CONTENTS

AClon	Annals of Clonmacnoise
AFM	Annals of the Four Masters
AI	Annals of Inisfallen
ASC	*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*
AT	Annals of Tigernach
AU	Annals of Ulster
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CMCS	*Cambridge/Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* (name changed in 1993)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society
os	original series
ss	supplementary series
EHR	*English Historical Review*
ITS	Irish Texts Society
JRSAI	*Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in Ireland*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MMIS	Modern and Medieval Irish Series
PG	Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1856–66)
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1841–64)
PRIA	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*
RC	*Revue Celtique*
SASLC	*Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture* (http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/research/saslc/)
ZCP	*Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*

This publication is the outcome of an initiative taken in 1999 by members of the post-graduate community in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic. That they have brought their venture so successfully to fruition is testimony not only to their commitment and enthusiasm, but no less importantly to the professionalism which they have displayed at every stage of the process. The Department is proud indeed to be associated with the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, and wishes it every success in the future.

Professor Simon Keynes
Head of the Department of ASNC
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COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The fourth Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic took place on Thursday, 22 May 2003, in the Winstanley Lecture Theatre, Trinity College, Cambridge. Papers on the theme of 'East Meets West' were presented in four sessions:

Session I *(Chair: Flora Spiegel)*
Thomas Charles-Edwards, 'The English Invasion of Ireland and Irish Politics, 1166–1186'

Session II *(Chair: Carys Underdown)*
Juliet Hewish, 'Eastern Asceticism versus Western Monasticism: a Conflict of Ideals in the Early Medieval Translations of Sulpicius Severus?'
Ashwin Gohil, 'The Ptolemy Project'
Catherine Rooney, 'Gerald of Wales and the Tradition of the Wonders of the East'

Session III *(Chair: Emily Lethbridge)*
Ross Woodward Smythe, 'King Alfred's Translations: Authorial Integrity and the Integrity of Authority'
Geraldine Parsons, 'Never the Twain Shall Meet?: East and West in the Characterisation of Conchobar mac Nessa'
Augustine Casiday, 'Thomas Didymus from India to England'

Session IV *(Chair: Andrew Rigby)*
Hywel Williams, 'Pope, Propaganda and Unchristian Saint in the *Life* of the Soldier, Collen'
Alaric Hall, 'Between a Celtic and a Classical Place: Did the Anglo-Saxons Play Elf-in-the-Middle?'

At the Colloquium it was announced that *Quaestio* would, from vol. 4 onwards, be known as *Quaestio Insularis*. This is to avoid confusion with another new journal also called *Quaestio*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ireland and its Invaders, 1166–1186

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I. THE ISSUES

There have been two great violent encounters between east and west within the British Isles in recorded history, both of which changed the shape of the political, ethnic and linguistic map for good: the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain and the English invasion of Ireland. My subject is the second.[1] For a messy and violent sequence of episodes, it was relatively well recorded: Gerald of Wales's *Expugnatio Hibernica* was written by a man who accompanied Henry II's youngest son, John, to Ireland in 1185 and who had relatives among the earliest invaders.[2] He is as remarkable for his insight into Welsh and Irish society as he is for his unblushingly high opinion of himself, characteristic of twelfth-century intellectuals.[3] *The Song of Dermot and*

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[1] I am very grateful to Fiona Edmonds for commenting on a draft of this paper and for her help with the maps. I have normalized Irish names to a standard represented in the contemporary Book of Leinster, although such forms as Máel Sechnaill are shown by such texts as *The Song of Dermot and the Earl* no longer to represent normal pronunciation: T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Notes on Middle-Irish Pronunciation', *Hermathena* 20 (1930), 152–95, esp. 152–63.

[2] *Expugnatio Hibernica: the Conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis*, ed. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin, A New Hist. of Ireland Ancillary Publ. 3 (Dublin, 1978), hereafter *Expug.*

[3] Those who find Gerald worryingly prone to self-promotion should compare him with the younger Peter of Blois: R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe II: the Heroic Age* (Oxford, 2001), p. 191.

the Earl is a verse chronicle in Old French, portraying the invasion in heroic terms.[4] It was evidently composed for an audience of Englishmen settled in Ireland. According to its most recent editor it was first composed in the last decade of the twelfth century but underwent minor updating for another twenty-five years.[5] On the Irish side there is a good spread of annals, including the Annals of Tigernach, at this period close to the standpoint of one principal player, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobuir, king of Connaught and high-king of Ireland.

My endpoints are the killing of Muirchertach mac Néill, *alias* Mac Lochlainn, high-king of Ireland, in 1166 and the killing of Hugh de Lacy in 1186.[6] The first precipitated the expulsion of Diarmait Mac Murchada from Ireland. The second saw the death of the man who was by then the most powerful among the early English settlers. Together with the failure in the previous year of the expedition headed by Henry II's youngest son John (later King John) it saw the

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[4] *The Deeds of the Normans in Ireland: La Geste des Engleis en Yrlande: a New Edition of the Chronicle formerly known as* The Song of Dermot and the Earl, ed. and trans. E. Mullally (Dublin, 2002); the historical notes of the earlier edition by G. H. Orpen, *The Song of Dermot and the Earl* (Oxford, 1892; repr. Felinfach, 1994) remain indispensable. Reference to the text will be by line-numbers. These are the same in the two editions as far as 1731, after which occurs the statement of Diarmait's death and the Latin prayer for his soul. These are counted as two lines by Orpen but as outside the line-count by Mullally. The effect is that from this point onwards Mullally's line-numbers are two less than Orpen's. I shall refer to Orpen's text as *Song* and Mullally's as *Deeds*. Translations are those of Mullally.

[5] *The Deeds of the Normans in Ireland*, ed. Mullally, pp. 27–32.

[6] For the descent and aspirations of Mac Lochlainn see D. Ó Corráin, 'Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn and the *Circuit of Ireland*', in *Seanchas: Studies in Early and Medieval Irish Archaeology, History and Literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne*, ed. A. P. Smyth (Dublin, 2000), pp. 238–50.

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end of the first phase of the invasion.[7] By this stage the invaders had effective control of most of Leinster and Meath, the south-east and the centre of Ireland; in addition John de Courcy had conquered most of Ulster in the north-east. Part of Munster had been conquered but there was only marginal penetration into the remaining Irish provinces, Connaught in the west and what was known as 'the North' in the north-west.

My concern is the way Irish politics affected the course of the invasion – a concern stimulated by two thoughts. One was about a map illustrating a contribution by Robert Bartlett to a volume on frontier societies.[8] It showed the castles constructed in Meath in the early years of the invasion. What Bartlett did not say, but what would be practically the first thing to occur to an historian of early medieval Ireland, was that almost all the castles were constructed on the sites of well-known churches. The other was suggested by one of the principal sources for Bartlett's map, namely *The Song of Dermot and the Earl*. It has accounts of the infeudation of two provinces, Leinster and Meath. They appear to reveal a contrast: in Leinster Richard fitz Gilbert, alias Strongbow, of the great house of Clare, had granted out Irish kingdoms to his followers; but, in Meath, Hugh de Lacy had granted mainly castleries, portions of land defined as being appendant to a castle. Many of these were, as we have seen, on the sites of old churches, some of them famous, such as Durrow, Columba's foundation, or Clonard. The geography of the infeudation of Leinster appeared to be Irish; the geography of the infeudation of Meath seemed to be primarily military. The one substituted English

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[7] S. Duffy, 'John and Ireland: the Origins of England's Irish Problem', in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S. D. Church (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 221–45, at pp. 221–34.

[8] R. Bartlett, 'Colonial Aristocracies of the High Middle Ages', in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. R. Bartlett and A. MacKay (Oxford, 1989), p. 33, map 2.

lords for Irish kings; the other imposed a new political landscape based upon the castle. The crucial technique of conquest in Meath was to rely on the capacity of the castle to act as a centre from which to control territory. When one looks closer, the contrast is less clear-cut; nevertheless it remains striking.

II. THE IRISH POLITICAL BACKGROUND

At the beginning of 1166 there were two alliances of leading kings in Ireland (leaving aside Munster). The alliance which was currently dominant was headed by Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn, king of Ireland and king of 'the North'; it included Domnall Ua Cerbaill, king of Airgialla and Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster. Since the power of Ua Cerbaill extended as far south as Drogheda, near the mouth of the Boyne, and the power of Mac Murchada extended northwards over Dublin and its appendant territories as far as the Delvin, this alliance dominated eastern as well as northern Ireland. Only the previous year, it had triumphed over opposition within Ulster. The other, opposed, alliance consisted of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, king of Connachta, Tigernán Ua Ruairc, king of Bréifne, and Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill, king of Mide. It was the contemporary form of an ancient bond between the Clann Cholmáin of Mide and the Connachta; all three principal kings within the alliance were termed Connachta by the Annals of Tigernach in a striking and effective re-alignment of ancient political vocabulary.[9] Both alliances thus had a geographical logic: the Connachta in this new sense were essentially a central alliance embracing Connaught and the midlands of Ireland; the alliance headed by Mac Lochlainn

[9] AT 1166: *The Annals of Tigernach*, ed. W. Stokes, *RC* 16 (1895), 374–419; 17 (1896), 6–33, 119–263, 337–420; 18 (1897), 9–59, 150–97, 267–303 (repr. Felinfach, 1993).

was a combination of 'the North', now extending far into the midland plain, thanks to Ua Cerbaill's expansion, together with Leinster. Mide, and especially Eastern Mide, was the principal point of tension.

The sequence of events that led to the English invasion of Ireland began with an act of treachery at the very top, with the blinding of the king of Ulster by the king of Ireland. Eochaid Mac Duinn Shléibe, king of Ulster, had rebelled against Mac Lochlainn in 1165, had been comprehensively defeated, and yet had been restored to his kingship through the good offices of Ua Cerbaill, who was his foster-father. Mac Lochlainn and Mac Duinn Shléibe were feasting together at Mac Lochlainn's 'Easter-house' at Camus, an old church-site a few miles up the Bann from Coleraine.[10] During the feast, Mac Lochlainn took Mac Duinn Shléibe away into captivity and had him blinded. Ua Cerbaill promptly rebelled against Mac Lochlainn and allied himself with Tigernán Ua Ruairc. He took troops from both their kingdoms and came upon Mac Lochlainn in the south of what is now Co. Armagh; in the battle the king of Ireland was killed.[11] Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, king of the Connachta, was now the dominant ruler in Ireland, and he rapidly took full advantage of his opportunity.

One might have supposed that Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster, would himself have seen the implications of the death of his political patron, Mac Lochlainn, and that he too would have been quick to submit to Ua Conchobair. After all, only fourteen years

[10] For the 'Easter-house', cf. AU 1124.3: *Annála Uladh: Annals of Ulster*, ed. W. M. Hennessy and B. MacCarthy, 4 vols. (Dublin, 1887–1901) and *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, part I (text and translation) (Dublin, 1983); Mac Carthaigh's Book, 1147.3: *Miscellaneous Irish Annals (A.D. 1114–1437)*, ed. S. Ó hInnse (Dublin, 1947), pp. 30–1.

[11] The most detailed account is in Mac Carthaigh's Book, *s.a.* 1165 = 1166.

earlier, in 1152, Mac Murchada had been the ally of Ruaidrí's father, Tairdelbach Ua Conchobair, in an attack on Tigernán Ua Ruairc. This was the occasion of the notorious abduction by Mac Murchada of Tigernán Ua Ruairc's wife, Derbfhorgaill;[12] the Annals of Clonmacnoise memorably, but questionably, described Mac Murchada as having 'kept her for a long space to satisfie his insatiable, carnall and adulterous lust', but he also seems to have wished to divide Tigernán Ua Ruairc from Derbfhorgaill's family, the Uí Maíl Shechnaill of Mide, and to cause the maximum insult to Tigernán himself.

Yet there were reasons why it should have been impossible for Mac Murchada to make any easy settlement with the new regime. His own authority in Leinster had been sustained by a combination of some adroit alliances together with extreme violence towards his enemies. The most striking example was in 1141, when 'seventeen men of the royalty of Leinster were killed and blinded by Diarmait Mac Murchada'.[13] Prominent among his victims on that occasion were the principal royal lineages of northern Leinster, Uí Fháeláin, Uí Muiredaig, and Uí Dúnchada, the three branches of the Uí Dúnlainge, which had dominated Leinster from the early eighth to the eleventh century. They were joined from central Leinster by three sons of Mac Gormáin, namely the ruler of the Uí Bairrche (around the modern town of Carlow). In addition to these former victims, the Hiberno-Scandinavian towns of Dublin and Wexford were also

opposed to his rule; and even more implacable in opposition was the king of Osraige, Donnchad Mac Gilla Phátraic.

The divisions within Mac Murchada's Leinster were faithfully echoed by the two principal accounts of the English invasion from the standpoint of the invaders: the *Expugnatio Hibernica* of Gerald of Wales and *The Song of Dermot and the Earl*. For *The Song*, Diarmait Mac Murchada was 'the noble king, who was so renowned'; 'in Ireland at this time there was no king as worthy as he. He was very rich and magnificent; he loved the generous, hated the mean'.[14] For Gerald, 'he oppressed his nobles, and raged against the chief men of his kingdom with a tyranny grievous and impossible to bear'.[15] In 1166, Diarmait Mac Murchada's enemies within Leinster were quick to align themselves with Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair: 'and the son of Mac Fáeláin and Ua Conchobair Failgi came into the house of Ua Conchobair … Mac Gilla Phátraic and the people of Osraige went into the house of Ua Conchobair and gave him their hostages'.[16] At this point Mac Murchada's kingship hung in the balance: he was defeated and forced to submit to Ua Conchobair on humiliating terms, but he still had hostages from the Uí Fhailgi and the Uí Fháeláin, even though they had also given hostages to Ua Conchobair.[17] Yet one group of his allies, the Maic Bráenáin, now killed the king of the Uí Dúnchada, Mac Gilla Mo Cholmóc; according to the Annals of Tigernach (admittedly a hostile source), this outrage was committed at the instigation of Mac Murchada.[18] The Uí Dúnchada, however, were

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[12] *Expug.*, I.1.

[13] AT, which has, by a slip, Murchad Mac Murchada; cf. Mac Carthaigh's Book, AFM *s.a.* 1141: *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Times to the Year 1616*, ed. J. O'Donovan (Dublin, 1851); AClon *s.a.* 1133: *The Annals of Clonmacnoise, being Annals of Ireland from the Earliest Period to A.D. 1408, translated into English, A.D. 1627 by Conell Mageoghagan*, ed. D. Murphy (Dublin, 1896).

[14] *Song/Deeds*, 146–7, 12–15.

[15] *Expug.*, I.1.

[16] AT 1166.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] The Maic Bráenáin have been identified with the Uí Bráenáin to whom Diarmait Mac Murchada's mother belonged: F. J. Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod: Ireland in 1169', in *A New History of Ireland II: Medieval Ireland 1169–1534*, ed. A.

situated just to the south of Dublin and were closely associated with its citizens. The ensuing rebellion against Mac Murchada therefore included the Dubliners: 'the Leinstermen and the Foreigners (of Dublin) revolted against Mac Murchada on account of his own misdeeds'.[19] Hostages were given by the Uí Fháeláin and Uí Fhailgi in the north and north-west of Leinster to Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill, king of Mide, one of the three main figures in Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair's alliance. As for Mac Murchada, he responded by killing the hostages of the Uí Fháeláin, including the son of their king, and the hostages of Osraige. The attack by Tigernán Ua Ruairc and Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill on Mac Murchada, which drove him into exile, followed rapidly upon this breakdown of his authority in northern and western Leinster.

When Mac Murchada re-established his power in Leinster after his return from exile in August 1167, he naturally had to confront those kings in Leinster who had been only to glad to see him driven out, namely those whom *The Song* called 'traitors' and 'felons', meaning by the latter term men who had treacherously abandoned their sworn allegiance to their lord. The identity of these traitors is one of the two principal keys to the original infeudation of Leinster by Mac Murchada and then by Strongbow, the other being, naturally, strategic good sense. Initially, from August 1167 until the summer of 1169, Diarmait had to accept that he only ruled lands belonging to the Uí Chennselaig. The attacks on 'the traitors' had to wait until Robert fitz Stephen, Hervey de Montmorency and Maurice de Prendergast had landed at Bannow Bay in the summer of 1169. Once that had happened, Mac Murchada could proceed, step by step, to the

Cosgrove (Oxford, 1987), p. 27. Byrne situates the Uí Bráenáin around Kilteel in the north-east of Co. Kildare, so that they would have been neighbours of the Uí Dúnchada.

[19] AT 1166.

reduction, or at least the punishment, of his enemies: first, Wexford, and then, in turn, Osraige, Uí Fháeláin, Uí Muiredaig, and then Osraige again.

Once Strongbow had landed on 23 August 1170, Mac Murchada's ambition became more extensive. The new arrivals captured Waterford almost immediately, and Mac Murchada's army was now in a position to take on another 'traitor', Dublin, ruled by Ascall mac Raghnaill meic Thorcaill.[20] The city was captured on 21 September. This triumph enabled Mac Murchada to pursue a further round of attacks on his enemies, Uí Fháeláin and Osraige, but also to extend his campaign into Mide. This kingdom had been weakened further in 1169 by the killing of Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill by his kinsman, Domnall Bregach, whereupon Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair had divided Mide between himself (the west) and Tigernán Ua Ruairc (the east). Mac Murchada's campaign into Meath after the capture of Dublin induced Domnall Bregach, in need of a new patron after his killing of his kinsman Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill, to submit to the king of Leinster. Mac Murchada was now back to where he had been in the days of his greatest power, triumphant over his enemies within Leinster and in Dublin, and with a share of a dismembered Meath.

III. THE FIEFS GRANTED TO THE ENGLISH IN LEINSTER

In its account of the fiefs granted to the English in Leinster, *The Song* presents an inconsistent tale. The main section is all in terms of what Earl Richard (Strongbow) gave to his principal vassals;[21] and, yet, what brought them all to Ireland was Mac Murchada's promise that 'whoever shall wish for soil or for sod, richly shall I enfeoff them'.[22]

[20] This represents the Irish form of his name; for suggestions about the Norse form, see *Expug.*, p. 303, n. 94.

[21] *Song*, 3060–3127; *Deeds*, 3058–3125.

[22] *Song/Deeds*, 435–6.

When Maurice fitz Gerald landed in Ireland, it was on the instructions of Mac Murchada that he established himself by building a castle at Carrick, just up the Slaney from Wexford; it was Mac Murchada, too, who entrusted Robert fitz Stephen with the custody of Wexford itself.[23] Admittedly, after Mac Murchada's death at the beginning of May 1171 and Henry II's subsequent expedition to Ireland, many of the early arrangements had to be changed. Yet the broad disposition of the grants to the principal incomers recalls Mac Murchada's agenda, and, in particular, the onslaught on 'the traitors'.

We may leave aside Dublin and Wexford, since they were ultimately taken by Henry II. Otherwise, the principal traitors and the English recipients of their lands were as follows:

(1) 'The traitor Mac Fáelán', king of Uí Fháeláin (around Naas, Co. Kildare): the English grantee was, eventually, Maurice fitz Gerald (*Song*, 3086–91; *Deeds*, 3084–9).[24]

(2) Gilla Comgaill Ua Tuathail, king of Uí Muiredaig: his kingdom, which corresponded to the deanery of Omorthy in the diocese of Glendalough, in the south of Co. Kildare, was split between two grantees: 'Omorethi' was given to Walter de Ridelisford (*Song*, 3096–9; *Deeds*, 3094–7; *Expug.*, II.23),[25] while Narragh, alias Forrach Phátraic, was given to Robert fitz Richard. Forrach Phátraic or In Fhorrach (hence Norragh, Narragh) was an old vassal kingdom within Uí Muiredaig, and this explains why it could form a separate fief, even though it was included in the ecclesiastical deanery of Omorthy and thus within the Uí Muiredaig kingdom as a whole.[26]

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[23] *Song/Deeds*, 1392–9.

