingjum’.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, in *Gibbons saga*, the maiden king’s wish to take on the title of ‘king’ marks her as *baldin ok full ofmetnaðar* (‘unruly and excessively prideful’).<sup>28</sup>

However, the above model, in which characters who are presented as fairly uncomplicatedly female take on aspects of a male social gender simply in order to strengthen their own power, does not hold true for all cases. Some maiden kings go far further in destabilising the boundaries of gender. Perhaps the most notorious example of this is the character of Þornbjörg/Þórberg in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*. In the oldest redaction of this saga, preserved in the early fourteenth-century manuscript Holm. Perg. 7 4°, we are told that Þornbjörg ‘hefir hirð um sik sem konungar’<sup>29</sup> and that ‘engi skal þora hana

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<sup>27</sup> Andersen, p. 8. ‘she thought that a great diminishment [of status] to thereafter be called ‘empress’ where she had before been called ‘maiden king’ over Partalopi and many other powerful men’. The quotation given here is taken from the A-redaction, but the B-redaction expresses similar sentiments: *Nú þótti henni í því metorð sín þverra er hon skyldi þá heita drottning sem áðr hefr heitit meykóngr bæði yfir Partalopa ok mǫrgum qðrum hofðingjum* (‘Now it seems to her that her estimation will diminish in this, that she should then be called ‘queen’ who before has been called ‘maiden king’ over both Partalopi and many other powerful men’).

<sup>28</sup> *Gibbons saga*, ed. by Raymond I. Page, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ. Series B, 2 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1960), p. 22. *Ok full ofmetnaðar* is not found in the A-redaction but is present in both B and C.

<sup>29</sup> *Zwei Fornaldarsögur: Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar und Ásmundarsaga Kappabana; nach Cod. Holm. 7, 4to.*, ed. by Ferdinand Dettler (Halle M. Niemeyer, 1891), p. 16. ‘has a group of retainers around them like a king’. As *sik* is an ungendered pronoun in Old Norse, I have translated it here as the gender-neutral ‘them’. The fourteenth-century redaction is consistent in referring to Þornbjörg only in feminine terms where gender is apparent, but

mey eða konu at kalla, svá at taki eigi þegar refsing fyrir'.<sup>30</sup> Even in this laconic form, the character's outright rejection of any elements of femininity is striking. Later, when Þornbjörg's would-be suitor Hrólfr arrives at their court, he rather crudely calls attention to the mismatch between what he perceives as their 'real' gender and their gender presentation, demanding: "Hvárt skulum vér hér kveðja son eða dóttur, konung eða konu?"<sup>31</sup>

The later redaction, known only from seventeenth-century paper manuscripts, expands considerably on this concept.<sup>32</sup> Though Þornbjörg/Þórberg is introduced as the king's daughter and frequently – almost obsessively – referred to as *mey* ('maiden') by the narrative, they speak of themselves in ungendered terms as the king's *einberni* ('only child') and practice the chivalric arts of fencing and tilting until 'hún kunni þetta list jafnframt sem þeim riddurum, er kunnu vel ok kurteisliga at bera vopn sín'.<sup>33</sup> This *framferð sem karlar* ('behaviour like [that of] men')<sup>34</sup> causes their father much disquiet, but his efforts to compel Þornbjörg/Þórberg back into the

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the seventeenth-century redaction is not. In order to maintain consistency in the discussion of these texts, I have chosen to use 'they' for Þornbjörg/Þórberg throughout. This is also, in part, a political choice: Þórberg is violently opposed to being referred to in feminine terms and to call them 'she/her' etc. therefore seems inappropriate, bordering on misgendering.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 'no one will dare to call her 'maiden' or 'woman', in order not to receive punishment for it'.

<sup>31</sup> Detter, p. 17. "Which should we greet here, son or daughter, king or woman?"

<sup>32</sup> For a fuller discussion of the differences between the two redactions, see Marianne E. Kalinke, 'Textual Instability, Generic Hybridity, and the Development of Some Fornaldarsögur', in *The Legendary Sagas. Origins and Development*, ed. by Annette Lassen, Agneta Ney, and Ármann Jakobsson (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2012), pp. 201–28.