[24] See M. T. Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship: Interactions in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1989), p. 153, for the history of Maurice's relationship with Strongbow.

[25] E. St J. Brooks, 'The de Ridelesfords', *JRSAI* 81 (1951), 115–17.

[26] *Bethu Phátraic: the Tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. K. Mulchrone (Dublin, 1939), lines 2202–15; H. S. Sweetman and G. F. Handcock, *Calendar of Documents Relating to*

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(3) Diarmait Ua Riain, king of Uí Dróna, 'le rei felun' (*Song*, 1993–4; *Deeds*, 1991–2 [tr. 1990–1]): Uí Dróna was the principal fief given to Raymond le Gros (*Song*, 3067; *Deeds*, 3065).

(4) Murchad Ua Brain, 'vn mal felun' (*Song/Deeds*, 141), king of Dubthar (the Duffry) granted to Robert de Quenci (*Song*, 2747–8; *Deeds*, 2745–6).

(5) Donnchad Mac Gilla Phátraic, king of Osraige: Osraige as a whole was too big to be partitioned in the first wave of land-grants; in any case, its ruler soon changed his allegiance after Mac Murchada's death; on the other hand, the lands which it had gained on the west side of the Barrow, within the old kingdom of Uí Bairrche, may have constituted the fief 'between Oboy and Leighlin' given to John de Clahull.

These five fiefs cover a wide tract of northern and central Leinster; they are enough to show that political relations between Mac Murchada and the opposition within Leinster to his rule before 1169 were a major influence on the outcome even after his death in May 1171.

The five grants were by no means the sum total of those listed in *The Song*, but, for the others, we have no clear information about the political stance of the territories in question in the period 1166–8. The old kingdom of Fothairt Fea in central Leinster, alias Fothairt Ua Nualláin after its current ruling lineage of Uí Nualláin, was, like Uí Dróna, granted to Raymond le Gros.[27] The Uí Nualláin were later sufficiently opposed to the new regime to kill Domnall Cáemánach,

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Ireland, 1172–1307, 5 vols. (London, 1875–1886), V, 242–5.

[27] *Song*, 3064–5; this was as dowry on the occasion of Raymond's marriage to Basilia, Strongbow's sister.
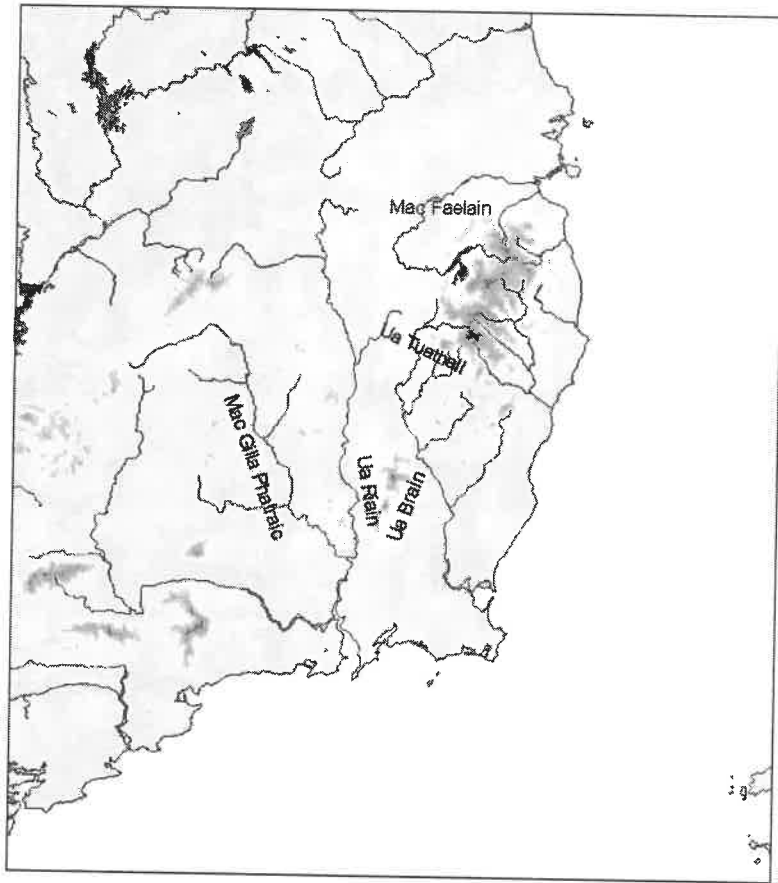
Map 1: Leinster Traitors

Map 2: The Leinster Fiefs

son of Diarmait Mac Murchada, regarded as king of Leinster.[28] Two grants were made for straightforward reasons of strategy: the kingdom of Uí Bairrche Mara lay in the south of what is now Co. Wexford, adjacent to the landing-places of the invaders; it was granted to Hervey de Montmorency.[29] Ferann na Cenél, close to Wexford, was given to Maurice de Prendergast and later to Robert fitz Godipert. It is an indication of the reason for the grant of Ferann na Cenél that *The Song* expressly says that the grant was decided in Strongbow's council before he ever came to Ireland.[30] Presumably it must have been agreed with Mac Murchada that this territory would be among those granted to those knights who came to his aid; what remained to be settled in Strongbow's council was which knight, in particular, would receive this crucial fief. One may probably go further and conclude that Mac Murchada's promise in 1168 that he would generously enfeoff those desiring Irish lands was not some unspecific declaration. Instead it probably gave indications about

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[28] AT and AFM disagree on the form of the name of Domnall Cáemánach's killers: 'Domnall Caemanach Mac Murchada, rí Laigen, do marbad la Huib Niallán', AT; 'Domhnall Caemhánach mac Diarmata, rí Laighen do mharbhadh la Hua Foirtchern 7 la Hua Nualláin i ffioll', AFM. It is usually assumed that the Four Masters were correct (although, for another possibility, see *Expug.*, p. 294, n. 32).

[29] *Song*, 3070–1; *Deeds*, 3068–9. This was the territory of Ua Lorcáin, who seems to have continued as 'Irish king' in a relationship which may be described as 'parallel lordship': *Song*, 3217; *Deeds*, 3215. It seems to have included the neighbouring kingdom of Fothairt Mara/Fothairt in Chairn: *Topographical Poems by Seaán Mór Ó Dubhagáin and Giolla-na-Naomh Ó Huidhrín*, ed. J. Carney (Dublin, 1943), lines 1093–6.

[30] *Song*, 3074–7; *Deeds*, 3070–5. This territory was also known as Fir na Cenél, 'The Men of the (Three) Kindreds', as in *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, ed. M. A. O'Brien (Dublin, 1962), §316, 22–4 (p. 344), after the descendants of three sons of Énda Cennsalach.

which lands would be available to be granted. It is easy then to see that the lands which might be mentioned were those, such as Ferann na Cenél and Uí Bairrche, which were critical to the initial invasion, and the lands of 'the traitors'.

The development of events was bound to compel some changes to the initial dispositions. In particular, Henry II's intervention and his taking of Dublin, Wexford and Waterford into his own possession made some initial grants ineffective. Robert fitz Stephen had been granted Wexford by Diarmait Mac Murchada;[31] he ended up holding lands in Cork.[32] Secondly, once Diarmait had died in May 1171, his particular enmities were no longer of such consequence. *The Song* has a list of Strongbow's Irish allies immediately after the death of Mac Murchada in 1171:[33] they include old allies, such as Domnall Cáemánach, son of Mac Murchada, Ua Mórda, the principal ruler of Laíchsi (opposed to Mac Gilla Phátraic of Osraige and thus well-disposed to Mac Murchada), Mac Dalbaig[34] and Mac Gilla Mo Cholmóc; but it also contained former enemies, such as Mac Gilla Phátraic of Osraige, Mac Fáeláin of Uí Fháeláin, Ua Díumasaig of Uí Fhailgi, and Mac Murchada's nephew, Muirchertach, son of the Murchad whom Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair and Tigernán Ua Ruairc had put into power in Leinster in 1166. At this stage, even in some areas granted out to English lords, Irish kings continued alongside the new rulers. This 'parallel lordship' is recognized in *The Song*, when it declares that Strongbow granted the kingdom of Uí Chennselaig to Muirchertach Mac Murchada but entrusted 'the pleas of Leinster to Diarmait's son, Domnall Cáemánach', while both Muirchertach and Domnall 'were called kings

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[31] *Song/Deeds*, 1392–5.

[32] *Expug.*, II.20 and n. 332.

[33] *Song*, 3208–21; *Deeds*, 3206–19.

[34] M. T. Flanagan, 'Mac Dalbaig, a Leinster Chieftain', *JRSAI* 111 (1981), 5–13.

by the Irish of that country'.[35] The notion of Domnall Cáemánach having charge of the pleas of Leinster recalls earlier Irish conceptions of sharing authority between two dynasties: when one held the kingship of Munster, the other would hold the office of judge of the province.[36] In any event, Domnall Cáemánach was recognized as king of Leinster in his obit in the Annals of Tigernach, while he, his uncle Murchad and the latter's son Muirchertach are all in the regnal list of kings of the province in the contemporary Book of Leinster.[37]

IV. MEATH, NOT LEINSTER, AS A LAND OF CASTLES

When writing about the summer of 1181, ten years after the death of Diarmait Mac Murchada, Gerald of Wales described the building of numerous castles by Hugh de Lacy, John de Lacy, constable of Chester, and Richard de Pec. He observed that 'hitherto very many castles had been built in Meath, but few in Leinster'.[38] After Hugh had been restored to full authority the following winter, a further programme of castle-building was undertaken, including several in Leinster.

The contrast made by Gerald between Meath and Leinster can be supported by the testimony of *The Song*. As we have seen, its account of the infeudation of Leinster is in terms of grants of former Irish

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[35] *Song*, 2185–90; *Deeds*, 2183–8.

[36] *Scéla Moshauluim*, §3: *Cath Maige Mucrama: The Battle of Mag Mucrama*, ed. M. O Daly, ITS 50 (London, 1975), 74, trans. 75.

[37] AT 1175; *The Book of Leinster*, ed. R. I. Best *et al.*, 6 vols. (Dublin, 1954–83), I, 186 (lines 5583–5).

[38] *Expug.*, II.23. Among the few would have been some built in the very early days by the English, such as the castle at Ferrycarrig, *Song/Deeds*, 1396–9; the castle at Wicklow (*Expug.*, I.44, II.4) may originally have been a Scandinavian construction: *Expug.*, p. 330, n. 288. The policy of castle-building was encouraged by Henry II: *Expug.*, I.37 and n. 184.

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kingdoms. Furthermore, when Gerald described castle-building in Leinster, it was largely in terms of castles built for new English lords within former Irish kingdoms:

> First a castle was built for Raymond among the Fothairt Ua Núalláin and another for his brother Gruffudd; a third castle was built at Dísert Diarmata in Uí Muiredaig for Walter de Ridelisford.[39]

Castle-building in Leinster reinforced a political authority which had survived for a decade largely without castles. When *The Song* described the infeudation of Meath by Hugh de Lacy, however, only a minority of the fiefs bore the name of former Irish kingdoms, whereas the list begins with two castles:

> He first gave Castleknock to Hugh Tyrrell, whom he loved greatly, and he gave Castell Bret, according to the text, to Baron William Petit.[40]

The Song concludes this section with another castle, built by Richard Fleming at Slane, one of the principal churches of East Meath:

> He built a motte
> in order to harass his enemies.
> He maintained knights and good forces in it,
> both archers and men-at-arms,
> in order to destroy his enemies.[41]

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[39] *Expug.*, II.23.

[40] Makerigalin (*Song*, 3143; *Deeds*, 3141) is Machaire Gaileng, 'the open land of the Gailenga', a territory which had been held by Ua Ragallaig, as shown by the Kells Charters (*Notitiae as Leabhar Cheanannais, 1033–1161*, ed. G. Mac Niocaill ([Dublin], 1961), nos. IX, XI), and yet Ua Ragallaig was one of the few staunch allies of Mac Murchada and later the English (*Song* 1740; *Deeds*, 1738); this indicates that less account was taken of previous allegiances in Meath than in Leinster; for the two castles see *Song*, 3132–6; *Deeds*, 3130–4; the phrase 'according to the text', 'solum l'escrit', has reasonably been taken as indicating that the author of *The Song* made use of an earlier document (*Deeds*, p. 35).

[41] *Song*, 3178–83; *Deeds*, 3176–80.
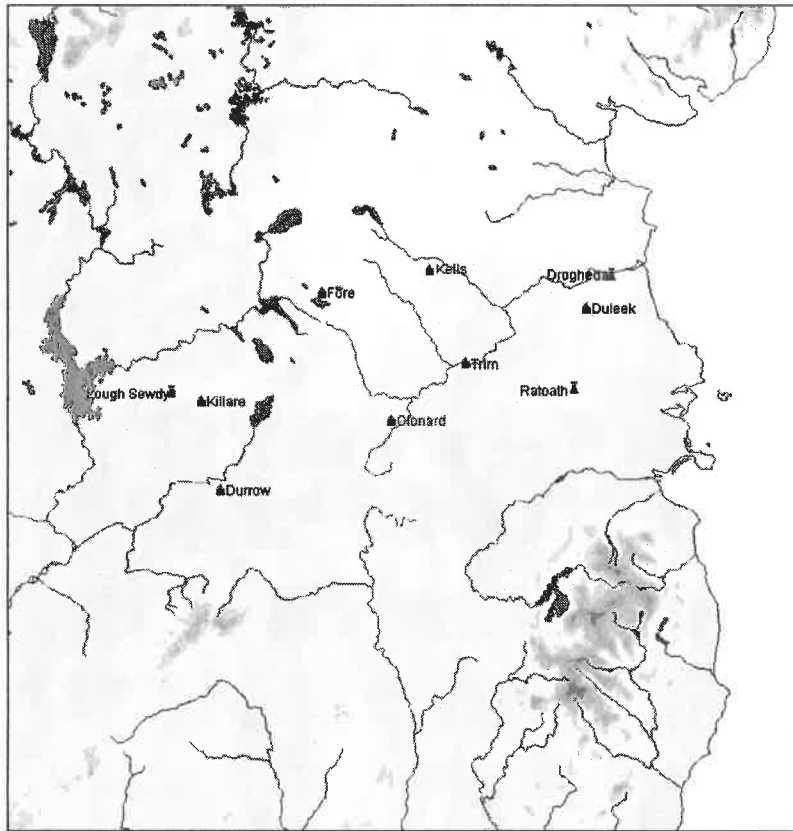
Map 3: Lacy demesne

    ♤ Lacy demesne castles on church sites

    ♘ Lacy demesne castles not on church sites
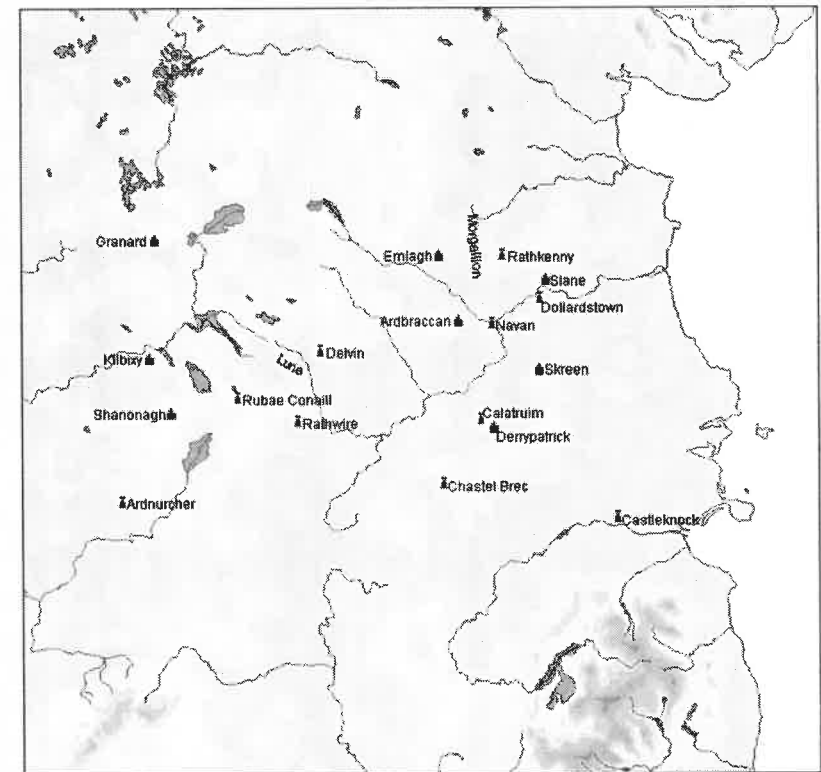
Map 4: Lacy Vassals

    ♤ Castles of Lacy vassals on church sites

    ♘ Castles of Lacy vassals not on church sites

The Song concludes its narrative of the siege of Slane with the words:

> Know, then, that in this manner
> the country was planted
> with castles and fortified towns
> and keeps and strongholds,
> so that the noble and renowned vassals
> were able to put down firm roots.[42]

It is easy to quote this passage as if it were a summary of how English Ireland was conquered.[43] Yet this is oversimplified: first, we have already seen that Meath, not Leinster, was the land of castles; secondly, *The Song* itself made a distinction, for, after this portrait of a resoundingly military conquest, it went on immediately to say:

> Moreover, the earl had already conquered
> his Leinster enemies,
> for on his side he had Muirchertach
> and Domnall Cáemánach,
> Mac Donnchada and Mac Dalbaig[44]

and so on for another five lines of Irish kings. Meath was held by building castles, whose garrisons plundered the Irish into submission; Leinster was held because enough Irish rulers gave their allegiance to Strongbow; their hostages he held 'according to the ancient custom'.[45]

The contrast between Leinster and Meath is not, however, absolute, especially once castle-building had got under way in Leinster

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[42] *Song*, 3202–7; *Deeds*, 3200–5.

[43] Bartlett, 'Colonial Aristocracies', p. 32; R. R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100–1300* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 41.

[44] *Song*, 3208–21; *Deeds*, 3206–19.

[45] *Song*, 3221; *Deeds*, 3219.

after Strongbow's death in 1176 and after Hugh de Lacy had begun to organize the construction of castles in the province from 1181. One of those built for the new English lords within Leinster was 'the castle he built for Meilyr at Timahoe in the province of Laíchsi'.[46] Timahoe, Tech Mo Chua, was one of the most important early churches in Laíchsi. Similarly, the castle built by Hugh for Walter de Ridelisford, the lord of Uí Muiredaig, was at Dísert Diarmata, a major ninth-century foundation in the far south of the kingdom.[47] In Meath, as we saw at the outset, it was almost the norm to build castles on significant church sites: Hugh de Lacy, 'the profaner and destroyer of many churches', was killed in 1186 when admiring his newly-built castle at Durrow;[48] any visitor to Clonmacnois is likely to notice the forbidding castle perched on its motte just to the south of the main monastic remains.[49]

A number of reasons may be given for this tendency to place castles by churches. Sometimes it may have been the product of 'parallel lordship', when the old Irish ruling family remained in its principal territory, while the site chosen for the new castle was, as an ancient church-site, an alternative focus. Timahoe in Laíchsi may be an example, since the main lands of Ua Mórda, listed by *The Song* among those loyal to Strongbow, were probably further north, on the Heath of Maryborough.[50] On the other hand, some churches had long been major centres of royal power: the Uí Maíl Shechnaill kings of Mide appear to have had a house at Durrow, where some of their ancestors had been buried since the eighth century; the lay or semi-lay

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[46] *Expug.*, II.23.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] AFM 1186.

[49] The motte was constructed in 1213 according to AClon.

[50] *Song*, 3213; *Deeds*, 3211; the Heath of Maryborough is likely to be the heart of Mag Réta, their principal territory: *Bethu Phátraic*, ed. Mulchrone, 2263–70.

clients of the monastery also provided a military force.[51] The principal monasteries were also proto-urban settlements capable of supplying the needs of a garrison. Yet perhaps the major reason was that the early English colonists in Ireland largely lived off plunder and the major monasteries were among the richest places in the country.[52]

V. REASONS FOR THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEINSTER AND MEATH
There are, therefore, points of similarity between the English presence in Leinster, especially after Strongbow's death in 1176, and the policies of Hugh de Lacy after he was granted Meath. Yet these are outweighed by the contrasts and the reasons for the latter must now be explored. Two principal explanations suggest themselves. The first is the long-term decline of the Uí Maíl Shechnaill lineage, the ruling branch of the Clann Cholmáin dynasty which had dominated Mide (Meath) since the seventh century. Ever since the death of Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill in 1022 – 'the fierce-hearted Ua Maíl Shechlainn son of Colmán, the great king who was so well bred and courtly' – his descendants had struggled with great difficulty to retain their lands and power.[53] Whatever Mac Murchada's excesses and misfortunes, the provincial kingship of Leinster, by contrast, was not in long-term danger in the mid-twelfth century. On the contrary, it was one of the powerful neighbours bidding to profit from the weakness of Meath. The Uí Maíl Shechnaill, however, were suffering territorial attrition from Tigernán Ua Ruairc, king of Bréifne, from Donnchad Ua Cerbaill, king of Airgialla, and, as we have just seen,

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[51] AClon 1153 (and cf. AU 1030.10; 1123.1); AFM 758 = 763, AU 764.6.

[52] *Expug.*, II.1; AT 1172 (first entry).

[53] *Song/Deeds*, 35–7 (Colmán is probably from the old name of the dynasty, Clann Cholmáin, as Orpen points out in his note).

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from Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster.[54] A more remote threat was the Ua Conchobair dynasty of the Connachta. In 1169, the same year as Mac Murchada retook Leinster, one of his enemies, Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill, king of Meath, was killed by a kinsman, Domnall Bregach. Ua Conchobair responded by expelling Domnall Bregach, dividing Mide into two, keeping the western part for himself, and giving the eastern to Tigernán Ua Ruairc.[55] Domnall Bregach reacted by submitting to Mac Murchada in 1170, only to transfer his allegiance to Tigernán Ua Ruairc after Mac Murchada's death in 1171.[56] Gerald was thus within his rights to call Ua Ruairc king of Meath: the bitterest enemy of Mac Murchada and his English friends was now established within a few miles of Dublin.

It was hardly surprising that Henry II should grant Meath to Hugh de Lacy before he left Ireland; and yet, by doing so, he ensured that the Treaty of Windsor, which he would make with Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair in 1175, was unworkable, for any genuine high-kingship of Ireland could only exist if the holder had power in the central province, Meath.[57] The reasons for the requirement that power be exercised in Meath are not just respect for ancient tradition but strategic necessity. Admittedly, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair was quick to display his newly-won authority by holding the ancient Fair of Tailtiu in the old province of Brega, now part of East Meath.[58] Yet, because Meath now stretched from the Shannon to the Irish Sea, across two-thirds of the centre of Ireland, because it included some of the most

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[54] For Ua Ruairc, see *Notitiae*, ed. Mac Niocaill, nos. VII, IX, XI, and AFM 1144; for Ua Cerbaill, Mac Carthaigh's Book, *s.a.* 1167.5; for Mac Murchada, AFM 1144.

[55] AFM 1169.

[56] AT 1170; AFM 1171.

[57] The Treaty of Windsor is translated in E. Curtis and R. B. McDowell, *Irish Historical Documents* (London, 1943), pp. 22–4, no. 4.

[58] AT 1167, 1168.

fertile land in the country, and because it was immediately adjacent to Dublin, the most important of the Hiberno-Norse towns, any claim to dominate Ireland would be absurd if the claimant did not first dominate Meath. Ancient tradition, suitably reinterpreted to fit twelfth-century conditions in Meath, can be seen in the way a source close to Ua Conchobair conceptualized the alliance on which his power rested. The annal for 1166 in the Annals of Tigernach begins with an entry on a campaign undertaken by the king of the Connachta to establish his position as king of Ireland in the aftermath of Mac Lochlainn's death: 'A hosting by Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair with the nobles of the Connachta in his company, namely Tigernán Ua Ruairc and Diarmait Ua Maíl Shechnaill'. As was pointed out above, this represented a crucial redefinition of the Irish dynastic landscape. The rulers of Meath were now held to be as much Connachta as was Ua Conchobair himself; and, although the justification for this might be ancient tradition, cleverly adjusted, the import was accurate and contemporary. The power of Ua Conchobair rested on an alliance with Ua Ruairc and Ua Maíl Shechnaill, the two most powerful rulers in Meath.

The second reason for the difference between Meath and Leinster lies in the basis on which the new English lords received their lands. Hugh de Lacy received Meath because Henry II claimed to be king of Ireland; for him, this entailed the right to grant the lands of Ireland to whomsoever he wished. Lacy could set about constructing a new Meath, one based on the east rather than the west. Meath had long been divided in this way:[59] the great monastery of Clonard could be taken as the centre point, so that west of Clonard was West Meath, east of Clonard was East Meath.[60] East Meath to a large extent continued the early Irish territory of Brega, but it also included the eastern fringes of the old Mide.[61] The main centres of Ua Maíl Shechnaill power lay in West Meath around Lough Ennell. On the lough the island fortress of Cró-Inis was situated, and a short distance to the east was Rubae Conaill; the two were presented by the twelfth-century Life of Colmán of Lann (by Mullingar) as twin royal centres of Meath.[62] Lacy reversed this relationship, which had endured since the eighth century, by establishing his main centre at Trim, an old church in the minor kingdom of Cenél Lóegairi.[63] A castle was built at Rubae Conaill, as shown by charter evidence, but it was not reckoned worthy of mention either by *The Song* or by Gerald.[64] The source of Lacy's authority was external and the geography of his power undid four centuries of history: he was indeed 'a stranger in sovereignty'.[65]

The situation in Leinster was quite different: the first English settlers gained their lands by the will of Mac Murchada, king of the province. The earliest geography of English power can be explained by Mac Murchada's agenda, in particular by his wish to destroy the power of his principal enemies. The disloyalty of those enemies was,

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[59] *Bethu Phátraic*, ed. Mulchrone, line 843.

[60] Clonard marked the boundary: AFM 1152. On the other hand, it might be

Lough Ennell: AFM 1144.

[61] Hence it included Tlachtga, where Tigernán Ua Ruairc was killed in 1172 (AT, *Expug.*, I.41).

[62] *Betha Colmáin meic Luacháin*, ed. K. Meyer, R. Irish Acad. Todd Lecture Ser. 17 (Dublin, 1911), §§59, 62.

[63] *Song*, 3222–9; *Deeds*, 3220–7.

[64] G. H. Orpen, 'Motes and Norman Castles in Ireland', *EHR* 22 (1907), 228–54, 440–67, at 236.

[65] For this term, see AFM 1144 on the killing of Conchobar mac Toirrdelbaig, where O'Donovan translates 'uair ba rí eachtair cheneóil lais a bheith siomh i ríghe uas fearaibh Midhe' as 'for he considered him as a stranger in sovereignty over the people of Meath' (literally 'for in his opinion a king of a foreign kindred was ruling over the men of Meath').

in the eyes of the author of *The Song*, full justification for their disinheritance and thus for Mac Murchada's grants to new vassals who were steadfastly loyal to 'Diarmait, the noble king'. Moreover, it has been shown that these new grants fell into a pattern which went back to the early days of Mac Murchada's reign: he had established his foster-kinsman Ua Cáellaide as ruler of the Osraige kingdom of Uí Buide, on the west side of the River Barrow; Ua Lorcáin, a branch of Uí Muiredaig, had been made ruler of Uí Bairrche Mara and Fothairt Mara (the south of Co. Wexford); he had given the Dubthar (Duffry) in central southern Leinster to a cadet branch of Uí Fháeláin.[66] By the will of the king of Leinster several strangers in sovereignty were established in power.

VI. MAC MURCHADA AND STRONGBOW

This willingness to flout the claims of inheritance has been invoked to explain what is, without doubt, the greatest puzzle about Mac Murchada and the English:[67] what did he promise to Strongbow in exchange for his help? For Gerald and for *The Song* the answer was not in question: he promised to give his daughter Aífe to Strongbow in marriage, and with her the succession to the kingship of Leinster.[68] In the household of Henry II – and Gerald of Wales gained his experience of Ireland through being a royal clerk – it was beyond controversy that a kingdom could pass from one dynasty to another by marriage; after all, Henry II was the son of Geoffrey, count of Anjou, who had married Matilda, daughter of Henry I. Yet the

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[66] Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod', p. 28.

[67] Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers*, pp. 89–90.

[68] 'Dermitius comiti cum regni successione filiam suam primogenitam firmiter pepigisset', *Expug.*, I.2. 'He offered him his daughter as a wife, the person he held dearest in the world; he would give her to him as his wife and he would give him Leinster, provided that he would help him to win it back', *Song/Deeds*, 340–5.

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validity of such a rule of succession had been controversial even in England within living memory: the majority of English barons had not accepted Matilda's claim in 1135, and Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, had been quite prepared to crown and anoint Stephen (himself, admittedly, descended from the Conqueror through his mother). Moreover, it had been controversial outside the succession to the kingship.[69] And, even if one were to grant that the law of the English king had validity in Ireland before that king ever set foot in the island, that would not be enough: Gerald was careful to claim that Aífe was Diarmait's eldest daughter, but when an inheritance passed to daughters, English law partitioned it between them.

Moreover, when Mac Murchada had his conversation with Strongbow, his sons Énda and Conchobor were still alive; and if Domnall Cáemánach, who outlived Diarmait, was regarded by Gerald as illegitimate, he was nonetheless evidently acknowledged by his father and was regarded by Irish sources as king of Leinster at his death in 1175.[70] That Mac Murchada had been prepared to establish strangers in sovereignty in kingdoms subject to him does not imply that he was willing to disinherit his own kindred. Scotland is sometimes cited as a parallel, but David I and his grandsons enfeoffed knights to protect their dynasty not to subvert it.

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[69] See the reply of Miles de Beauchamp to King Stephen in *Gesta Stephani*, ed. K. R. Potter and R. H. C. Davis (Oxford, 1976), pp. 48/49.

[70] *Expug.*, I.3 (*Duvenaldo naturali eiusdem filio*; cf. *Song/Deeds*, 620–1: 'he was the son of the king of Leinster, as I understand', which may suggest some doubt about his paternity rather than the distinct issue of illegitimacy); AT, AFM 1175. Cf. B. Jaski's discussion in his *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2000), p. 154, which, however, may not give sufficient weight to the distinction between what Gerald meant by illegitimacy, namely that Diarmait was not married to Domnall Cáemánach's mother, and what might have harmed his claims in Irish eyes, namely that his mother was unfree (for which there is no evidence).

Admittedly, the major Irish kings were prepared to attempt to intrude kings into other provinces, as Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair had made his son Conchobar king of Leinster in 1126.[71] But, again, such attempts were made by major kings in order to extend the power of their own dynasties, not to curtail it. Furthermore, we have seen already that the plan envisaged the establishment of Strongbow and his leading supporters in northern Leinster in the lands of the principal 'traitors'. When he had handed over Dublin to Henry II, Strongbow based himself in Kildare, the leading church of northern Leinster.[72] If he were to succeed to Leinster in the way envisaged by Gerald and *The Song*, the power of the Uí Chennselaig, the leading dynasty of southern Leinster, would have been undone by a king of the Uí Chennselaig. The principal traitors might have been killed, subjugated or driven into exile, but their part of Leinster would regain its former preeminence. All these considerations make it difficult to believe that Mac Murchada intended Strongbow to succeed him as king of Leinster.[73]

A solution has been proposed by Professor Byrne which draws strength from Gerald's report of a secret conversation in the winter of 1169–70 between Mac Murchada, Robert fitz Stephen and Maurice fitz Gerald (uncle to Gerald of Wales).[74] In his report of this conversation, Gerald wrote that:

> Mac Murchada now raised his sights to higher things and, now that he had recovered his entire inheritance, he aspired to his ancestral and long-standing rights, and he determined, by the use of armed might, to

bring under his control Connacht, together with the kingship of all Ireland.[75]

The suggestion is that Mac Murchada planned to become king of Ireland and could thus grant Leinster to Strongbow without disinheriting his own kindred. Even though Strongbow and his descendants might hold the kingship of Leinster, the Maic Murchada of Uí Chennselaig would be a new royal dynasty of all Ireland.

Before this solution can be rendered persuasive, however, certain difficulties need to be tackled. First, Gerald does not treat Mac Murchada as feeling himself bound by his promise to Strongbow: after his conversation with Strongbow, he apparently offered his daughter to both fitz Stephen and fitz Gerald, again with the prospect of inheriting Leinster.[76] Secondly, if Gerald is to be believed, Mac Murchada's wider ambition to extend his conquest beyond Leinster was voiced only in 1169–70. This was after he had had clear evidence in the campaigns of 1169 that, with his English knights, he could defeat the armies of his enemies. When he had his earlier conversation with Strongbow, he was still an exile and his ambition was to recover Leinster. Finally, Mac Murchada cannot even have pretended to believe that, once he had left his ancestral province of Leinster to Strongbow, any of his sons would have a territorial base from which to enforce a claim to the kingship of Ireland. When Gerald wrote that Mac Murchada offered his daughter in turn to fitz Stephen and fitz Gerald 'with the right of succession to his kingdom', the word 'kingdom' may be taken to refer to the one Gerald had last mentioned – 'the kingdom of all Ireland'.[77]

These objections require the theory to be modified. The first

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[71] AT 1126, an example cited by Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers*, p. 91.

[72] *Song*, 2696, 2769–72; *Deeds*, 2694, 2767–70; AT 1172 ('for muintir in Iarla i Cill Dara').

[73] For a defence of the claim made by *The Song* and by Gerald, see Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers*, pp. 79–111.

[74] Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod', p. 28.

[75] *Expug.*, I.12.

[76] *Ibid.*; the promise to Strongbow was reported in I.2.

[77] *Expug.*, I.12; this argument is not affected by Gerald's use of *monarchia* for the kingship of Ireland and *regnum* for the kingdom he would leave to Aífe's husband.

modification arises from the way in which leading Irish kings were prone to gain support by allowing potential rivals to bear titles which might be taken to have wider implications on the ground than was actually the case. An example is the combination of Brian Bórama and Máel Sechnaill mac Domnaill, the former as king of Ireland, the latter as king of Tara.[78] It is conceivable that Mac Murchada envisaged some such arrangement. Moreover, this might have been consistent with the parallel lordship quite often found within the early territories acquired by the English in Ireland, as when Domnall Cáemánach, called king of Leinster by the Annals of Tigernach, was said by *The Song* to have been entrusted with 'the pleas of Leinster' and to have been entitled a king by the Leinstermen.[79] What Mac Murchada intended is best understood through the actual distribution of authority in the months between the capture of Dublin in September 1170 and his own death in May 1171. What happened was that Strongbow appointed Miles de Cogan as his governor in Dublin, and Mac Murchada and Strongbow then mounted campaigns in Uí Fháeláin, Osraige and, most importantly, in Meath. This raises the possibility that what Mac Murchada offered was the kingdom of Dublin. Indeed, Roger of Howden, who, as a royal servant, might be expected to know something of the issues at stake, described Mac Murchada, as king of Dublin, granting the kingdom of Dublin – apparently as dowry – with his daughter.[80] The arrangement with

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[78] AU 1014.2.

[79] *Song*, 2187–90; *Deeds*, 2185–8.

[80] Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. W. Stubbs, 4 vols., Rolls Series 51 (London, 1868–71), I, 269: 'Richard Earl of Striguil, assembled a great army, invaded Ireland, and subdued a very great part of it, with the assistance of Miles de Cogan, a warlike man; and when he had made an agreement with the king of Dublin, he married his daughter and received with her the kingdom of Dublin.' Cf. Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers*, p. 168, n. 4. It is not necessary to

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Strongbow, if it involved the kingship of Dublin, would have followed earlier precedent.[81]

Secondly, it is necessary to ask a straightforward question: after the death of Mac Murchada in May 1171, was Strongbow going to hold his lands in Ireland from Henry II or Domnall Cáemánach or nobody? That it would be the first was ensured by Henry's expedition to Ireland, let alone any previous undertakings given by Strongbow's envoy, Raymond le Gros, in the winter of 1170–1.[82] Yet, Henry was determined that he would take under his immediate lordship the coastal towns of Dublin, Wexford and Waterford. He was also determined to weaken Strongbow's power in Ireland, by detaching his principal supporters, by presenting himself as the protector of Irish kings, and by granting Meath to Hugh de Lacy. Yet, he did not go as far as he had threatened by depriving him of all his lands in Ireland and elsewhere. Strongbow was therefore to be regarded as holding his Leinster lands of Henry as a continuation, with modifications, of the situation under Mac Murchada. Strongbow thus came to be regarded by the English in Ireland as Mac Murchada's heir for Leinster; and Mac Murchada himself was regarded as having become the vassal of Henry II.[83] Only if he was regarded as Mac Murchada's heir was he

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suppose that *regnum Diveliniae* was merely a synonym for the kingdom of Leinster, although, if there was some confusion, it would make it all the easier to claim that Strongbow was promised Leinster: Mac Murchada was *rí Laigen 7 Gall*, 'the king of the Leinstermen *and* the Foreigners' (AT 1171; by Gaill here the annalist means the Hiberno-Norse of Dublin).

[81] AI 1070.2; 1075.3, 4: *The Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson B 503)*, ed. S. Mac Airt (Dublin, 1951). It may also be relevant that AT 1176, in its obit for Strongbow, described him as 'earl of Dublin', *iarla Átha Cliath*.

[82] *Expug.*, I.19–20.

[83] For the latter, see *Expug.* I.1: 'susceptisque ab ipso [sc. Mac Murchada] tam subieccionis vinculo quam fidelitatis sacramento' (the same terminology is used of the subjection of the Irish kings in I.33); *Song/Deeds*, 286–7: 'I will become

entitled to warrant the tenure of English lordships within Leinster other than his own: this may explain why *The Song* insisted on the conception of a subinfeudation of Leinster by Strongbow, even in cases when the original grants were made by Mac Murchada, and yet also made much of Mac Murchada as the king wrongfully betrayed by the Irish and restored to his inheritance by his faithful English knights. This is essentially how *The Song* perceived the legitimacy of the presence of the English in Ireland. The further justifications presented by Gerald – papal bulls, prophecies of Merlin and Moling, conquests by British kings of doubtful historicity even for Gerald – were probably important for some; but *The Song*'s view is likely to be much closer to the beliefs of those who did the fighting for Mac Murchada and his successors. Its deep interest in Mac Murchada and, more generally, in Leinster makes it likely that it was composed for performance before an audience of the English settlers in Leinster.

The differences between the map of Strongbow's Leinster and Lacy's Meath are now explicable. Strongbow's Leinster still bore the imprint of Mac Murchada's Leinster, since that, in large part, is what it was – still in all but name a provincial kingship divided between old Irish kingdoms. It was a province which, unlike Meath, was not yet 'planted with castles and fortified towns and keeps and strongholds, so that the noble and renowned vassals were able to put down firm roots'.[84] The vassals of Strongbow had usually put down firm roots by the will of Mac Murchada himself. What transformed the English presence in Ireland into an attempted conquest was Henry II's expedition, the 'eighteen weeks, neither more nor less' that 'the duke

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your liege man for as long as I live.' Whatever the actual undertaking was, it was bound to be interpreted as full homage by the English after Mac Murchada's death.