<sup>33</sup> *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda*, ed. by Carl Christian Rafn, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Poppska prentsmiðja, 1830), III, p. 68. 'she was just as capable at that art as those knights who know how to bear their weapons well and courteously'.

<sup>34</sup> Rafn, III, p. 68.

feminine sphere (geographically as well as physically, given his insistence that they *hafa skemmusetu sem aðrar konungadætr* ('sit in their bower like other kings' daughters')<sup>35</sup>) prove in vain. In this redaction, when Hrólfr comes to seek the maiden king's hand, he is scrupulously polite – which here means acknowledging the male social gender they have crafted by addressing them solely in masculine honorifics: *herra* ('sir, lord') and *konungr* ('king').<sup>36</sup>

Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir has noted that the way that Þornbjörg/Þórbergir is able to move between gender categories over the course of the saga calls into question the inherent stability of such categories in the first place.<sup>37</sup> This tendency is particularly pronounced in *Hrólfs saga*: whereas in most maiden-king sagas, once the maiden king has been defeated and forced to marry, they become the epitome of femininity, Þornbjörg/Þórbergir is still permitted to play with the boundaries of gender, albeit in service of the ultimate goal of heterosexual marriage. Towards the end of the saga, they once again take up arms and armour in order to rescue Hrólfr from imprisonment in Ireland. When Hrólfr sees them, his first impression is of 'maðr einn [...] með alvæpni ok var inn vígligasti'.<sup>38</sup> It is only when this 'warlike man' removes their helmet that Hrólfr recognises his wife; the social gender created by donning armour is strong enough to overrule any other gender cues, and even the kind of interpersonal recognition that one might expect between a husband and wife who have been married for more than a decade at this point.

Though Þornbjörg/Þórbergir is a particularly extreme example of a maiden king taking on masculine attributes, in *Sigrgarðs saga frækna*,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Women in Old Norse Literature: Bodies, Words, and Power, New Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 116.

<sup>38</sup> Rafn, III, p. 183: 'a man with all kinds of weapons, and he was the most warlike'.

Ingigerðr adopts the male name of Ingi upon accession to the throne: ‘Hon lét taka sik til konungs um allt landit, ok var þat kallaðir meykönungar i þann tíma, er svá breyttu. Tók hon at sér ríkisstjórn ok lét kalla sik Inga’.<sup>39</sup> This episode is not given the same expansive treatment as Þornbjörg/Þórberg’s carefully constructed male gender presentation, but is nonetheless an indicator of the ambiguous gender role maiden kings were thought to inhabit.

The maiden king in prose sagas is therefore a compelling figure for both medieval and modern audiences, providing a space to explore unacceptable behaviour by women while making sure that by the end of the narrative these alarming figures are firmly settled in a safe heterosexual union with their power curtailed. Judging by the number of surviving manuscripts, which largely follow the preservation patterns seen for other chivalric sagas,<sup>40</sup> maiden-king sagas remained popular over the late medieval period and on into the early modern. In the seventeenth century especially, there is a sharp uptick in the number of preserved manuscripts of any given saga, likely due to the wider availability of paper in Iceland from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards.<sup>41</sup> A number of redactions (and indeed whole sagas, in the case of *Hrólfs saga kraka*) are only attested in post-medieval manuscripts,

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Sigrarðs saga frækna’, in *Late Medieval Icelandic Romances*, ed. by Agnete Loth, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ. Series B, 24, 5 vols (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1965), v, 39–107 (p. 49): ‘She had herself recognised as king over all the land, and at that time those who behaved thus were called ‘maiden kings’. She took control of the kingdom and had herself called Ingi’.

<sup>40</sup> Quantities of manuscripts based on the lists given in *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, ed. by Marianne E. Kalinke and P.M. Marshall, *Islandica*, 44 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) and Matthew Driscoll et al., *Stories for All Time* (2019) <<http://fasnl.ku.dk/>> [Accessed 11 June 2019].