[84] *Song*, 3203–7; *Deeds*, 3201–5.

of Normandy remained in Ireland'.[85]

The proposed solution is, therefore, that the earliest English settlement of Leinster was determined by Mac Murchada's agenda. He probably offered the kingdom of Dublin to Strongbow as his daughter's dowry in exchange for recovering Leinster; he did not offer succession to the kingdom of Leinster. Such men as Raymond le Gros and Maurice fitz Gerald were, in the first place, Mac Murchada's vassals for their Irish lands, not Strongbow's. Mac Murchada's introduction of English lords as rulers of Irish kingdoms continued his earlier policy by which he planted external Irish dynasties into kingdoms with which they had no hereditary connection. Henry II, however, would not accept that Strongbow should become king of Dublin. He made this position clear by actual measures, as well as threats, before the death of Mac Murchada – at a period, therefore, when Strongbow had gained authority over Dublin but had not yet claimed to be the ruler of Leinster. When Mac Murchada died around 1 May 1171, the position of the English in Ireland was threatened from two sides: the Leinstermen regarded Muirchertach mac Murchada, Diarmait's nephew, as their new king and there was no reason to suppose that he would confirm the English in their lordships;[86] Henry II had ordered the English to leave Ireland, probably in part after Irish envoys had complained about their actions.[87] In the event, however, Henry II was most anxious to deprive Strongbow of the coastal towns, especially Dublin. His primary concerns were in direct contradiction to Mac Murchada's promise to Strongbow. The answer was to claim that Mac Murchada had promised Leinster, not just Dublin, and that Leinster should be

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[85] *Song*, 2678–80; *Deeds*, 2676–8.
[86] *Song*, 1742–45; *Deeds*, 1740–3.
[87] Flanagan, *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers*, pp. 168–71.

held of the king of England. This was possibly aided by confusion in English minds between 'the kingdom of Dublin' and 'the kingdom of Leinster'. In any event, Strongbow as lord of Leinster could guarantee the fiefs of men who were now unambiguously his vassals. In Meath, however, the situation was quite different: Henry II's primary motive may have been to prevent Strongbow from conquering Meath and becoming a new high-king, but what Hugh de Lacy undertook was a straightforward military conquest.

'Never the Twain Shall Meet'?
East and West in the Characterization of Conchobar mac Nessa

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INTRODUCTION

This paper must begin with a clarification. Far from heralding a discussion of representations of the Occident and the Orient in tales featuring Conchobar mac Nessa and their impact upon his characterization, the 'East' and 'West' of this paper's title are no more than metaphoric, alluding to two starkly contrasting depictions of Conchobar mac Nessa from the early modern Irish period. These characterizations – one of exemplary munificence, and one of equal depravity – demand attention. The Early Modern Irish text *Oided Mac nUisnig* depicts Conchobar mac Nessa manipulating his warriors' *gessi*, winning over the allies of the sons of Uisneach with bribes and using his mendacious eloquence to convince Cathbad to defeat his opposition by means of magic; on the basis of this portrayal, Conchobar has been described as 'one of the most Machiavellian characters in Irish literature'.[1] The second depiction current in the early modern period is encapsulated in the poem written between

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[1] *Oideadh Chloinne hUisnigh: the Violent Death of the Children of Uisneach*, ed. and trans. C. Mac Giolla Léith, ITS 56 (London, 1993), 15. Note that the tales are referred to by the titles used in J. P. Mallory and R. Ó hUiginn, 'The Ulster Cycle: A Checklist of Translations' in *Ulidia: Proceedings of the First International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales, Belfast and Emain Macha 8–12 April 1994*, ed. J. P. Mallory and G. Stockman (Belfast, n. d.), pp. 291–304.

1560 and 1580 by Domhnall Mac Dáire in honour of Pádraigín Mac Muiris, eldest son of Thomas Fitzmaurice, sixteenth Lord of Kerry and Baron of Lixnaw. This poem depicts the touching scene wherein the infant king is being taught generosity by his mother. Needless to say, Conchobar proves an attentive pupil and is seen as the ultimate symbol of regal largesse, a king whose rule rests on his liberality:

Fúair sáormhac Fhachtna Fháthaigh   ór chan ris a rioghmháthair –
féile an leinbh gá chora i gcion –   a thogha i seilbh na sinnsior.[2]

These two ideas of Conchobar occur frequently in the literature of the early modern period. He is frequently employed in the apologues of bardic poetry, often symbolising the ideal king whose reign rests on generosity and martial might, and less frequently in depictions more reminiscent of that found in *Oided Mac nUisnig*. In addition, both types of representation feature in the writings of Geoffrey Keating.[3] It is clear, therefore, that the character of Conchobar underwent no crystallisation at the hands of a Geoffrey of Monmouth. In an effort to understand these late contradictory representations, this paper will consider treatments of Conchobar in the earlier medieval material. It is hoped that a character-analysis of such a prominent figure in medieval Irish literature will serve to

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[2] 'A Poem by Domhnall Mac Dáire', ed. and trans. O. J. Bergin, in his *Irish Bardic Poetry*, ed. D. Greene and F. Kelly (Dublin, 1970), no. 11 (pp. 52–60, 233–7), p. 58, trans. p. 236: 'Fachtna Fathach's noble son acquired by what his queenly mother said to him (the child's generosity makes it manifest) his election to the possessions of his forefathers'. Translations, unless otherwise attributed, are my own.

[3] *Foras Feasa ar Érinn le Seathrún Céitinn, D.D.: the History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, ed. and trans. P. S. Dinneen, 4 vols., ITS 4, 8, 9, 15 (London, 1902–14) contains versions of the *Longes mac n-Uislenn* and *Aided Chonchobuir* tales at II, 190–7 and II, 198–205 as well as a birth-tale at II, 214–5 and details of his offspring.

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illuminate some of the approaches to and concepts of characterization current at the time.

Conchobar appears in forty-four of seventy-two tales of the Ulster Cycle.[4] These appearances demonstrate that Conchobar's character is hallmarked by a number of unusual features. Most commonly identified by his matronymic, there are two conflicting traditions of his paternity, and accounts of his familial relationships are further complicated by allusions to incest with both his sister and, in later tradition, with his mother. There are a number of divergent accounts of how he assumed his kingship; instances of underhand dealings to obtain and maintain power sit uneasily alongside accounts claiming him to be a paragon of kingship, and on occasion, the first Christian in Ireland whose faith pre-empted the advent of Christianity there. For reasons of space and time, this analysis will be far more superficial than the material warrants. I propose to limit myself today to a consideration of particular texts that exemplify the diverse treatments of Conchobar in the medieval period and which might be seen as the sources for the later polarised depictions.

CONCHOBAR AS KING

This assessment of Conchobar's characterization will focus on his kingship. It is immediately obvious that the first set of associations triggered by Conchobar's appearance in a text would have to do with his status as king and his location. There is one example of a tale, *Immacaldam in Dá Thuarad*, a tenth-century poetic text, where the sole use of the character is to set the scene.

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[4] Details of these appearances are supplied in the Appendix. Though a somewhat problematic term, the 'Ulster Cycle' will be used throughout this paper.

Loc tra dond immacallaim sea Emain Macha Amser
dano di amser Conchobair maic Nessa.[5]

Although this is the only tale that uses Conchobar for this purpose
alone, five other texts open with a statement that at the time of the
action, Conchobar was king in Emain Macha.[6] Therefore, it can be
assumed that these references were signposts to a literary milieu
understood by author and audience alike. It would appear that as early
as the eighth century, these statements functioned as an
acknowledgement of an understood status quo, a jumping-off point
for the action of the story. However, if the fundamental associations
made by audiences were in relation to his physical location and social
status, what, if any, other expectations were evoked by the appearance
of Conchobar in a text? To this end, I will investigate to what extent
there are homogeneous depictions of behavioural patterns and moral
characteristics in the tales detailing Conchobar's assumption of
power, an episode which might be expected to encapsulate authorial
attitudes towards Conchobar's kingship.

DEPICTIONS OF CONCHOBAR'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER
There are three distinct strata of tradition surrounding Conchobar's
assumption of kingship. The eighth-century *Compert Chonchobuir* and
the early twelfth-century *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa* constitute one
strand of tradition, sharing the central idea that Ness and Cathbad are
the parents of Conchobar. In the earlier text Ness decides to become
pregnant by Cathbad on hearing his prophecy that a son conceived at
that hour would rule over Ireland: 'As-noí in draí dar deu ba fír; mac
do-génta ind air sin for-biad Hérinn'.[7] In this short text, Ness's
pregnancy is remarkable for its duration: 'Boí a ngein fó brú trí mísa
for teorib blíadnaib'.[8] Ness's three year and three month pregnancy
can be understood to mark Conchobar out as a figure destined for
greatness.[9] *Scéla Conchobair* contains an account of the birth with
similar overtones: Conchobar's birth is delayed by his mother's sitting
on a rock to await an auspicious time to give birth.[10]

More significant, however, is that the account of Conchobar's
birth in *Scéla Conchobair* takes a rather ambiguous stance on the validity
of his kingship. Cathbad is here portrayed as a warrior, and this
martial strength is manifested in his rape of Ness, here a female
champion.[11] The introduction of this rape might be seen to change

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[5] 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 26 (1905), 4–
64, at 15, §10: 'The place then of the colloquy it is Emain Macha. The time
then of it is the time of Conchobar mac Nessa'.

[6] *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, ed. A. G. van Hamel, MMIS 3 (Dublin,
1933), 1–8; *The Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, R. Irish
Acad. Todd Lecture Ser. 14 (Dublin, 1906), 12–13; 'Das Fest des Bricriu und die
Verbannung der mac Duil Dermait', ed. and trans. E. Windisch, in his *Irische
Texte*, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1884–7), ser. 2, I, 186–209; 'Tidings of Conchobar mac
Nessa', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Ériu* 4 (1910), 18–38; 'The Oldest Version of
Tochmarc Emire', ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *RC* 11 (1890), 433–57.

[7] T. Ó Cathasaigh, 'Some Reflections on Compert Conchobuir and Serglige Con
Culainn', in *Ulidia*, ed. Mallory and Stockman, pp. 85–9, ed. and trans. at pp. 85–
6: 'The druid swore by gods that it was true; a son who was begotten at that
hour would be over Ireland'.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 86: 'Three years and three months the child was in her womb'.

[9] *Forbhais Droma Dámhgháire: the Siege of Knocklong*, ed. and trans. S. Ó Duinn
(Cork, 1992) depicts both Cormac mac Airt and Fíachu Muillethan are depicted
as the results of seven-month pregnancies.

[10] 'Tidings', ed. and trans. Stokes, p. 22, §4: 'A wonderful birth would be born
with Christ's birth on that stone yonder upon which Conchobar was born and
his name was famous in Ireland'. See also *ibid.*, p. 19: 'Parturition on a stone
(cloch) is mentioned in §4. So S. Patrick was born on a flagstone (lecc), Trip.
Life, p. 8. The idea may perhaps have been that the babe might absorb the
valuable properties of the stone (stability, solidity, etc.)'.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 22, §3, '...that is the afore-mentioned Cathbad, until he came between

considerably the dynamics of this pairing, although Ness's power and calculating nature reassert themselves in her dealings with Fergus when she agrees to marry him on condition that Conchobar is made king temporarily.

> Bói dano Fergus mac Rossa i rrígu Ulad. Adcobrastar-side in mnái .i. Ness, do mnái dó. Nathó, ol sisi, co ndomrab a log .i. ríge mbliadne dom mac, conid tairle co n-erbarthar mac ríg frim mac. Tabair, ol cach, 7 bid lat a rrige cia chongarthar [dó] ainm ríge. Foid tra iar suidi in ben la Fergus, ocus congairther ríge n-Ulad do Chonchobur.[12]

This incident forms the first of the irregular steps towards Conchobar's kingship. The second is the garnering of support for him through his mother's rather dubious policy of stripping every second man in the kingdom of his wealth, and granting this wealth to the champions of the Ulaid.[13] Thus, Conchobar emerges as a puppet king manipulated by his mother, and as a king whose regal status has been endorsed on the basis of a false manifestation of *fír flatha*, the

topos of the 'Sovereign's Truth' present in medieval Irish kingship theory.[14]

The account of *fír flatha* contained in *Mesca Ulad*, the eleventh- or twelfth-century text which forms the second stratum of tradition concerning Conchobar's assumption of kingship, is markedly different. Here, an adult Conchobar assumes power, having convinced his fellow kings in the territory of the Ulaid, Cú Chulainn and Fintan mac Néill Níamglonnaig, to relinquish their power to him for the period of a year. An explicit statement of what might be called a true *fír flatha* is present in the text when it states that under Conchobar, the province was a 'well-spring of abundance and calm':

> thánic i cind blíadna, ro boí in cócied ina thopor thuli 7 téchta ac Conchobar, cona rabi aithles fás falam ótá Rind Semni 7 Latharnai co Cnooc Úachtair Fhorcha 7 co Duib 7 co Drobaís cen mac i n-inad a athar 7 a shenathar ic tairgnam da thigernu dúthaig.[15]

In fact, this impression of the validity of Conchobar's rule is reinforced throughout the text – for example by the statement at the

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them and spears, until that they came together, and until that she was his loving wife, and until that she bore a son to him. That son then was namely Conchobar mac Cathbad'. For a parallel to this scene, see Conchobar's rape of Medb in 'The Oldest Version', ed. and trans. Meyer.

[12] 'Tidings', ed. and trans. Stokes, p. 22, §5: 'Fergus mac Rossa was then in the kingship of the Ulaid. He desired the woman Nessa as his wife. "No," she said, "until its value is mine, namely the kingship of a year for my son, so that it happens that my son will be called a son of a king." "Give (it)," says all, "and the kingship will be yours although he is called the name of a king." The woman sleeps with Fergus then after that, and Conchobar is called the king of the Ulaid'.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 24, §6: 'Ro gab tra in ben for tinchosc a maicc 7 a aite 7 a muntire .i. lomrad indala fir 7 a thidnacul diaraile, 7 a hór-si 7 a hargat do thidnacul do a[n]radaibUlad ardaíg iartaige dia mac', 'The woman was then instructing her son and his foster-father and his household, namely to strip every second man and to bestow it upon the other, and to bestow his gold and his silver upon the champions of the Ulaid because of the result to her son'.

[14] The concept of *fír flatha* has been summarised by F. Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Ser. 3 (Dublin, 1986), 18: 'The law-texts, wisdom-texts and sagas constantly stress the importance of the king's justice (*fír flathemon*). If the king is just, his reign will be peaceful and prosperous, whereas if he is guilty of injustice (*gáu flathemon*) the soil and the elements will rebel against him. There will be infertility of women and cattle, crop-failure, dearth of fish, defeat in battle, plagues, lightning, etc. The relationship between a king and his territory may be viewed in sexual terms, as when the inauguration of Fedlimid son of Áed is described as his "sleeping with the province of Connacht" (*feis re cóiced Connacht*)'.

[15] *Mesca Ulad*, ed. J. C. Watson, MMIS 13 (Dublin, 1941), lines 130–5, '...it came to the end of the year, Conchobar's province was a well-spring of abundance and calm, so that there was not a vacant, empty, disused fort from Rind Semni and Latharnai to Cnocc Úachtair Fhorcha and to Duib and to Drobaís without a son in the presence of his father and his grandfather providing for his native lord'.

beginning that equates the time in which the province was best with the reign of Conchobar[16] – and no trace of the attitudes towards his kingship expressed in the first stratum of this tradition are to be found.

Ferchuitred Medba/Cath Bóinde and *Cath Leitreach Ruide*, both late Middle Irish texts, constitute the third of these strata and show Conchobar exerting military force to obtain the kingship of the Ulaid from the high-king Echu Feidlech as the *éric*, or compensation, for the slaying of his father. As in *Mesca Ulad*, Conchobar's father is Fachtna Fathach.[17] (It is perhaps to avoid confusion arising out of the dual tradition of paternity that Conchobar is most commonly known by his matronymic.)[18] *Cath Leitreach Ruide*, meanwhile, returns to the idea

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[16] *Ibid.*, lines 19–20: 'int tan is ferr ro buí in cúiced .i. ra lind Conchobair mac Fachtna Fathaig', 'at the time during which the province was best, that is during the time of Conchobar son of Fachtna Fathaig'.

[17] Fifteen of the texts studied name Conchobar's father. Cathbad is named as his father in *Aided Chonchobuir* version D, *Compert Chonchobuir*, *Táin Bó Cuailnge* I, *Tochmarc Ferbe/Fís Conchobair* and *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa*. Fachtna Fathach, meanwhile, first features in this paternal role in *Foglaim Con Chulainn*, dated to the ninth or tenth century, thereby allowing only a short period of overlap with *Táin Bó Cuailnge* I, *Tochmarc Ferbe/Fís Conchobair* or *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa* in which the two traditions could have been current. Fachtna Fathach is also named in *Mesca Ulad*, *Tochamrc Emire*, *Táin Bó Cuailnge* II, *Cath Leitrech Ruide*, *Cath Ruis na Ríg*, *Cocad Fergusa 7 Conchobair*, *Ferchuitred Medba/Cath Bóinde*, *Oided Mac nUisnig* and *Táin Bó Cuailnge* III, and often is given as Conchobar's father in the genealogies. (See, for example, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, ed. M. A. O'Brien (Dublin, 1962), §147bI, §157, 53, §158, 13. Cathbad is given as an alternative in §157, 5.) To my knowledge, the Bardic poetry names only Fachtna as Conchobar's father. See, for example, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, ed. and trans. Bergin, nos. 8, 10, 16, 33.

[18] Few explanations have been offered for this unusual naming procedure; most scholars have merely pointed to the parallel cases of Fergus mac Róich and Muirchertach mac Erca (See 'Táin Bó Flidais,' ed. and trans. E. Windisch in his

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that Ness ensures her son's kingship by means of sexual activity. She grants sexual favours here rather than becoming pregnant, and the grateful recipient is Fergus mac Rossa, the then incumbent of the kingship of the Ulaid.

> Feargus mac Rosa for Ulltaib for re VII mbliagan cor eirig Concubar 7 dorat Feargus gradh do mathair Concubair, .i. do Neasa ingen Eachach Salbuide, 7 doraid Neasa nach faighfedh leis ach muna fhaghad in aiscid do iarrfadh fair … 7 do raigh Feargus co tibreadh di 7 dorat. 'Agus ised is cuma liom', ar si 'righ Ulad do Concubar co ceand mbliadna.[19]

By means of this arrangement, she obtains for Conchobar the kingship of the Ulaid for one year, which is again a time of prosperity for the Ulaid.[20] On this basis, the Ulaid support Conchobar above Fergus and allow him to gain the kingship of Ulster, as well as his four daughters, as recompense from Echu Feidlech.

This discussion of the various accounts of Conchobar's

Irische Texte, ser. 2, II, 205–16, at 207) and to occurrences of matronymics in an ogam inscription and in *Féilire Oengusso*. (See 'Tidings', ed. and trans. Stokes, p. 18. Note that Stokes also suggested here that Conchobar's use of the matronymic evidences the existence of a matriarchal social system.) However, as he is known by his mother's name in texts that pre-date the Fachtna Fathach tradition, this theory can only safely explain the popularity and not the origin of that usage. The name might instead reflect the unusual figure of Ness, a female champion, and her contribution to the making of Conchobar into a king.

[19] 'La Bataille de Leitir Ruibhe', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *RC* 39 (1922), 1–32, at 20, §15, 'Feargus mac Rosa was over the Ulaid for seven years until Conchobar grows up and Feargus gave love to Conchobar's mother, that is to Nessa daughter of Echu Sálbuide, and Nessa said that she would not sleep with him if she did not obtain the gift that she would demand from him … and Feargus said that he would give it to her and he gave (it). "And my conditions are," she said, "the kingship of the Ulaid for Conchobar to the end of a year"'.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 20, §15, 'Ba mor a n-ith 7 a blicht 7 a meas 7 torad', 'Their corn and their milk-yield and their fruit and produce were great'.

assumption of kingship leads us to some preliminary conclusions. First, it is clear that throughout the Middle Ages, Conchobar's depiction was subject to change. Secondly, we note that there is no discernable chronological development towards a fixed depiction; it cannot be shown that early texts follow one pattern and later texts another. Rather, as is evidenced by the relationship between *Compert Conchobair* and *Scéla Conchobair*, strands of tradition can be picked up after a gap of four centuries, despite the emergence of quite different representations in the interval. Thirdly, although *Compert Conchobair* and *Mesca Ulad* contain generally positive portrayals of Conchobar's kingship, the other tales all present Conchobar gaining his kingship through rather underhanded methods. Thus, Conchobar's kingship, the defining aspect of his persona, was often presented as resting on questionable foundations.

SOME DEPICTIONS OF CONCHOBAR IN THE BOOK OF LEINSTER: *AIDED CHONCHOBUIR*, VERSION A; *TÁIN BÓ CÚAILNGE*; *CATH RUIS NA RÍG*; *LONGES MAC NUISLEANN*

In order to test to what extent this apparent ambiguity in the depictions of Conchobar as king is present in the rest of this corpus, I propose to examine four differing depictions of Conchobar. These texts, *Aided Chonchobuir* version A, Recension II of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, *Cath Ruis na Ríg* and *Longes mac nUisleann*, constitute four of the most powerful characterizations of Conchobar, and as such, and because of their potential impact upon subsequent interpretations of Conchobar, they should be assessed. Furthermore, and more speculatively, their candidacy for consideration is bolstered by the fact that all these depictions are found in the twelfth-century manuscript of the Book of Leinster. It is worth considering the possibility that it was their variety in close proximity which legitimised quite contradictory representations of Conchobar by authors in the early

modern period.

Perhaps the most striking example of the 'positive' depiction of Conchobar occurs in version A of *Aided Chonchobuir*. The medieval Irish ideology of kingship has been alluded to already, but as an understanding of some of its precepts is central to a reading of this text, it is necessary to pause and ask to what extent should the literary, and indeed the legal, kingly exemplars inform our reading of Conchobar? We can reasonably expect that many of the audiences and authors of medieval Irish narrative tales in general were familiar with the Irish *Speculum Principum* genre. Furthermore, *Audacht Morainn*, like *Compert Conchobair*, has been postulated as one of the texts of the *Cín Dromma Snechta* manuscript, while *Tecosca Cúscraid* and *Bríatharthecosc Con Chulainn* are preserved as sections embedded in *Cath Airtig* and *Serglige Con Culainn* respectively; on this basis we can expect that at least some of the audiences and authors of the Conchobar texts in particular were familiar with this genre. Although the authors of the Conchobar material did not feel obliged to cohere strictly with this ideology – we have seen that the motif of *fír flatha* is 'imperfectly' present in *Scéla Conchobair*, while its flip-side, the concept of *gáu flatha*, is even more conspicuous by its absence – *Aided Chonchobuir* A certainly draws on a knowledge of one major principle of this system. This text refers to the notion that the most significant external manifestation of the king's status was his appearance. The physical descriptions of Conchobar found throughout this corpus habitually emphasise his perfection and establish explicit links between his appearance and his kingly status.[21] However, in this possibly eighth-century text, Conchobar is seen to break this

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[21] *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension I*, ed. and trans. C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1976), lines 3592–3: 'Loéch cáem seta fota ard óemind, caínem do rígaib a delb, i n-airinach na buidne', 'A fair, slender, tall, pleasant warrior, fairest of the kings his appearance, at the head of the host'.

fundamental condition of rightful kingship by gaining a physical blemish. Far from undermining Conchobar's right to be king, this blemish leads to his status being augmented: the Ulaid conclude that it is preferable to have Conchobar as a blemished king than to replace him stating "'Is asso dún ind athis oldás a éc-som'".[22] This highly favourable representation is sustained when the text goes on to portray Conchobar as one of the first Christians in Ireland. Indeed, it even depicts Conchobar in a strongly Christ-like fashion. The dramatic climax of the tale describes Conchobar's fall, having been struck by the brain of Mess Gegra, and states that his grave is where he fell, before, in a moment reminiscent of the Resurrection, he reveals himself to be alive by demanding to be carried from the field of battle. The identification with Christ is continued in the motif found here and in other versions of the tale that he and Christ share the same birthday.[23] The rest of this text, like the other versions of *Aided Conchobair*, relates how Conchobar hears of the Crucifixion and is then simultaneously filled with faith and rage at this deed. In the other versions, Conchobar's own death is brought about by this rage, which dislodges the brain-ball that is still implanted in his own head. The identification with Christ is particularly evident in version C, where the second of the two accounts of Conchobar's death offered depicts it as coinciding exactly with the Crucifixion.[24]

The *Táin* and *Cath Ruis na Ríg* provide quite dissimilar views of Conchobar as a martial leader. Although, of course, he is incapable of fighting for much of the *Táin*, it is clear that he is to be understood as a noble opponent. This can be illustrated by reference to, for example, the comment made by Fergus to the Connachta "'Cia 'táim ane ar longais riam reme dabuir bréthir," ar Fergus, "ná fuil i nHérend nó i nAlbain óclach mac samla Conchobuir'"[25] or Medb's refusal to accept Fedelm's prophecy of the slaughter of the Connachta on the basis that Conchobar is temporarily disabled.[26] This representation is sustained throughout all versions of the *Táin* despite the emphasis placed on tales of Cú Chulainn's past and present feats in battle. A final statement in this recension, this time an authorial aside, strengthens the case for Conchobar's ferocity and tenacity in battle.

Conid hí sin in tress bríathar is génnu ra ráded bar Táin Bó Cúalnge:

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[22] *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, p. 8, §9: "'It is easier for us (to accept) the blemish than his death'".

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 8, §11: "'In fer sin dano", ar in drúi, "i n-óenaidchi rogein 7 rogenis-[s]iu .i. i n-ocht calde Enair cen cop inund bliadain'", "'That man then," said the druid, "on the same night he was born and you were born, that is on the eighth of the calends of January, although it was not in the same year'".

[24] *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, p. 16: 'Antan dodechaidh teimheal forsin ngréin 7 rosúi ésga a ndath fola rofiarfaigh Concubur immorro do Cathbad dúss cid rombádar na dúile. "Do comhalta-sa", ar sé, "in fer rogéanair a n-

óenaidchi frit, anosa martar docuirthi (?) fair 7 doradadh a croich hé 7 isé sin chanuid anní sin.'", 'When darkness came upon the sun, and the moon turned to the colour of blood, Conchobar then enquired of Cathbad what ailed the elements. "Your own fosterbrother," he said, "the man who was born on the same night as you, is now undergoing martyrdom and has been put on the cross, and that is what this signifies'".

[25] *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1970), lines 747–8: "'Although I am thus in exile from him, I give (my) word," said Fergus, "that there is not in Ériu or in Alba a warrior resembling Conchobar'".

[26] *Ibid.*, lines 204–8: "'Maith and sin, a Feidelm banfáid, cia facci ar slúag?'" "'Atchíu forderg forro, atchíu rúad'", "'Atá Conchobor 'na chess noínden i nEmain ém,'" ar Medb. "'Ráncatar m'echlacha-sa connice. Ní fail ní itágammar-ne la Ultu. Acht abbair a fír, a Feidelm'", "'Well then Fedelm, prophetess, how do you see our host?" "I see them wounded, I see red." "Indeed, Conchobar is in his debility in Emain," said Medb. "My messengers have gone to him. There is nothing that we fear from the Ulaid. But tell the truth, Fedelm'".

Conchobar gana guin do gabáil.[27]

This comic portrayal of Conchobar as a warrior is further underlined in a retrospective analysis of the passage at the start of the text, which depicts Conchobar in a kind of battle-frenzy reminiscent of the *ríastrad* of Cú Chulainn in the *Táin*:

> Cid tra acht nir chutulsa do Chonchobor in[d] Heriu etir ra mét leis a brotha 7 a bríge 7 a báige. Et ro-mebaid loim cráo 7 fola dar a bél sell sechtair. Et in cháep chró 7 fola ro-bói for a chride issí roscesatar ra halt na huaire sin.[28]

A number of contrasts – the 'troublesome' drops of blood in Conchobar's heart as compared with those on the ends of Cú Chulainn's hair – mean that this can be read as an inverted version of Cú Chulainn's *ríastrad*, inferring perhaps that Conchobar's abilities as a warrior are seen to be the antithesis of those associated with his nephew in the *Táin*. *Cath Ruis na Ríg* seems to be a direct and irreverent response to that text's depiction of Conchobar as a warrior-king *par excellence*. This depiction of Conchobar as a weak and ineffectual martial leader may draw on earlier portrayals such as that in the ninth-century text *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó*, where he is humiliated by the charioteer Fer Loga, and in the eleventh- or twelfth-century text, *Aided Guill meic Carbarda 7 Aided Gairb Glinne Rige*, in which he relies totally on Cú Chulainn for the defence of his territory, and is threatened physically and again humiliated by him in Emain.[29]

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[27] *Ibid.*, lines 4257–8: 'So that is of the three most ridiculous words spoken in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*: Conchobar to be taken without being wounded'.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 18, §12: 'However the whole of Ireland did not satisfy Conchobar at all through the amount in him of his ardour and of his energy and of his fierceness. And a drop of blood and gore burst out through his mouth a little and the clot of blood and gore that was on his heart it is it that pained him at that time'.

[29] *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó*, ed. R. Thurneysen, MMIS 6 (Dublin, 1935), 19, §20;

Philip O'Leary has commented that it was a king's responsibility to administer justice that distinguished him from his warrior companions,[30] and this, taken alongside the motif of *fír flatha*, prompts us to consider Conchobar's decision-making in these texts. The favourable characterization evident from a consideration of the martial values ascribed to Conchobar in the *Táin* continues in its description of how Conchobar spent his reign,[31] as it closely parallels a passage outlining the weekly duties of a king in *Críth Gablach*.[32] Nonetheless, far more common is the characterization of Conchobar as a king who habitually made false judgements, a strand of characterization which survives into the early modern literature in, for example, *Oided Mac nUisig*. Indeed the text that directly gave rise to that depiction, and most probably other similar later depictions, *Longes mac nUisleann*, is the obvious text to consider in connection

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'The Violent Deaths of Goll and Garb', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 14 (1893), 396–449, at 426, §47.

[30] P. O'Leary, 'A Foreseeing Driver of an Old Chariot: Regal Moderation in Early Irish Literature', *CMCS* 11 (1986), 1–16, at 9.

[31] *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. O'Rahilly, lines 741–2: 'Dáig is amlaid domeil Conchobar in rígi óro gab rígi in rí .i. mar atraig fó chétóir cesta 7 cangni in chóicid d'ordugud', 'Since it is thus Conchobar enjoyed the kingship since the king took the kingship, namely to settle that which arose immediately of difficulties and branches of the province'.

[32] *Críth Gablach*, ed. D. A. Binchy, MMIS 11 (Dublin, 1941), lines 542–7: 'Atá dano sechtmonáil i córus ríg .i. domnach do ó[u]l chorma[e], ar ní flaith téchta[e] nád ingella laith ar cach ndomnach; lúan do br(e)ithemnacht, do choccertad túath; máirt o(i)c fidchill; cétaín do déisciu mílcho(i)n o(i)c tofunn; tar(a)dain do lánamnas; aín díden do retha[i]b ech; satharn do brethaib', 'There is then a weekly order in a king's system, namely Sunday for the drinking of ale, since he is not a proper prince who does not promise liquid on every Sunday; Monday for judgement, to set to rights the conflicts of *túatha*; Tuesday for the playing of *fidchell*; Wednesday for looking at greyhounds hunting; Thursday for marriage; Friday for horse racing; Saturday for judgements'.

with the characterization of Conchobar as kingly-judge.

Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, in his recent edition of *Oided Mac nUisnig*, has characterized Conchobar in the earlier text as 'the wronged king exacting a terrible but not explicitly unjust vengeance.'[33] This view derives no doubt from a favourable comparison with the later version, but it is clear that the author of *Longes* intended us to see Conchobar as more than a wronged king seeking revenge. It is his selfishness, and irresponsible attitude to his kingly duty, made manifest in his decision to put personal desires over the good of the province, that initiates the drama. He subsequently manipulates the code of honour governing his warriors, while remaining aloof from it himself. The conversation between Derdriu and Naísi in which Conchobar is described in terms of a bull is highly significant: '"Atá tarb in chóicid lat," or-se-seom, ".i. rí Ulad"'.[34] Because Conchobar is not present at this time, and because Deirdriu and Naísi are as yet without the prejudices against him that arise from subsequent events, this conversation reveals a wider and more objective view of Conchobar than is available elsewhere in the text. It would appear that his warriors regard him as a formidable presence, a leader with remarkable physical strength, and perhaps a solitary figure. There is also an element of criticism present in the comment, as it also suggests that he is a headstrong, unthinking, easily angered and threatening figure. This passage may also have been intended to awaken in its audience memories of the bull-king in *Audacht Morainn*, a truly flawed kingly type:

> Tarbflaith, to-slaid side to-sladar, ar-clich ar-clechar, con-claid con-cladar, ad-reith ad-rethar, to-seinn to-sennar, is fris con bith-búirethar

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[33] *Oidheadh*, ed. and trans. Mac Giolla Léith, p. 15.

[34] *Longes mac nUislenn: the Exile of the Sons of Uisliu*, ed. and trans. V. Hull (New York, NY, 1949), line 113: '"You have the bull of the province," he said, "namely the king of the Ulaid"'.

bennaib.[35]

CONCLUSION

The images of the bull-king and of the Christ-like figure seem as far-removed from one another as Kipling's east and west. What conclusions can be drawn? The four texts discussed in the latter part of this paper offer striking and skillful interpretations of the character of Conchobar mac Nessa. Some of them can easily be thought of as the direct ancestors of later depictions, and, furthermore, the divergent characterizations of the bardic poets and Geoffrey Keating are better understood in light of the Book of Leinster's diversity. But what does this analysis contribute to our understanding of medieval Irish concepts of characterization? On the evidence of the texts featuring Conchobar mac Nessa, I suggest that characterization, those basic sets of associations made with a particular figure that transcend textual boundaries, resided in external factors only rather than in the moral or behavioural patterns that emerge within the parameters of individual texts. That only the infrastructure of his character was fixed allowed authors to develop Conchobar's character in whatever direction – east or west – that served their particular purposes.

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[35] *Audacht Morainn*, ed. and trans. F. Kelly (Dublin, 1976), p. 18, §62: 'The bull-prince strikes and is struck, wards off and is warded off, roots out and is rooted out, attacks and is attacked, pursues and is pursued; it is against him that there is constant bellowing with horns'. I am indebted to Prof. T. M. Charles-Edwards for a reference to a similar depiction of Conchobar in the eighth-century *Míadshlechta*. See *Corpus Iuris Hibernici ad Fidem Codicum Manuscriptorum*, ed. D. A. Binchy, 6 vols. (Dublin, 1978), II, 582–9 (line 32) and T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 519–20.

APPENDIX

Appearances of Conchobar mac Nessa in Ulster Cycle Tales[36]

1. *Aided Áenfhir Aife (AAA): Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, ed. A. G. van Hamel, MMIS 3 (Dublin, 1933), 9–15. Late ninth-century: R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, (Halle, 1921), p. 404.

2. *Aided Cheltchair meic Uithechair* (ACMU): *The Death Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, ed. and trans. K. Meyer, R. Irish Acad. Todd Lecture Ser. 14 (Dublin, 1906), 24–31. Ninth- or tenth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 571.

3. *Aided Chonchobuir* (ACon): *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, 2–23. Versions current from the eighth century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 534.

4. *Aided Chonlaeich meic Con Culainn/Cú Chulainn 7 Conlaech* (ACMC): 'Cuchulinn and Conlaech', ed. and trans. J. G. O'Keefe, *Ériu* 1 (1901), 123–7. Middle Irish.

5. *Aided Chon Roí* I (ACR-I): 'Die Sage von Curoi', ed. and trans. R. Thurneysen, *ZCP* 9 (1913), 190–6. Eighth- or ninth-century: *ibid.*, p. 190.

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[36] Mallory and Ó hUiginn, 'The Ulster Cycle' provided a starting point for this list. However, as this list aims to provide references to editions, rather than translations, of these texts, it was necessary to make some modifications to that catalogue. I have standardised the spellings of tale names, where they have sometimes used the names employed in early translations, but I have retained the abbreviations given by Mallory and Ó hUiginn to counter any resultant ambiguity. I have also combined some instances of duplication, the result of a tale being partially translated by different editors. I have counted *Cath Étair* and *Talland Étair* as one text, and *Aided Con Roí* II and *Amra Con Roí* as another. I have had to conclude that their *Aided Chonlaeich mic ConCulainn*, for which no translation is given, is identical to their *Cuchulinn 7 Conlaech*. References to editions follow the tale names and a dating has been supplied. Where no basis for dating has been cited, the suggested date is very approximate, and where possible some indication of the foundation of my dating has been given.

6. *Aided Chon Roí* II and *Amra Con Roí* (ACR-II): 'The Tragic Death of Cúroí Mac Dáiri', ed. and trans. R. I. Best, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 18–35 and 'The Eulogy of Cúroí (Amra Chonrói)', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 1–14. Tenth-century: 'The Tragic Death', ed. and trans. Best, p. 18.

7. *Aided Fhergusa meic Róich* (AFMR): *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, 32–5. Pre-tenth-century: included in Saga List A.[37]

8. *Aided Guill meic Carbarda 7 Aided Gairb Glinne Rige* (AG): 'The Violent Deaths of Goll and Garb', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 14 (1893), 396–449. Eleventh- or twelfth-century.

9. *Aided Laegairi Buadaig* (ALB): *Death Tales*, ed. and trans. Meyer, 22–3. Probably tenth-century: included in Saga List A.

10. *Aided Meidbe* (AM): 'Aided Medibe: The Violent Death of Medb', ed. and trans. V. Hull, *Speculum* 13 (1938), 52–61. Eleventh- or twelfth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 583.

11. *Brinna Ferchertne* (BF): 'Brinna Ferchertne', ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *ZCP* 3 (1901), 40–6. Tenth-century: *ibid.*, p. 41.

12. *Brislech Mór Maige Muirtheimne/Aided Chon Chulainn* (BM): 'Cuchulainn's Death, abridged from the Book of Leinster', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 3 (1877), 175–85. Pre-twelfth century: included in the Book of Leinster.

13. *Bruiden Da Chocae* (BDC): 'Da Choca's Hostel', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 21 (1900), 149–65, 312–27, 388–402. Ninth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 586.

14. *Cath Airtig* (CA): 'The Battle of Airtech', ed. and trans. R. I. Best, *Ériu* 8 (1916), 170–90. Middle Irish: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 595.

15. *Cath Aenig Macha* (CAM): 'Battle of the Assembly of Macha', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *ZCP* 16 (1926), 145–61. Late Middle or Early Modern Irish.

16. *Cath Cumair* (CCum): 'Cath Cumair', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *RC* 43 (1926), 277–342. Twelfth- or thirteenth-century.

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[37] For this, and for any subsequent, references to the saga lists, see P. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1980).

17. *Cath Étair* and *Talland Étair* (CE): 'The Siege of Howth', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 8 (1887), 47–64. 'Agallamh Leborchaim', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *Études Celtiques* 5 (1945–51), 154–61. Eleventh-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 506.

18. *Cath Findchorad* (CF): 'The Battle of Findchorad', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *ZCP* 14 (1923), 395–420. Twelfth-century.

19. *Cath Leitrech Ruide* (CLR): 'La Bataille de Leitir Ruibhe', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *RC* 39 (1922), 1–32. Thirteenth-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 528.

20. *Cath Ruis na Ríg* (CRR): *Cath Ruis na Ríg for Bóinn with Preface, Translation and Indices; also a Treatise on Irish Neuter Substantices, and a Supplement to the Index Vocabulorum of Zeuss' 'Grammatica Celtica'*, ed. and trans. E. Hogan, R. Irish Acad. Todd Lecture Ser. 4 (Dublin, 1892). Twelfth-century.