<sup>41</sup> For a brief account of the use of paper in early-modern Iceland, see Arna Björk Stefánsdóttir, ‘Um upptöku pappírs á Íslandi á sextandu og sautjándu öld’, *Sagnir*, 30 (2013), 226–36.

including the younger redaction of *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* discussed above, and the younger and longer redaction of *Mágus saga jarls*, found in the early-sixteenth-century manuscript AM 152 1–2 fol., which contains the maiden-king episode known as *Geirarðs þáttr*.<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to say by what extent these redactions predate the manuscripts in which they are preserved, but it is illuminating to consider these problems of preservation in the light of the many *rímur*-cycles based on these sagas, the earliest of which come from a period in which there is a relative lack of extant manuscripts, i.e. the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It does not seem to be the case that *rímur* were intended to supplant prose sagas, and many of the early *rímur* only retell a selected part of their source-saga, rather than the entire narrative (e.g. the fifteenth-century *Grettis rímur* only covers events up until approximately ch. 26 of the saga; *Dínus rímur drambláta* only retells about half of the prose saga's story; *Bjarka rímur* deals with only the *Boðvarr bjarki* section of *Hrólfs saga kraka*, etc.)

Despite the abovementioned popularity of the maiden-king motif in prose sagas, the figure is virtually absent from the corpus of pre-Reformation *rímur*. This is particularly surprising in light of the fact that chivalric and legendary sagas, the very tales in which maiden kings shone, were otherwise the most popular sources for *rímur* at this time. In this absence, we must see a conscious creative choice by *rímur*-poets of this period to excise the figure of the maiden king. The second part of this article explores their possible

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<sup>42</sup> *Hrólfs saga kraka* is only found in manuscripts from the seventeenth century onwards but must have existed in some form before 1461 as a manuscript of it is listed in a cartulary made by the monastery at Möðruvellir in that year. *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenskt fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og máldaga, og aðrar skrár, er snerta Ísland eða íslenska menn*, ed. by Jón Þorkelsson, 16 vols (Copenhagen: S.L. Møller, 1899), v, p. 290.

motivations for this choice, as well as how the *rímur*-poets who do keep their maiden kings treat them.

Of the dozen maiden-king sagas listed above, six of them were turned into *rímur*-cycles in the pre-Reformation period:

<i>Dínus saga drambláta</i>	→	<b><i>Dínus rímur</i></b>
<i>Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar</i>	→	<i>Hrólfs rímur Gautrekssonar</i>
<i>Hrólfs saga kraka</i>	→	<i>Bjarka rímur</i>
<i>Mágus saga jarls</i>	→	<i>Mágus rímur</i>
	→	<b><i>Geirarðs rímur</i></b>
<i>Sigurðar saga þogla</i>	→	<b><i>Sigurðar rímur</i></b>
<i>Viktors saga ok Blávuss</i>	→	<i>Blávuss rímur</i>

Yet of these seven *rímur*-cycles, only three actually feature the maiden king in any significant capacity (the titles shown in bold here), and the poets of those three make significant changes to which parts of the source-text they focus on.

As noted above, the most common adaptational choice is simply to ignore the figure of the maiden king. This is possible because for a number of these sagas the maiden-king episode forms only a small proportion of the plot. In *Hrólfs saga kraka*, for example, the maiden-king episode serves to establish an appropriately tragic parentage for the eponymous hero, as his father Helgi is first humiliated by the warrior-queen Ólof, then kidnaps and rapes her, and subsequently abducts and marries their child, with Hrólfr *kraki* being the product of this incestuous union.<sup>43</sup> Although this episode's effects

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<sup>43</sup> As Marianne Kalinke points out, the saga subverts the expected end of a maiden-king story: rather than being married off to her rapist, as is the typical 'happy ending' to these stories, Ólof is left dangerously unattached and is therefore free to destroy Yrsa and Hrólfr's marriage (Kalinke, *Bridal-Quest Romance*, p. 95).

are felt throughout the ensuing narrative, it forms a relatively small part of the story as a whole. The poet of *Bjarka rímur* was therefore able to ignore it entirely and fashion a *rímur*-cycle entirely around the heroic adventures of Þoðvarr *bjarki* and Høttr/Hjalti, two of Hrólfr's retainers.