21. *Cocad Fergusa 7 Conchobair* (CFC): 'La Guerre entre Fergus et Conchobar', ed. and trans. M. Dobbs, *RC* 40 (1923), 404–23. Early Modern Irish.

22. *Compert Chonchobuir* (CCon): T. Ó Cathasaigh, 'Some reflections on Compert Con Culainn and Serglige Con Culainn', in *Ulidia*, ed. Mallory and Stockman, pp. 85–90, at 85–6, trans. at 86. Eighth-century: *ibid.*, p. 85, citing 'The Conception of Conchobor', ed. and trans. V. Hull, in *Irish Texts Fasciculus* 4, ed. J. Fraser, P. Grosjean and J. G. O'Keefe (London, 1934), 4–12, at 7.

23. *Compert Chon Chulainn* (CCC): *Compert Con Culainn*, ed. van Hamel, 1–8. Version I before the first half of the eighth century, version II from the eighth or ninth centuries: *ibid.*, p. 1.

24. *Ferchuitred Medba / Cath Bóinde* (FM): 'Cath Boinde', ed. and trans. J. O'Neill, *Ériu* 2 (1905), 174–85. Late Middle Irish: *ibid.*, p. 175.

25. *Fled Bricrenn* (FB): *Fled Bricrend: The Feast of Bricriu, an Early Gaelic Saga Transcribed from Older Mss. into The Book of the Dun Cow, by Moelmuiri Mac Mic Cuinn na m-Bocht of the Community of the Culdees at Clonmacnois, with Conclusion from Gaelic MS. XL. Edinburgh, Advocates' Library*, ed. and trans. G. Henderson, ITS 2 (London, 1899). Last quarter of the ninth century: *ibid.*, p. xviii.

26. *Fled Bricrenn 7 Longes Mac nDuíl Dermait* (FBL): 'Das Fest des Bricriu und die Verbannung der mac Duil Dermait', ed. and trans. E. Windisch, in *Irische Texte*, ed. E. Windisch and W. Stokes, ser. 2, I (Leipzig, 1884), 173–209. Ninth-century: 'The Feast of Bricriu and the Exile of the Sons of Dóel Dermait', trans. K. Hollo, *Emania* 10 (1992), 18–24, at 18.

27. *Foglaim Con Chulainn* (FC): 'The Training of Cúchulainn', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 29 (1908), 109–52. Ninth- or tenth-century, text draws on FB and AG.

28. *Goire Chonaill Chernaig* (GCC): 'The Cherishing of Conall Cernach and the Death of Ailill and Conall Cernach', ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *ZCP* 1 (1897), 102–11. Thirteenth-century.

29. *Immacaldam in Dá Thuarad* (IDT): 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', ed. and trans. W. Stokes, *RC* 26 (1905), 4–64. Tenth-century: *ibid.*, p. 5.

30. *Lánellach Tigi Rích 7 Ruirech* (LTR): 'Lánellach Tigi Rích 7 Ruirech', ed. and trans. M. O'Daly, *Ériu* 19 (1962), 81–6. Old Irish: *ibid.*, p. 81.

31. *Longes mac nUislenn* (LMU): *Longes mac nUislenn: the Exile of the Sons of Uisliu*, ed. and trans. V. Hull (New York, NY, 1949). Late eighth-century or early ninth-century: *ibid.*, pp. 29–32.

32. *Mesca Ulad* (MU): *Mesca Ulad*, ed. J. C. Watson, MMIS 13 (Dublin, 1941). Eleventh- or twelfth-century.

33. *Oided Mac nUisnig* (OMU): *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisnigh: the Violent Death of the Children of Uisneach*, ed. and trans. C. Mac Giolla Léith, ITS 56 (London, 1993). Early Modern Irish: *ibid.*, pp. 9, 21.

34. *Scéla Conchobair meic Nessa* (SCMN): 'Tidings of Conchobar mac Nessa', *Ériu* 4 (1910), 18–38. First half of the twelfth century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 524.

35. *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó* (SMMD): *Scéla Mucce Maic Dathó*, ed. R. Thurneysen, MMIS 6 (Dublin, 1935). C. 800: *ibid.*, p. iv.

36. *Serglige Con Chulainn* (SCC): *Serglige Con Culainn*, ed. M. Dillon, MMIS 14 (Dublin, 1953). Eleventh-century for version A: *Serglige*, ed. Dillon, p. xiv.[38] Ninth-century for version B: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 416.

37. *Siaburcharput Con Chulainn* (SC): 'Siabur-charput Con Culaind', ed. and trans. J. O'Beirne Crowe, *Jnl of the R. Hist. and Archaeol. Assoc. of Ireland*, ser. 4, 1 (1870), 371–401. Tenth-century.

38. *Táin Bó Cuailnge* I (TBC-I): *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension I*, ed. and trans. C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1976). Ninth-century.

39. *Táin Bó Cuailnge* II (TBC-II): *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, ed. and trans. C. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1970). Twelfth-century.

40. *Táin Bó Cuailnge* III (TBC-III): *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, ed. and trans. P. Ó Fiannachta (Dublin, 1966). Fifteenth-century.

41. *Tochamrc Emire* (TEm): 'The Oldest Version of Tochmarc Emire', ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *RC* 11 (1890) 433–57. Eleventh-century: Thurneysen, *Die Irische Heldensage*, p. 382.

42. *Tochamrc Emire* III (Tem-III): 'The Wooing of Emer', ed. and trans. K. Meyer, *The Archaeol. Review* 1 (1888), 68–75, 150–5, 231–5, 298–307. Middle Irish: *Compert Con Culainn*, ed. van Hamel, p. 16.

43. *Tochmarc Ferbe / Fís Conchobair* (TF): 'Das Freien um Ferb', ed. and trans. E. Windisch, in *Irische Texte*, ed. E. Windisch and W. Stokes, ser. 3, 1 (Leipzig, 1891), 461–556. Ninth- or tenth-century; in Book of Leinster and list of *remscéla* of Táin Bó Cuailnge.[39]

44. *Tochmarc Luaine 7 Aided Athirni* (TL): 'Tochmarc Luaine ocus Aided Athairne', ed. and trans. L. Breatnach, *Celtica* 13 (1980), 1–31. Second half of the twelfth century: *ibid.*, p. 6.[40]

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[38] *Serglige*, ed. Dillon, p. xiv suggests that a ninth-century date is rather early for version B.

[39] See T. Chadwin, 'The Rémscéla Tána Bó Cualngi', *CMCS* 34 (1997), 67–75.

[40] I owe thanks to many for their helpful discussion following this paper. Particular thanks go to Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh for her advice on an earlier version of this paper.

Pope, Propaganda and Unchristian Saint in the *Life* of the Soldier, Collen

Hywel Williams
National Library of Wales

My study of *Buchedd Collen* is very much at an early stage, and therefore what I propose to do in this paper is to bring together various aspects of the background to *Buchedd Collen*, some thoughts and ideas about its main narratives and its context as a text found in three sixteenth-century manuscripts. In short, my aim is to whet your appetite, and mine, for further study of this *Life*. As one may have gathered from the title, this is not a typical saint's *Life*! Elizabeth Henken says in her book on the *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* 'Collen is a slightly unusual saint. His Life gives the impression of being totally unlike that of any other saint'.[1] However we do find token gestures in the *Life* to the traditional aspects of a saint's *Life*: a strange birth, the saint's pedigree, a brief account of his childhood and learning, how he gained his lands and then his death; but this is all dealt with in less than 600 words. However, it is the two main episodes in this *Life* that make the *Life* so unique. The first episode, and the one upon which the title of this paper is based, is the story recounting how Collen saved Rome from the invading pagans. The second main episode is the tale of how Collen defeated Gwyn ap Nudd (who by the later Middle Ages in Welsh literature was both the king of the fairies and equated with the devil) on Glastonbury Tor. These two episodes

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[1] E. R. Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 221.

explain why this is more a *Life* of a soldier than a saint. And, indeed, in the earliest manuscript the *Life* does not begin with 'Buchedd Collen', which would indicate the *Life* of a saint, but 'Ystoria kollen a'i vuchedd',[2] and in the second earliest manuscript the title given is 'Ystoria Kollen vilwr',[3] although neither of these appear as titles but as the first lines of their respective texts.

Here is a brief summary of the first main episode as found in the earliest manuscript:[4] the pope during the time of Julian the Apostate, having received a challenge to single combat by a Greek named Byras, is told by a voice from heaven to go to *Porth Hamwnt* (Southampton) to find his champion. His own armies in the east had refused to fight. The champion is the first man he meets in Southampton. Collen, that first man whom he meets, accepts the challenge, and goes with the pope. He meets Byras on the prescribed day but in the fight Collen is the first to be wounded. Byras, who had a magical ointment in his helmet, offers it to Collen who takes and uses it to heal his wound, before throwing it in the river so that neither might have further benefit from it. He then wounds Byras under his armpit until his liver and his lungs can be seen, and Byras falls to the ground. However, uncharacteristically of what one might expect from a *saint*, Collen is loath to grant mercy to Byras, and Byras has to threaten Collen with impeachment before God. At this Collen is obviously frightened and grants Byras his mercy.

Little is known about the date of the *Life*. The Welsh versions extant today seem to have been composed after the popularisation of

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[2] 'The story/history/account of Collen and his Life'. Cardiff, Central Library, Havod 19 (Cardiff 2.629), pp. 141–51, at p. 141.

[3] 'The story of the Soldier Kollen'. Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Llanstephan 117, pp. 183–8, at p. 183.

[4] Havod 19. For further discussion concerning the manuscripts see below, pp. 60–4.

the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Romances, since we see their influence on some of the motifs in *Buchedd Collen*. Henken has argued that 'The *Buchedd* gives every appearance of its late date using the imagery of the Romances and the late concept of otherworld inhabitants'.[5] The latter point refers to the treatment of Gwyn ap Nudd as both the king of the fairies and/or the devil, which developed from earlier concepts of him as the ruler of the otherworld, just as the realm of the fairies developed from the otherworld itself. The fifteenth century saw an increasing amount of interest in the saints of Wales. E. P. Roberts has argued in her paper on religious life in the Tudor period that the cult of the local saint flowered during the second half of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth.[6] She has also argued that the growth of national feeling in Wales due to the contention for the throne of England during the Wars of the Roses may have had a role in encouraging this interest in local Welsh saints. A result of this increased interest in the saints, Roberts has suggested, was the composing of a litany for St. Deiniol, the patron saint of Bangor. Could *Buchedd Collen* as a Welsh text have a similar background? Morfydd Owen, referring to the fifteenth century, has argued that 'Many native saints' lives must also belong to this period...'[7] and included *Buchedd Collen* in a short list of such native *lives* found in Roger Morris's manuscript. As yet I cannot offer any answers to this. One factor that does point towards the late fifteenth century concerns the borrowing of the word *basyned* from the Middle English *Basinet*, which is itself a borrowing from Old

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[5] Henken, *Traditions*, p. 225.

[6] E. P. Roberts, 'Cyfnod y Tuduriaid: sylwadau ar Fywyd Crefyddol y Bobl Gyffredin', in *'Ysbryd Dealltwrus ac Enaid Anfarwol': Ysgrifau ar Hanes Crefydd yng Ngwynedd*, ed. W. P. Griffith (Bangor, 1999), pp. 73–95, at p. 79.

[7] M. E. Owen, 'The Prose of the *Cywydd* Period', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature II: 1282–c. 1550*, ed. A. O. H. Jarman and G. R. Hughes (Cardiff, 1997), p. 345.

French. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* only gives two examples of its use in Welsh.[8] The first is in a poem by Lewis Glyn Cothi dated by the *Geiriadur* to between 1480 and 1525, and the second example is that found in *Buchedd Collen* itself. However, Mary Irene Roach Delpino in an unpublished doctorate thesis submitted in 1980 has argued that an original Latin *Life* was composed during the fourteenth century at Glasney in Penryn, Cornwall, using elements gathered from earlier Cornish traditions. But she does agree that the texts recorded in the surviving manuscripts are of late revision, mainly and most probably at St Mary's in Monmouth, the daughter house of St Florien-lès-Saumur, France.[9]

There are eight extant copies of *Buchedd Collen*. Of those, three were written in the sixteenth century during the religious upheavals of the Protestant Reformation; Havod 19 was written in 1536 by one Dafydd ap Jeuan Henddyn, Llanstephan 117 was written in 1548 and Llanstephan 34 was written towards the end of the sixteenth century.[10] Both the Havod manuscript and Llanstephan 117 were owned by Ieuan ap William ap Dafydd ap Einws, and the latter was written by him while Llanstephan 34 was written by Roger Morris. It is probable that Ieuan ap William, like Roger Morris, was a Catholic and possibly within the underground Catholic circles in North Wales

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[8] *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, ed. R. J. Thomas and G. A. Bevan, 4 vols. (Cardiff, 1950–2002), I, 263.

[9] M. I. R. Delpino, 'A Study of "Ystoria Collen" and the British Peregrini' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1980).

[10] Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Llanstephan 34, pp. 315–20. The other manuscrpts are: London, British Library, Add. 14987; Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Llanstephan 18, pp. 25–32; Cardiff, Central Library, Cardiff 36, pp. 377ff.; Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Panton 22, pp. 37–44; London, British Library, Add. 15003, pp. 60–5, an edited version of which was printed in *Y Greal* 8 (1807), 337–41.

during the Protestant rules of Edward VI and Elizabeth I. There certainly seems to have been a remarkable density of humanists in north-east Wales. This is where both Llangollen and Ruabon are situated and Ieuan ap William was constable of the latter in 1554. Indeed, as shall be discussed below, he wrote at the end of *Buchedd Collen* that the reason for writing these texts was so that others could read about God and the saints.[11] Given the number of humanists and Catholics in north-east Wales, this could indeed have been a strong incentive. In his article 'From Manuscript to Print' Thomas argues that 'The wide range of texts copied by the poet Gutun Owain would indicate the presence of a pool of literary, religious, medical, astrological and other pseudo-scientific texts in north-east Wales during the late fifteenth century, probably in one of the abbeys, Basingwerk or Valle Crucis, with which he had connections'.[12] The fact that the texts Ieuan copied in his two manuscripts seem at least to belong to the same tradition as those copied by Gutun Owain and Thomas suggests that he may well have copied them from Gutun's own manuscripts. Was *Buchedd Collen* a part of that pool of texts? If so, and even if he did not find the *Life* in that pool, an important question is what motives made Ieuan decide to include *Buchedd Collen* in his collection in Llanstephan 117? Why did he think this *Life* to be worth copying? There are a few possible answers. Firstly, Ieuan came from the Ruabon area not far from Llangollen and therefore an interest in materials pertaining to the area may have played a part. He may also have been aware that the church at Rhiwabon had been dedicated to St Collen before the Normans rededicated it to St Mary. Also, near Rhiwabon is a place called Capel Collen Field where his

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[11] Llanstephan 117, p. 94.

[12] G. C. G. Thomas, 'From Manuscript to Print: I Manuscript', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature III: c. 1530–1700*, ed. G. Gruffydd (Cardiff, 1997), pp. 241–62, at p. 245.

chapel and cross were to have been, and where, according to T. D. Breverton, Collen's 'wake was kept on the third week of Summer', although Breverton does not state until when it was practised.[13] Ieuan, however, does tell us himself what the purpose was of this section of the manuscript: 'ir muyn achwynych o ddarllen duw ai saint ir neb'.[14] This would indicate that he was writing for an audience, and with the purpose of spreading these texts around to other likeminded people. This note could also imply that Ieuan was indeed in underground Catholic circles, since it would have been illegal to circulate Catholic texts as he seems to be aiming to do here. But, given the scope of material in Llanstephan 117,[15] it would be a simplification to cast Ieuan merely as a Catholic; he seems to have had a thirst for knowledge of all kinds, and was therefore an early antiquarian, possibly saving texts from the effects of the dissolution of the monasteries.

The manuscript Havod 19 was written just before or at the beginning of the dissolution of the monasteries. This may be what instigated the copying of the material in Havod 19 from sources which at the time could still have been in monastic hands. Valle Crucis Abbey is situated not far from Llangollen; therefore, since (as has been discussed above) much of Ieuan's material as well as Gutun Owain's might have come from there, could it not also be possible that the abbey held a copy of *Buchedd Collen*? Thomas claimed that Ieuan ap William was the scribe of Havod 19 as well as of Llanstephan 117. However, Delpino has claimed that a 'dd [Dafydd]

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[13] T. D. Breverton, *The Book of Welsh Saints* (Vale of Glamorgan, 2000), p. 151.

[14] Llanstephan 117, p. 94; see above, p. 61 and n. 11.

[15] The manuscript contains poetry, apocryphal gospels, proverbs, vocabulary, a planisphere, planetary tables, interpretations of dreams, palmistry and directions about bleeding as well as *Lives* of saints. See *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language II*, ed. J. G. Evans (London, 1902).

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ap Jeuan Henddyn', who appears in a note on page sixty of the manuscript, seems to have been the scribe and that Ieuan was a later owner as can be seen by the note 'Jeuan ap Wylla pier llyvr hwn'.[16] Havod 19 is a collection of Catholic works, such as *Pum Rinwedd yr yfferen*, *Pregeth a wnaeth ensws bab*, and *Llyma val i dyli dyn gyffesu*. It also contains the *Lives* of SS Margaret, Catherine and Mary Magdalene as well as that of Collen; this strongly indicates the spiritual bias of Dafydd, which would also contribute to his interest in copying such works during a period when the knowledge and the materials kept by the monasteries were being destroyed or scattered. It is also possible that the exemplar of Ieuan's Llanstephan 117 came from Valle Crucis into his hands due to the scattering of materials to lay hands after the dissolution.

As has been mentioned, the other sixteenth-century copyist of *Buchedd Collen* about whom we have a little knowledge was also probably within Catholic circles. We have two pointers to this within Llanstephan 34. In this manuscript Roger Morris uses the dotting under letters such as **d**, **l** and **u** to stand for the doubling of those letters to form **dd**, **ll** and **w**. This puts him not only within a specific period, but also within a select group of writers. This dotting of letters was an experiment carried out under Italian influence by humanists such as Gruffydd Robert who had fled to Italy during the Protestant Reformation. They used this system in an attempt to prepare the Welsh language for the press, by trying to show every phoneme and grapheme. Other examples of this system being used are Robert's own treatise on Welsh grammar,[17] the first part of which was published in 1567, and Morys Clynnog's *Athrawiaeth Gristnogawl* in

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[16] Llanstephan 117, p. 87: 'Jeuan ap Wylla owns this book'.

[17] *Gramadeg Cymraeg gan Gruffydd Robert: yn ôl yr Argraffiad y dechreuwyd ei gyhoeddi ym Milan yn 1567*, ed. G. J. Williams (Cardiff, 1939).

1568. Therefore, since it came to Wales from Italy via the humanists and the underground Catholic clergy, most of those who used the dotting system were themselves Catholics. The other pointer we have is of course the contents of Llanstephan 34. It is mainly a collection of saints' *Lives*, but also includes other religious works and treatises. Since it was written at the end of the sixteenth century and therefore well into the reign of Elizabeth I, the printing of Catholic works would have been illegal and the press itself under the control of the crown, meaning that the spreading and sharing of manuscripts would have been the main way to spread Catholic literature.

Having discussed the background to the manuscript texts I shall now move on to give an overview of some of the themes and motifs within the *Life*. The many remarkable occurrences and motifs show that a whole range of influences have contributed to the making of the extant texts. One of them is that the unnamed pope is made to travel to Britain. This is the only example of a visit by a pope to Britain that I know of in medieval literature. The pope is usually portrayed as waiting in Rome for the saints and pilgrims to make a pilgrimage there to seek his blessing. Here, however, he is given an active role as the ruler of Christendom, who has to find a champion to fight for him and for Christendom. His route to Britain, like his role in the story, is also different to what we usually find in hagiography. The pilgrimage routes to the Continent used by most Welsh and Irish saints in the hagiography are via the peninsulas of Wales and Cornwall and then to Brittany. The pope here, however, comes to Southampton, which is 'in line with the geography of the Romances in which journeys are made between the continent and the southeast coast of England'.[18] This is not the only example of the influence of the Romances on *Buchedd Collen*, as will be discussed

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[18] Henken, *Traditions*, p. 222.

below in regard to the meeting between Collen and Gwyn ap Nudd. We now move on to the single combat itself.