Likewise, in *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar*, Hrólfr's bridal-quest for the hand of Þornbjörg/Þórberg is only one of four bridal-quest sequences in the saga. It is therefore a straightforward matter for the *rímur*-poet to focus only on the latter half of the saga, which concerns Hrólfr and his brother Ásmundr's adventures in Ireland. Þornbjörg/Þórberg does make a brief appearance, but whereas the saga explicitly notes, in both redactions, that the queen directs the rescue mission, in the *rímur* we are only told that *frúin var sjálf í ferð með þeim* ('the lady herself was on the journey with them' (Ketill and Gautrekr)), which the poet seems to feel is remarkable enough for a woman.<sup>44</sup> The *rímur*-cycle maintains the somewhat comedic moment in which Hrólfr fails to recognise his own wife, with Þornbjörg/Þórberg perceived by him as a *vaskan mann* ('doughty man') before they remove their helmet, but as the *rímur*-cycle lacks the saga's account of Þornbjörg/Þórberg's prior martial exploits, the scene is somewhat inexplicable here and all but requires the audience to have some familiarity with events as portrayed in the saga.<sup>45</sup>

*Mágus saga jarls* is an interesting case. The saga was adapted twice into *rímur*-form, with one covering the start of the older redaction and the other focusing its attention on the *Geirarðs þáttur* section of the younger redaction.<sup>46</sup> *Mágus rímur jarls* tells the first part of the older redaction, which concerns the uncomfortable courtship of Hlōðvir and Ermenga. While this section features

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<sup>44</sup> Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir and Haukur Þorgeirsson, 'Hrólfs rímur Gautrekssonar', *Gripla*, 26 (2015), 81–137 (p. 127).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>46</sup> Björn K. Þórólfsson, *Rímur fyrir 1600* (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska fræðafélag, 1934), pp. 343, 404.



a number of motifs also seen in maiden-king narratives – for example, Ermenga is initially reluctant to wed; she subsequently disguises herself as a male warrior in order to fulfil her husband’s otherwise-impossible tests of loyalty – the bridal-quest section of the narrative is relatively straightforward, with trouble only developing once the two parties are married. This is rather different to the usual maiden-king structure, in which marriage marks the conclusion of the narrative, and this section of the saga is therefore not generally counted among the maiden-king stories. *Geirarðs rímur*, however, tells a quintessential maiden-king narrative, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Finally, the older redaction of *Blávuss rímur og Viktors*, found in its entirety in AM 604 c 4° (mid-sixteenth-century) and as a fragment in AM 603 4° (sixteenth-century), stops short before it gets to the maiden-king section of its tale in the older redaction.<sup>47</sup> AM. Acc. 22, a late-seventeenth-century paper manuscript, continues the story through the maiden-king episode with the addition of four new *rímur*, deemed by both Finnur Jónsson and Björn K. Þórólfsson to be far younger than the rest of the cycle – indeed Björn considers them to be the youngest *rímur* his *Rímur fyrir 1600* discusses.<sup>48</sup> The section of the saga retold in the earlier form of the *rímur* concerns the misadventures of the rather feckless Viktor and his sworn brother Blávus as they ineptly fight berserkers and the like. This interest in the martial deeds of men is something of a theme in the *rímur* corpus more broadly, and will be returned to below.

When it comes to the three *rímur* which actually do feature a maiden king to any meaningful extent, the poets take several different approaches.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327–28.

<sup>48</sup> Björn K. Þórólfsson, p. 328; *Rímnasafn: Samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols (Copenhagen: S.L. Møller, 1905), II, p. 604.

*Sigurðar rímur þögla* follows its saga closely, as far as can be told, although given large sections of the older saga redaction are reconstructed from the *rímur* due to damage to the manuscript, this conclusion is somewhat speculative.<sup>49</sup> The story told here is a classic maiden-king narrative, and Seditiana is the quintessential proud maiden king, viciously assaulting her would-be suitors by means of blood-eagling (or, as the *rímur*-cycle has it, blood-owling, V.32–33) before being led to her downfall by her own greed for treasures and lust over the supernaturally-attractive Sigurðr. The saga delights in the gruesome details of both Seditiana's ill-treatment of Sigurðr's brothers, and her own sexual humiliation at the hands of Sigurðr, now disguised as a variety of beings calculated to be least palatable to the haughty maiden king. Given the *rímur* genre's love of cartoonish violence, it may well have been these grotesque details that drew the poet of *Sigurðar rímur* to the saga as a source material.

Meanwhile, *Geirarðs rímur* is based on the longer, younger redaction of *Mágus saga jarls*, known from a sixteenth-century manuscript. *Geirarðs þátr*, on which the *rímur*-cycle is based, is a maiden-king saga in miniature, taking up only six chapters.<sup>50</sup> In it, the noble earl Geirarðr is at first rejected by the emperor's haughty daughter Elínborg on the grounds that he is of insufficient rank to be worthy of her. Upon her father's death, her kingdom is besieged by the Saracen army of King Príamus, a man whose reputation precedes him for 'enjoying' maidens for three nights before casting them aside. Elínborg realises that the only man able to defend her is Geirarðr and is forced to humbly request his assistance. Once he has defeated Príamus in single combat

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<sup>49</sup> *Sigurðar saga þögla: the shorter redaction. Edited from AM 596 4to*, ed. by Matthew James Driscoll, *Rit* (Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi), 34 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> 'Mágus saga Jarls', in *Riddarasögur*, ed. by Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan; Haukadalsútgáfan, 1949), II, 135–429.

and driven off his army, Geirarðr and Elínborg wed. In prose, the tale is briskly narrated, but the *rímur*-poet, working in a genre which never knowingly passes up a good battle sequence, expands on their source-material considerably, taking eight *rímur* – approximately four hundred stanzas – to tell the story, of which the fight between Geirarðr and Príamus occupies a quarter. The action is further extended by the interpolation of several scenes in which Elínborg, uncertain of her fate, reflects wistfully on what an excellent husband Geirarðr would have made if only she had not turned him down so intemperately.<sup>51</sup>

In both of these adaptations, the poets delight in exaggerated violence, gore and gruesomeness, precisely the qualities for which later critics castigated the *rímur*. However, in the final cycle discussed in this article, *Dínus rímur drambláta*, the poet takes a different tack. As mentioned above, *rímur*-poets frequently de-emphasise the role of women in their texts in favour of the martial deeds of men. The *Dínus rímur* poet certainly downplays the role of the maiden king Philotemía, but is even less interested than the saga narrator in portraying Dínus as a mighty warrior. In the saga, the introductions of the two pro-/antagonists are very deliberately paralleled: both are described as beautiful, specifically by means of comparison to flowers; both are learned in the seven literate arts; both are their royal fathers' sole heirs; both foreswear the company of the opposite sex, choosing instead to sequester themselves with their forty most attractive same-sex companions.<sup>52</sup> While all of the above may be typical for a maiden king, it is highly unusual to see a male protagonist described in such terms, though as Geraldine Barnes points out, such deliberate comparisons emphasise the saga's

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<sup>51</sup> Finnur Jónsson, II, pp. 472–529.

<sup>52</sup> *Dínus saga Drambláta*, ed. by Jónas Kristjánsson, Riddarasögur, 1 (Reykjavík: Háskóli Íslands, 1960), pp. 5–9, 13–5.

didactic message: both pro-/antagonists are excessively proud, and both turn their learning to the service of that pride, resulting in the two of them suffering for it over the course of the saga.<sup>53</sup>