> In the narrative concerning the war between the pope and the Greeks, Collen's role is closer to that of an epic hero than the protagonist of legend or folktale, as tends to be the case with the other saints.[19]

This is another aspect of the *Life* which points to more diverse influences than only hagiographical tradition. Here we see an example of a single combat fought between two champions, one of Christendom and the other of the pagan Greeks. This is a motif which is very widespread in medieval literature, but is not often found in the *Lives* of the saints. However, the story we expect, that of the hero winning the fight with the aid of God and granting conversion and baptism to the defeated enemy, is not what we find in this episode. Firstly, Collen does not reject the compromising situation of accepting Byras's healing balm at the price of his faith. But the author of this part of the *Life*, or a later copyist, tried to make up for the compromise by having Collen throw the balm into the nearby river. What one might have expected instead was a similar response to that of Tristram in his single combat with Morhaut in the *Romance of Tristram and Ysolt*. Tristram is the first to be wounded, but Morhaut makes him an offer: 'Yield thee as wounded and discomfit and vanquished, and I will well for love of thee bring thee unto the queen, and make her heal thy wound. Then will we be always fellows together, and all my wealth shall be in thy power, for never found I no knight that I might so praise as thee'.[20] Tristram, wanting to keep his honour rather than his life, rejects the offer and continues to fight even though he himself is mortally wounded. Collen's behaviour goes

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[19] Henken, *Traditions*, p. 222.
[20] R. S. Loomis, *The Romance of Tristram and Ysolt by Thomas of Britain* (New York, NY, 1951), p. 72.

against heroic expectations as well as against what one would expect of a Christian saint. One might have expected his character to rely on a miracle to heal his wound, rather than accepting the oil and compromising his faith as a Christian as well as his honour as the hero. Delpino has found two other analogues to this episode: the oral tale of Sir Colan from St Dominica in Cornwall, and various versions of the *chanson de geste* of *Fierabras*. In the former (a folk tale first published in 1894) two Saxons, Sir Colan and Gotlieb, fight in single combat for a lady.[21] Colan is the first to be wounded but ignores his wound and even though he wins, he eventually dies from his wound. Delpino has argued that 'The unhealed wound of Sir Colan may be a vestige of the original resolution of the problem in a local saint's legend' and Colen's 'unhealed wound is the badge of his sanctity'.[22] The second analogue can be separated into three versions. The first is the Old French *Fierabras* in which the hero is already wounded when he begins the combat. He uses the healing ointment to gain an equal footing before throwing it away. In the second, a Norman version, the hero cuts the ties of the container so that the unused liquid sinks into the ground. The third version is a hypothetical one called 'Balan', thus named by Gaston Paris and reconstructed by Joseph Bédier.[23] In this version the hero Oliver is again already wounded, but refuses the offer of healing before fighting. These analogues highlight the epic and heroic nature of Collen's fight with Byras. However, for Delpino,

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[21] M. and L. Quiller-Couch, *Ancient and Holy Wells of Cornwall* (London, 1894), pp. 64–5. Delpino argued in her thesis that this Sir Colan can be identified with Colan the saint (and therefore with Collen), and that this tale may be a remnant of a tradition about the saint and may also point to where the original dedication to Colan might have been.

[22] Delpino, 'Ystoria Collen', p. 278.

[23] J. Bédier, *Les légendes épiques: recherches sur la formation des chansons de geste*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1908–13), II.

these analogues, and especially the last, are the link in her attempt to chart the history of the making of *Buchedd Collen*.

In her thesis[24] Delpino has argued that Collen, an historical figure, may have been originally Irish, moved to Cornwall and became a Cornish saint founding churches in the sixth century, but that his name was Colan. This Colan was culted both in Cornwall and in Brittany. She has argued that the story of the single combat also originated in Ireland and at some point 'was written into a life of the Cornish-Glastonbury saint Colan or Coelanus, credited locally with defending his faith against an enemy Champion'.[25] The *Life* found its way from Glasney in Penryn to Glastonbury, and to St Mary's at Monmouth where the *Life* was revised. Here the Irish tales of the Tuatha Dé Danaan and the character Balar (confused with Balan through the confusion of Insular **r** and **n** in the manuscripts) were used to revise both *Buchedd Collen* and story of *Fierabras*. It was claimed in the poem that after his baptism Fierabras the Saracen became 'St Florans de Roie'.[26] This St Florans became confused with an obscure soldier named Florian, and a disciple of St Martin of Tours, St Florent of Mont Glonne. It is this latter person after whom the abbey of St Florent was named. St Florent-lès-Saumur was a daughter-house of that abbey, and in its turn St Mary's of Monmouth was a daughter-house of St Florent-lès-Saumur, which brings us back to our texts. It was also here that the *Life* of St Florentius would have

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[24] Much of her theory about the origins of Colan/Collen's cult is based on a slightly critical understanding of Bowen's theories concerning the Peregrini of Wales, Ireland and Cornwall and their settlements and dedications. I am not aware of any attempt, so far, to analyse and revise her use of these now outdated theories.

[25] Delpino, 'Ystoria Collen', p. 316.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 295. I cannot here do justice to the argument nor give all its details; for the full argument see pp. 270–316.

had the opportunity to influence the revision of *Buchedd Collen*. It would also make sense to propose that it was at St Mary's, a house known for its tradition of copying texts, that the elements more akin to the Welsh romances were added.

Nowhere is this influence seen more clearly in the *Life* than in the description of Gwyn ap Nudd's castle on top of Glastonbury Tor. After being a monk and abbot at Glastonbury abbey, then leaving to preach to the people of the country for three years, Collen decides to leave the world and become a recluse in a cave on Glastonbury Tor. It is here that his second battle takes place. After Collen angrily scolds two devils who talk about Gwyn ap Nudd outside the door of his cave, he is challenged to go meet Gwyn ap Nudd on top of the Tor. After refusing twice, Collen, frightened by the threats, resolves to go, and makes some holy water to take with him which he eventually throws around him and everything disappears. The castle is described thus: 'ef awelai ykastell teka ar awelsai irioed amerch abechin yni marchogeth ari kevyne agore pwynt i meirch',[27] and should be compared with the description of the castle in *Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnawn*.[28] Morfydd Owen also sees native Welsh influence on *Buchedd Collen*: 'These native lives preserve the traditional style of medieval religious *cyfarwyddyd*',[29] and quotes the opening lines of our *Life* as an example of a traditional genealogy. We can conclude that the nature of both conflicts in *Buchedd Collen* does not fit easily into the hagiographical *traditio*: 'They mix the traditional strains of epic and fairy-tale with the more literary ones of the Romances'.[30]

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[27] Havod 19, p. 148. 'he could see the fairest castle he had ever seen, and horses and youths riding on their backs and the best condition for horses'. Henken, *Traditions*, p. 223.

[28] *Owein: or Iarlles y Ffynnawn*, ed. R. L. Thomson (Dublin, 1968), pp. 2–3.

[29] Owen, 'Prose of the *Cywydd* Period', p. 345.

[30] Henken, *Traditions*, p. 225.

As we have seen, therefore, *Buchedd Collen* is a complex text. Much of the *Life* is unclear and confusing as to its origins and meaning, and its main character is viewed in a different light from the earlier Welsh saints of the Middle Ages, taking on the role of the defender of Christendom and also performing the deeds of an epic or Romance hero. The text itself not only joins together east and west – from Glastonbury to Rome – in its narrative, but also in its composition (if one agrees with Delpino) – from Ireland to Cornwall, Wales and France. *Buchedd Collen* also bridges the boundaries between this world and the land of the fairies, literary and folklore motifs, hagiography and the Romances, as well as possibly being used as a piece of propaganda among many other texts to bring about the return of the Christian faith of the Catholic east to Wales as opposed to the Protestant faith of the British west.

Thomas Didymus from India to England

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Recent research into the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian has provided a forum for very encouraging – and productive! – interaction across the disciplines of Anglo-Saxon and late antique studies.[1] This is all to the good. Both fields are characterized by methodological diversity and both provide abundant material for studying the complex negotiations that transformed the classical world into the medieval world. Both fields stand to gain a great deal from further collaboration. A strong case could be made that the only principle separating the worlds of Anglo-Saxon England and the late antique Mediterranean is the allocation of subjects within our universities. As an offering of what sort of things we can learn by considering the British Isles as part of the world of Late Antiquity, I will trace the evolution of the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* from Syrian India to the West Saxons. Naturally, I will have to miss out a number of important details along the way, but even so it is possible from considering the development of the tales about Thomas to learn something of the connections that linked two such seemingly disparate worlds.

So important are the *Acts of Thomas* to the Christians of Malabar that they are sometimes simply called the Christians of St Thomas.

They live on an ancient trade route,[2] and were very likely known to Cosmas Indicopleustes.[3] Still, this community was largely forgotten in Europe until the travels of Marco Polo and especially Vasco da Gama – who were both keen to locate the saint's relics in India – brought them once more into public notice.[4] (Indeed, we are told by a near contemporary of Vasco's that King Manuel commissioned him to travel to India at least in part because he was moved to contact the Christians of India.)[5] One imagines that whatever surprise was felt upon learning of the St Thomas Christians was inspired chiefly by the discovery that the communities still existed. For the foundational document that describes the Apostle Thomas's activity in India was known and read quite broadly in Latin and Greek from an early stage. For example, in the Greek east, Gregory of Nyssa[6] and, in the Latin West, Ambrose[7] and Jerome[8] attest to Thomas's activities in India. Gregory of Tours even refers to the monastery established at the site of Thomas's first burial (that is, before his remains were translated to

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[1] For example *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1995).

[2] See, for example, Strabo, *Geography* XVI.iv.24 and XVII.i.45: *The Geography of Strabo*, ed. H Jones, 8 vols. (London, 1969), VII, 358 and VIII, 118–20.

[3] Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography* III.65: *Cosmas Indicopleustès: Topographie Chrétienne*, ed. Wanda Wolska-Conus, Sources Chrétiennes 141 (Paris, 1968), 503–5.

[4] See *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, ed. H. Yule, 2 vols. (London, 1929), II, 353–9.

[5] See M. de Faria e Sousa, *Ásia portuguesa*, 3 vols. in 6, Biblioteca Histórica de Portugal e Brasil Série Ultramarina 6 (Porto, 1945–7), I, 140–8, at 141: 'O Rei sabia – motivo principal que arrebatava os corações dos seus vassalos para esta emprésa, como se fôssem inspirados por Deus – quanta ventura lhe adviria se prosseguisse na obra do apóstolo S. Tomé, implantando a religião cristã naquelas terras.'

[6] Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio XXXIII c Arianos* II.11, PG 36, col. 228.

[7] Ambrose of Milan, *In Psalmum XLV*, enarr 21, PL 14, col. 1143.

[8] Jerome, *Epistola* LIX.5, PL 22, col. 589.

Edessa).[9] The Syriac Fathers, too, tell us a great deal about Thomas's activities in India[10] – which is much as we would expect, since it is overwhelmingly likely that India was Christianized by Syrian Christians and because the Persian church continued to preside over the Indian Christians for centuries.[11] And indeed it is generally accepted that the *Acts of Judas Thomas the Apostle* were written initially in Syriac.[12]

The *Acts* open with the Apostles casting lots for which countries they will evangelise. When India falls to Thomas, he protests on grounds of being weak and, as a Hebrew, being unable to teach Indians. But the Lord appeared to Thomas in a dream and ratified his commission. And when Thomas was still recalcitrant, the Lord

intervened directly and sold Thomas as a slave to a merchant called Habbān, who was seeking to buy a carpenter on behalf of his lord, King Gūdnaphar. Gūdnaphar was pleased by Thomas and gave him funds to build a new palace. Thomas, however, distributed the money to the poor; and when Gūdnaphar learned that the money was gone and ground had not been broken, he was understandably not pleased. Not even Thomas's assurance that he had built Gūdnaphar a castle in heaven mollified the king, who imprisoned Thomas and Habbān. Shortly thereafter, Gūdnaphar's brother Gad died; and he saw in heaven Thomas's building. Being miraculously restored to life, Gad assured his brother of the truth of Thomas's claim. And so both Gūdnaphar and Gad were persuaded to become Christian. (It is worth noting that we have independent evidence that there was a Gūdnaphar who rule the Scytho-Indian kingdom lying to the east and west of the Indus, c. 19–45 A.D., and who had a brother called Gad.)[13] This miraculous event was followed by several more, which collectively insured the success of Thomas's evangelisation. Thomas established churches and ordained clergymen, while continuing to teach.

He landed himself in trouble once more, however, when his teaching induced several women of the royal court to abstain from sexual relations with their husbands. And when at length he converted the lady Mygdonia, Thomas was imprisoned and ultimately executed by King Mazdai at the instigation of Karīsh, Mygdonia's husband and Mazdai's kinsman. After Thomas's martyrdom, however, Mazdai's son fell ill and eventually Mazdai decided to use a relic of St Thomas to heal him. Thomas appeared to Mazdai in a dream and chided him, saying, 'Thou didst not believe in one living; wilt thou

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[9] Gregory of Tours, *De gloria beatorum martyrum* 33, PL 71, cols. 733–4.

[10] For example Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena* 42, ed. G. Bickell (Leipzig, 1866), pp. 79–81 (Syriac text), 163–5 (Latin translation); cf. Yesuyab of Nisibis, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, ed. G. S. Assemani, 3 vols. in 4 (Rome, 1719–28), III, 306.

[11] See A. Mingana, 'The Early Spread of Christianity in India', *Bull. of the John Rylands Lib.* 10 (1926), 435–514; L. Brown, *The Indian Christians of St Thomas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1980). See also A. F. J. Klijn, 'Das Thomasevangelium und das altsyrische Christentum', *Vigiliae Christianae* 15 (1961), 146–159, esp. 154 *ad fin*.

[12] See F. C. Burkitt, 'The Original Language of the Acts of Judas Thomas', *JTS* 1 (1900), 280–90; 'The Name Habban in the Acts of Thomas', *JTS* 2 (1901), 429; 'Another Indication of the Syriac Origin of the Acts of Thomas', *JTS* 3 (1902), 94–5. Burkitt's work has been advanced, especially by H. Attridge, 'The Original Language of the *Acts of Thomas*', in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins*, ed. H. Attridge *et al.*, College Theology Society Resources in Religion 5 (Lanham, MD, 1990), pp. 241–50. See also the discussion in A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 5 (Leiden, 1962), 1–17. Against this view, see K. Beyer, 'Das syrische Perlenleid. Ein Erlösungsmuthos als Märchengedicht', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 140 (1990), 234–59, at 237–8.

[13] *Cambridge History of India I: Ancient India*, ed. E. J. Rapson (Cambridge 1922), pp. 576–9.

believe in one, lo, who is dead? But fear not. My Lord the Messiah will have mercy upon thee because of his clemency.'[14] Mazdai then professed his faith in the Lord Jesus and bowed his head to the presbyter and, taking some dust from Thomas's grave, he rubbed it on his son, who was thereby healed.

So much for the *Acts* as such; when we turn to Thomas's teaching, the most notable feature is something that has already been mentioned: his insistence on celibacy. We can get some sense of how his teaching was received from Mygdonia's words in rebuffing her husband:

> Remind me not of thy former doings with me, which I pray and beg of the Lord to blot out for me. Remind me not of thy filthy and unclean pleasures and thy fleshly deeds, from which I pray that I may be rescued by the love of my Lord. I have forgotten all thy practices, and thy familiarities and thy doing are at an end with thyself; but my Lord and my Saviour, Jesus, abideth alone forever, with those souls which have taken refuge with him.[15]

Mygdonia's total rejection of Karīsh's advances is striking, but it is nothing more than a faithful implementation of what Thomas taught. Some scholars have taken this as evidence that the teaching and indeed the document itself are not orthodox.[16] This line of thought about the *Acts* can be buttressed with reference to the poems scattered throughout the text. *The Wedding Hymn, The Hymn of the Pearl* and *The Praises of Thomas* are replete with dualistic, gnosticising themes. *The Hymn of the Pearl* in particular is a striking poem in which the narrator describes his quest for a pearl that was being guarded by a serpent in Egypt; strong cases have been made for reading *The*

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[14] *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, ed. W. Wright, 2 vols. (London, 1871), II, 297; Wright's translation.

[15] Wright, *ibid.*, II, 254-255; Wright's translation.

[16] Zelzer, for example.

Hymn as Iranian folklore, Bardesanian heresy, Manichaean myth or even Christian midrash.[17] Comparatively little work has been done on *The Wedding Hymn* and *The Praises*, but Bousset has shown convincingly that *The Praises* can be meaningfully compared to a variety of Manichaean sources.[18]

For a complete picture, however, we need to be aware that the emphasis on celibacy is not particularly unusual in light of the Syriac provenance of the work. Aphraates, the Persian Sage, shares this emphasis; and it recurs through the Syriac tradition.[19] Thomas's teaching is very much in keeping with this tradition. Furthermore, even if one finds *The Hymn of the Pearl* suspiciously Manichaean, Johan Ferreira has noted in his recent book on that part of the *Acts* that it is only found in one Syriac manuscript and in one Greek manuscript and can therefore be considered an interpolation.[20] And though *The Praises* has been compared to Coptic Manichaean psalms, the fact that striking points of similarity can be found is ultimately inconclusive. It seems in the end that the teaching reported in the *Acts* simply represents a school of Christian thought that did not become predominant.[21]

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[17] The history of the scholarship has been well presented by Johan Ferreira in his new study on *The Hymn*; see n. 20, below.

[18] W. Bousset, 'Manichäisches in den Thomasakten,' *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 18 (1917–18), 1–39.

[19] Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London, 1904), pp. 125–6; A. Vööbus, *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church*, Papers of the Estonian Theol. Soc. in Exile 1 (Stockholm, 1951). Against this view, see A. F. J. Klijn, 'Doop en Ongehuwde Staat in Aphraates,' *Nederlands Theologiske Tijdschrift* 14 (1959), 28–37.

[20] J Ferreira, *The Hymn of the Pearl* (Sydney, 2002); Dr Ferreira's introduction to *The Hymn* is clear and very thorough.

[21] It may be noted that Bornkamm has argued for the Gnostic background of the *Acts*; see his introduction to the translation in *The New Testament Apocrypha*,

That is a controversial statement, since scholars such as Günther Bornkamm have argued that the Syriac text characteristically represents 'the Gnostic Christianity of Syria in the third century … which was only catholicized at a relatively late date (in the fourth and fifth centuries…).'[22] Bornkamm repeatedly invokes Walter Bauer's *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei*, to the effect that orthodoxy developed as heresy was tidied up; and Bornkamm gathers examples from the *Acts* that he claims are redolent of Gnosticism. However, he irritatingly does not substantiate those claims; and simply invoking Bauer's name is never sufficient.[23] What is more, in his annotated translation of the *Acts* from the Syriac, A. F. J. Klijn has counterbalanced the putatively Gnostic themes adduced by Bornkamm with a number of decidedly un-Gnostic themes.[24] Even though it is clear that the Greek version of the *Acts* is shorter and lacks a number of evocative passages (such as *The Hymn of the Pearl*),[25] we should resist the temptation to think

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ed. E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher and R. Wilson, 2 vols. (London 1965), II, 429–32. But one can justifiably object that Bornkamm does not actually refer the reader to Gnostic sources, and instead appeals to the reader's common sense about Gnosticism. Bornkamm's claims may be true, but he has not shown them to be true.