The *rímur*-cycle, on the other hand, makes no attempt at such a lesson. Indeed, the story is cut short only halfway through, long before the audience may be expected to have any moment of understanding that this is anything other than an amusing series of pranks perpetrated by the two main characters. Moreover, the carefully matched descriptions seen in the prose saga are nowhere in evidence here. Dínus receives a full description over the course of seven stanzas, in which his command of the seven liberal arts is praised, along with his prowess in battle. His arrogance is also noted, but by far the greatest space is devoted to his singular physical beauty, which receives two stanzas of attention. In each of these it is said that his beauty is such that every woman who sees him falls madly in love; finally we are told that in order to avoid this unwanted attention, Dínus conceals his face with a mask (this is also the case in the saga, a detail which is never brought up again).<sup>54</sup> His portrayal reflects a literal female gaze: his desirability is heightened by being described always according to the opinion of female onlookers. Meanwhile, the description of Philotemía is reduced to a handful of lines in which we are told that she is *skær* ('radiant', I.32)<sup>55</sup> and *sæmd og visku fylldu*

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<sup>53</sup> Geraldine Barnes, *The Bookish Riddarasögur. Writing Romance in Late Medieval Iceland*, The Viking Collection: Studies in Northern Civilization (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2014), XXI, p. 188.

<sup>54</sup> This owes a debt to a very similar scene in *Bærings saga* in which the eponymous hero is informed by an angel that his beauty really is God's gift to women and that to hide it would be sacrilegious.

<sup>55</sup> References to *rímur* are given by individual *ríma* (Roman numeral) and stanza (Arabic numeral). Given the length of time and linguistic variation that the *rímur* corpus spans, all quotations have been normalised to modern Icelandic orthography for the sake of consistency.

(‘filled with honour and wisdom’, I.34).<sup>56</sup> Such terms are so conventionally used to describe women in *rímur* as to be almost formulaic, and they form a stark contrast against the lavish description of Dínus’s many appealing qualities.

The rest of the narrative is told at a brisk pace unusual for *rímur*, with Philotemía and Dínus’s tricks and counter-tricks well-balanced against each other. The *rímur*-cycle stops halfway through the saga, shortly before the point at which events shift in Dínus’s favour and he secures the upper hand for good through his rape of Philotemía. For a *rímur*-cycle of this period to only tell part of its source narrative is not uncommon, and several similar examples are discussed above. However, coupled with the unusual emphasis on Dínus’s beauty seen above (male characters in *rímur* may be described in passing as *vænn* (‘handsome’), but it is far more common for descriptions to linger on their strength in battle, rather than on their attractiveness), one suspects the poet of having an uncommon degree of sympathy for their female audience members; while many *rímur* are assumed to be dedicated to women in the absence of any contradictory information, the *Dínus rímur* poet does specifically note this in I.6: ‘Færa verður fræða vín / fríðum menja lundum’.<sup>57</sup> Such concern with a female audience is rare, despite the fact that the introductory stanzas of so many *rímur* claim to be composed for women.

As is apparent from the above, the three pre-Reformation *rímur*-cycles that retell maiden king narratives take rather different approaches to their source material, but when taken together with the other cycles based on maiden-king sagas, certain patterns do begin to emerge. In general, there is a lack of interest in the figure of the maiden king at all, and this is no doubt

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<sup>56</sup> Finnur Jónsson, II, p. 806.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 802. ‘The wine of wisdom [POETRY] must be brought to the handsome trees of necklaces [WOMEN]’.

linked to a more widespread emphasis throughout the *rímur* corpus on the actions of men. Such indifference is occasionally found explicitly stated by the *rímur*-poets themselves, who seem to view a distinct divide between the introductory stanzas known as *mansöngvar* which preceded individual *rímur* and which are conventionally lyric poetry addressed to women,<sup>58</sup> and the main narrative of the poem. For example, the poet of *Geðraunir* states:

I.5

*Mun ek því ekki mansöng slá  
mens af dýrum skorðum;  
rímum heldr um rekka þá,  
er randir skáru forðum.*<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, the poet of *Sturlaug's rímur* has this to say:

V.4

*Hverfum burt með heiðr og  
kurt frá Hrundi seima.  
Leitum heldr um lönd og geima;  
listuga mættum hitta beima.*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Although many poets spend more time lamenting their lack of desirability than actually praising their dedicatees.

<sup>59</sup> Finnur Jónsson, II, p. 172. 'Thus I may not strike up love-poetry about the worthy support of the necklace [WOMAN]; let us rather make rhymes about those men who cut shields long ago.'

<sup>60</sup> *Rímnasafn: Samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, 2 vols (Copenhagen: S.L. Møller, 1905), I, p. 490. 'With honour and courtesy, let's turn away from the Hrund of gold [WOMAN]. Let's rather look towards land and sea; we might encounter skilful men.'

The overall effect of *mansöngur* stanzas is to create the impression that *rímur* are a masculine space. Though it is impossible to be certain, since most early *rímur*-cycles are anonymous, the vast majority of pre-Reformation *rímur*-poets seem to have been men. When they speak about their audience, even in the supposedly female-centric *mansöngur* stanzas, 46% of the time, they mention an audience that includes men. An interest in manly heroism, especially of the martial kind, is hardly uncommon in the prose sagas as well, but *rímur*-poets take a more deliberate approach to the matter.

This may be due in part to the differing expectations of the audience regarding saga and *rímur*. As noted above, manuscript evidence shows that the prose sagas were circulating at the same time the *rímur* were being composed. Indeed, in many cases the narrative in the *rímur* is extremely difficult to follow unless the audience is already familiar with the events described. Their purpose is therefore not merely to convey narrative but to adapt it. A key means by which adaptation is achieved is through *rímur*'s tendency towards comedic overexaggeration, above and beyond even the worst excesses of the prose *riddarasögur*. Didactic messages, e.g. that of *Dínus saga drambláta*, are toned down or excised entirely, and a greater proportion of the text is spent of gleefully gruesome violence, such as the battle scenes in *Geirarðs rímur*, Seditiana's 'blood-owling' of the two suitors in *Sigurðar rímur þögla*, etc. In addition to this, terms such as *gaman* ('fun') and *skemmtan* ('entertainment') are often used by *rímur*-poets to describe their work, and there seems to be a sense that *rímur* were conceived of as being mostly light entertainment, albeit with a strongly bloodthirsty bent.

This does not mean, as scholarship has sometimes taken it, that these texts are unworthy of in-depth study; 'light entertainment' interacts with the culture which produces it no less than highbrow media. Yet it may go some

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way to explaining the lack of presence of the maiden king. However emphatic a message the pervasive sexual violence of the *riddarasögur* may have offered their audience about the perils of not knowing one's social role, it can hardly be called 'entertaining' or 'fun', especially for an audience we know contained women. Moreover, whatever the *rímur* genre's taste for male-on-male violence, there seems to be a sense that involving women in such scenes would be inappropriate. This is evident even in far earlier depictions of female warriors, e.g. Hervor in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*: we are frequently *told* that these characters are superlative warriors, highly skilled with all weapons, but it is extremely rare to see them depicted in the gory centre of combat. Þornbjörg/Þórbergir is the obvious exception to this, but their battle against Hrólfr and his men has undeniable sexual undertones that complicate the matter.

Though this article has argued that in general *rímur*-poets were far more interested in the heroic deeds of men than in anything a woman might do, it is important to emphasise that the *rímur* corpus is by no means homogenous. Texts such as *Mabilar rímur*, which features a largely female cast, *Landrés rímur*, whose poet was female,<sup>61</sup> as well as the unusually sympathetic approach of *Dínus rímur* to its female audience, reveal the heterogeneity of the *rímur* corpus and raise questions about how far it is possible to speak of a *rímur* 'genre' at all. What I hope to have shown here is that these poems provide an under-investigated means by which to explore questions of reception and adaptation in late-medieval Iceland, being an important stage on the way to our modern perception of these sagas as well as important cultural artefacts in their own right.

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<sup>61</sup> Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Om Ólif og Landrés, Vers og Prosa samt Kvinder og Poeter', in *Eyvindarbók: Festskrift Til Eyvind Fjeld Halvorsen, 4. Mai 1992*, ed. by Finn Hødnebo and others (Oslo: Universitet i Oslo, 1992), pp. 217–30.