[22] Bornkamm, *New Testament Apocrypha*, p. 440.

[23] Bauer's thesis has become an article of faith even though it has drawn extremely cogent criticism on a number of fronts. See for example F. Norris, 'Ignatius, Polycarp and I Clement: Walter Bauer reconsidered,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976), 23–44; C. Roberts, *JTS* ns 16 (1965), 183–5, and *Manuscript, Society and Belief in early Christian Egypt* (London, 1979).

[24] A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden, 1962), esp. pp. 34–7.

[25] Lipsius-Bonnet's text (*Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, ed. R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, 2 vols. in 3 (Leipzig, 1891–1903), II.2) includes *The Hymn*, but Poirier has noted that *The Hymn* is only contained in one manuscript (Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, B35, 124r–125v [=Lipsius-Bonnet's U]), whereas some seventy-five other Greek manuscripts – which are otherwise complete – do not have it. See P.-H. Poirier, *L'hymne de la perle des Actes de Thomas: Introduction, texte-traduction,*

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that this represents a loss of the true spirit of the *Acts*. The major consideration that militates against simply endorsing Bornkamm's view is that we do not actually know enough about the transmission of the text to be able to claim confidently that it is a Christian redaction of a Manichean or Gnostic document.[26] It could just as well be the case that the Manichaeans adapted a Catholic document to their own uses.[27] In any event, the Greek is, on the whole, a painfully accurate translation from the Syriac in that it contains a number of Semiticisms that make for stylistically atrocious Greek.

Rather more interesting by comparison is what happens to the *Acts* in Latin translation. In the first place, there are in fact two Latin translations: the *Passio sancti Thomae apostoli* (*Passio*) and the *De miraculis beati Thomae apostoli* (*Miracula*). We are fortunate in that both translations exist in a good critical edition by Klaus Zelzer.[28] Zelzer has established that the translations date to the mid-fourth century.[29] He has also demonstrated that the translations are rather free in that they omit a substantial amount of material (for example neither of them mentions Thomas's third and fourth miracles); they re-order material (for example both of them defer mention of Karīsh's

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commentaire (Louvain, 1981), p. 177.

[26] This is what Bornkann supposes, for example *New Testament Apocrypha*, p. 433: 'The Syriac text of the Wedding Hymn betrays a thorough catholocizing…'.

[27] In his *Acts of Thomas*, pp. 14–16, Klijn notes that the Greek version, while a translation from the Syriac, reflects an earlier stage of the text than the Syriac that survives. He therefore posits that a number of the differences between the Greek and the Syriac are attributable to a later Syriac redactor making the text agree 'with the theological development in Syriac Christianity at a later stage in which special attention was paid to man's free will and the resurrection of the body' (p. 16).

[28] *Die alten lateinischen Thomasakten*, ed. K. Zelzer, Texte und Untersuchungen 122 (Berlin, 1977).

[29] *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

involvement in Thomas's imprisonment until treating what is, according to the Greek reckoning, Thomas's twelfth miracle); and they periodically add material (for example the *Passio* in particular adds a homily on the Holy Trinity that is not found in the earlier versions).[30] On the whole, both versions are considerably abbreviated: Wright's edition of the Syriac text runs to just over a hundred pages; likewise, Bonnet's (heavily annotated) Greek text; but the *Passio* is only thirty-nine pages long, and the *Miracula* is a mere thirty-two pages.

The *Miracula* is found in a collection now called *Virtutes apostolorum*, which was formerly called Pseudo-Abdias's *Apostolicae historiae*. This collection, compiled in sixth-century Gaul, features apocryphal tales about all twelve apostles – Thomas among them. Because the material compiled in the *Virtutes* often circulated independently of that collection, it is not always easy to determine when any given reference to apocryphal information about the apostles stems from the *Virtutes*.[31] And while it has been argued that the *Virtutes* accounts for some particular details about the apostles Andrew, John and James the Less in several Anglo-Saxon sources, as yet no traces of the *Miracula* have been detected in Anglo-Saxon literature.[32] In this respect the *Passio* is unlike the *Miracula*. In fact, we have evidence for the *Passio*'s circulation in Anglo-Saxon England. So, for our purposes, the *Passio* deserves special attention.

The evidence that the *Passio* circulated in Anglo-Saxon England is quite simply that we find in Aldhelm of Malmesbury's *De uirginitate*

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[30] Zelzer (*ibid.*, pp. xiii-xxii) has conveniently given this information and more in tabular form.

[31] See J. E. Cross, 'Apostles in the Old English Martyrology', *Mediaevalia* 5 (1979), 15–59, at 17.

[32] I am very grateful to Prof. Frederick Biggs, who has made available to me the entry 'Apocrypha' for *SASLC*. This entry contains a thorough presentation of research to date on the *Virtutes*.

prosa a lengthy, direct quotation from it. At *uirg* 24, Aldhelm approvingly cites the following saying from Didymus Thomas: 'Virginitas soror est angelorum et omnium bonorum possessio, uirginitas uictoria libidinum, trophaeum fidei, uictoria de inimicis et uitae aeternae securitas'.[33] The provenance of that quotation has eluded scholars since at least 1884, when R. A. Lipsius acknowledged his inability to find it.[34] It is in fact excerpted from quite early on in the *Passio* (ch. 12).[35] It is satisfying to have Aldhelm's source identified – not least because it provides a sure and relatively early date for the *Passio* in England. Heretofore, evidence for the *Passio* has been largely conjectural. Scholars have inferred that the *Passio* was behind Cynewulf's *Fates of the Apostles* and the entry on Thomas in the Old English *Martyrology*.[36] Rather more secure is the claim that Ælfric knew the *Passio*, who very probably referred to it in his 'Apology' in the *Catholic Homilies*. In that work, Ælfric intriguingly says, 'the *Passion of Thomas* we leave unwritten because it was long ago translated from Latin into English, in verse.'[37] Since we are now in a position to affirm

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[33] 'Virginity is the sister of angels and possession of every good thing; virginity is the victory of desires, trophy of faith, victory over enemies and surety of eternal life.'

[34] R. A. Lipsius, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden*, 2 vols. in 3 (Braunschweig, 1883–7), II.2. Lapidge was also unable to find the source; see M. Lapidge and M. Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Ipswich, 1979), pp. 194–5.

[35] Zelzer, *Thomasakten*, p. 10.

[36] On Cynewulf's *Fates*, see Cross, 'Apostles in the Old English Martyrology', pp. 167–9; on the OE *Martyrology*, see *An Old English Martyrology*, ed. George Herzfeld, EETS os 116 (London, 1900), 220–2 and 240 (note *ad loc*). I owe these references to Prof. Biggs.

[37] Ælfric, *Catholic homilies* II.34: *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, the Second Series*, ed. M. R. Godden, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979), 298: 'Thomas ðrowinge we forlætað unawrittene. for ðan ðe heo wæs gefyrn awend. of ledene on englisc on leoðwison.' I owe this reference to Prof. Biggs.

that the *Passio* was indeed in England a long time before Ælfric, the case for taking him to have referred to our *Passio* is strengthened.

But more can be said about the relevance of the *Passio* as Aldhelm used it. Professor Lapidge has persuasively argued that the recipients of Aldhelm's *uirg* were the nuns of Barking; and he has further suggested that Cuthburh may not have been the only royal woman amongst them who had set aside her marriage to devote herself wholly to the Christian life.[38] We have already had occasion to note that a strong emphasis on celibacy characterises the *Acts of Thomas*, even to the extent that Thomas is eventually martyred for persuading a noble woman to forego sexual relations with her husband. And while most of the aspects of the Syriac *Acts* that might cause the orthodox eyebrow to arch have been removed from the *Passio*, Zelzer has noted with a hint of lamentation that the *Ehelosigkeitslehre* typical of the eastern versions has remained.[39] But of course that teaching is precisely the *Passio*'s claim to inclusion in Aldhelm's work. It is ideally suited to his purposes.

It is this convergence of Aldhelm's promotion of celibacy and the preoccupation of the Syrian *Acts of Thomas* with chastity that I would suggest is of special interest. It should be noted that eminences such as Augustine of Hippo had spoken very dismissively of the *Acts* – precisely because it was so readily used by Manichaeans.[40] But of course their disapproval was not proscriptive

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[38] Lapidge, *Aldhelm*, pp. 51–6.

[39] Zelzer, *Thomasakten*, p. xxiii.

[40] For example Augustine, *De sermone domini in monte* I.xx.65: *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Sermone in Monte Libros Duos*, ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 35 (Turnhout, 1967), 75; *contra Adimantum* 17: *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Utilitate Credendi, De Duabus Animabus, Contra Fortunatum, Contra Epistulam Fundamenti, Contra Faustum*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25 (Prague, 1891), 166; *contra Faustum* XXII.79: *ibid.*, 680–2.

and Aldhelm was certainly at liberty to use the *Passio* in furtherance of Catholic monasticism, by redeploying in a new context precisely those elements of the *Acts* that provoke the disapprobation of heresiologists. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, we read that, in 883, King Alfred sent Sigehelm and Æthelstan to Rome to fulfil his vow of alms and that they continued on to Saints Thomas and Bartholomew.[41] The elliptical reference to SS Thomas and Bartholomew (who was the other apostle associated with Syrian India) suggests the intriguing possibility that the intrepid bishops may have made their way as far as India. Aldhelm's use of the *Passio*, no less than that evocative entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, teaches us that Anglo-Saxons participated in the late ancient world in unexpected ways.

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[41] *ASC*, Peterborough MS (E) *s.a.* 883, ed. M. Swanton (London 1996), p. 79.

Gerald of Wales and the Tradition
of the Wonders of the East

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Gerald of Wales lived from around 1146 to 1223. He was the son of William de Barri, a Cambro-Norman Marcher baron from Pembrokeshire in south-west Wales, and of Angharad, the granddaughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth. He was educated in Paris and went on to have an eventful career as a churchman (as the archdeacon of Brecon in Wales and as a candidate for the see of St Davids), as a member of King Henry II's court, and as a prolific author.[1] His works, of which nineteen survive, include historical and topographical descriptions of Ireland and Wales, theological and hagiographical studies, and several autobiographical works.[2] His first work, published in 1188, was *Topographia hibernica* or 'The Topography of Ireland', a small but comprehensive study of

Ireland.[3] It is divided into three books or *Distinctiones*, of which the first is a description of the land and its wildlife, the second an account of wonders and miracles which occurred there, and the third a study of the Irish people, including a history of the various invasions to which they had been subjected.

In *Topographia hibernica*, Gerald more than once explicitly compared the marvels and prodigies of Ireland with the wonders of the East. In the Preface to the work, addressed to Henry II, he said:

> Just as the countries of the East are remarkable and distinguished for certain prodigies peculiar and native to themselves, so the boundaries of the West are made remarkable by their own wonders of nature.[4]

And again when he introduced the second book:

> For just as the marvels of the East have through the work of certain authors come to the light of public notice, so the marvels of the West which, so far, have remained hidden away and almost unknown, may eventually find in me one to make them known even in these later days.[5]

In making this comparison he associated himself with a tradition which had its roots in Indian mythology and has fascinated audiences even to the present day. I propose to argue that this association was the result of a conscious decision by Gerald to exploit this, and other popular literary traditions of the time, in order to ensure a wide audience for his work.

The Wonders of the East, a collection of tales about monsters and

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[1] There has been a great deal written about Gerald and his career. R. J. Bartlett's *Gerald of Wales 1146–1223* (Oxford, 1982) is a particularly interesting study; B. Roberts, *Gerald of Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1982) is a more straightforward biographical work. See also J. C. Davies, 'Giraldus Cambrensis 1146–1946', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 99 (1946–7), 85–108, 256–80.

[2] The standard edition of Gerald's works is *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and G. F. Warner, 8 vols., Rolls Series 21 (London, 1861–91). For a list of his works, including other published editions, see R. Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland Before 1540*, Publ. of the *Jnl of Med. Latin* 1 (Turnhout, 1997), 134–7.

[3] J. J. O'Meara, 'Giraldus Cambrensis in Topographia Hiberniae: Text of the First Recension', *PRIA* 52C (1948–50), 113–78, and *Gerald of Wales: the History and Topography of Ireland* (Harmondsworth, 1982). O'Meara has not numbered the chapters, so references will be by page-numbers only.

[4] O'Meara, 'Topographia', p. 119, and *Topography*, p. 31.

[5] O'Meara, 'Topographia', pp. 134–5, and *Topography*, p. 57.

strange phenomena in India, had been a popular literary topic for over a thousand years by Gerald's time. The earliest surviving account is that of the Greek Herodotus from the fifth century B.C., which itself was based on now-lost earlier accounts. Following Herodotus were another two Greeks: Ktesias, royal physician to Artaxerxes of Persia, whose work only survives now in a ninth-century abridged version, and Megasthenes, who was sent to India as an ambassador by Seleucus Nector, the heir to Alexander's Asian empire. Alexander's conquests in India in 326 B.C. also spawned several works on the East (most of which are now lost in their original form), and gave rise to a whole genre of mostly apocryphal medieval literature about Alexander and his Eastern experiences.[6] The tradition of the Wonders of the East, thus formed, found its way to the Latin West via the encyclopaedic works of Pliny, Solinus and Isidore, and was used by many authors in various forms from the seventh to the tenth century.[7]

Apart from being incorporated into large encyclopaedias and collections, *The Wonders of the East* also survive in various separate works. One of these was an apocryphal letter of Alexander to Aristotle describing the marvels which Alexander encountered on a military campaign in India.[8] Another, which in its earliest form seems

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[6] R. Wittkower, 'Marvels of the East: a Study in the History of Monsters', *Jnl of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), 159–97, at 159–62. See D. J. A. Ross, *Alexander Historiatus: a Guide to Medieval Illustrated Alexander Literature*, 2nd ed., Athenäums Monografien Altertumswissenschaft 186 (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), for a detailed study of the Alexander-legend.

[7] For example Aethicus of Istria (a seventh-century cosmography), Hrabanus Maurus (*De uniuerso*, c. 844), and other encyclopaedias and cosmographies. The tradition continued to appear in encyclopaedias of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Wittkower, 'Marvels of the East', p. 169).

[8] Ross, *Alexander Historiatus*, pp. 27–30; *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem ad Codicum Fidem Edidit et Commentario Critico Instruxit*, ed. W. W. Boer, Beiträge zur

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to go back to the fourth century A.D., is a supposed letter of one Pharasmenes to the emperor Hadrian, which now survives in several different versions, some with the author called Fermes or Feramen, in others Premo, Perimonis or Parmoenis, including translations into Old English and Old French.[9] In yet another version it is entitled *De monstris et belluis* (*On Wonders and Monsters*).[10]

The popularity of *The Wonders of the East* in England is attested by the survival of three copies of it in English manuscripts, all of a version of the work not found in any other copies, which has dropped the epistolary structure and become more of a simple catalogue.[11] John Block Friedman has remarked that these manuscripts 'testify … to an intense Anglo-Saxon interest in wonders and monsters'.[12] The earliest copy is to be found in the British Library manuscript Cotton Vitellius A. xv – the *Beowulf* manuscript.[13] Indeed

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Klassischen Philologie 50 (Meisenheim am Glan, 1973); A. P. M. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the* Beowulf-*Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. V and Appendix II.

[9] A. Knock, 'Wonders of the East: a Synoptic Edition of the Letter of Pharasmenes and the Old English and Old Picard Translations' (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of London, 1982).

[10] M. Haupt, *Opuscula*, ed. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1875–6), II, 218–52.

[11] M. R. James, *Marvels of the East: a Full Reproduction of the Three Known Copies*, Roxburghe Club Publications 191 (Oxford, 1929) (text at 15–32); *An Eleventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Miscellany: British Library Cotton Tiberius B.V Part I*, ed. P. McGurk, D. N. Dumville, M. R. Godden and A. Knock, EEMF 21 (Copenhagen, 1983), 88–103; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 18–27 (Old English text and translation at pp. 175–203).

[12] J. B. Friedman, 'The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art', in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and V. D. Oggins, Stud. in Med. Culture 20 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1986), 319–41, at 319.

[13] *The Nowell Codex: British Museum Cotton Vitellius A. XV, Second MS*, ed. K. Malone, EEMF 12 (Copenhagen, 1963); E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*

the contents of the *Beowulf* manuscript demonstrate a great interest in monsters and fantastic stories – *The Passion of St Christopher*, about a dog-headed saint, *The Wonders of the East*, the apocryphal *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*, *Liber monstrorum*, and *Beowulf* itself. The copy of *The Wonders of the East* is an Old English translation and is the only work in the manuscript to be illustrated.

The other manuscripts containing *The Wonders of the East* are British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v, part 1,[14] and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 614.[15] Tiberius B. v is a mid-eleventh-century manuscript containing a variety of texts (*Labours of the Month*, a metrical calendar, lunar tables, *computus*, lists of popes, kings and bishops, Ælfric's *De temporibus anni*, Cicero's *Aratea*, two maps, etc.), of which some, including *The Wonders of the East*, are illustrated. The text of *The Wonders of the East* is in both Latin and Old English. Bodley 614 is a twelfth-century manuscript containing, as well as *The Wonders of the East*, a calendar and a treatise on astronomy. These contents are also to be found in Tiberius B. v, and, indeed, it has been argued that Bodley 614 was copied from Tiberius B. v.[16] It contains only a Latin copy of the text.

It is likely that there were once more than these three copies in existence. Andy Orchard has said of the Old English texts in Vitellius

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900–1066, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 2 (London, 1976), no. 52, ill. 185; Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies. The Wonders of the East* is at 98v–106v.

[14] *Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*; Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*, no. 87, ills. 273–6. *The Wonders of the East* is at 78v–87v.

[15] *A Summary Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, 7 vols. in 8 (Oxford, 1922–53; repr. 1980), II.1, 229–30, no. 2144; C. M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066–1190*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 3 (London, 1975), no. 38, ills. 107–11; James, *Marvels of the East. The Wonders of the East* is at 36r–51v.

[16] Knock, in *Anglo-Saxon Illustrated Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, pp. 92–4.

A. xv and Tiberius B. v that 'there are sufficient differences between the texts to show that they do not derive directly from a common ancestor'.[17] Also, the illustrations in Vitellius A. xv are from a different source from those in Tiberius B. v and Bodley 614. For example, in the illustrations of a man with ears like winnowing fans, in Vitellius A. xv the ears are round and stick out at right angles to the head, but in Tiberius B. v and Bodley 614 the ears are long and wound around the man's arms.[18] Clearly they have been taken from different exemplars.[19] Therefore at least one other manuscript, the manuscript from which Vitellius A. xv took its text and illustrations, must have once existed, and there were probably others to feed the Anglo-Saxon appetite for wonders and monsters.

The twelfth-century date of Bodley 614 proves that the Wonders of the East tradition was still popular in post-Conquest times. Indeed, there was a great interest in both marvels and the East in the twelfth century. Interest in the East had been fuelled by the Crusades, which began to be preached in 1095, and which for the first time brought large numbers of Westerners into contact with the Middle East and the non-Christians who lived there. This gave rise to a great deal of new literature on the subject, most notably the *chansons de geste* or French epic poems, which became popular in numerous other countries including Britain. The most famous *chanson de geste* is *La chanson de Roland*,[20] thought to have been written at the time of the

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[17] *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 20.

[18] *The Wonders of the East*, §21: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 196–7; London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv, 104r; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v part 1, 83v.

[19] Wittkower ('The Marvels of the East', p. 173) suggested that these different interpretations of the fan-eared man may go back to ancient Greek times, when different translations were made from Sanskrit.

[20] *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. F. Whitehead, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1946); G. Burgess,

First Crusade. It is ostensibly a history of a campaign of Charlemagne's in Spain in 778, but the events have been recast as a clash between Christians and Muslims. In the description of the Muslims there are several echoes of *The Wonders of the East*, for example one whose brow between his eyes was so broad that 'its measure was a good half foot', which is reminiscent of the large-headed men or headless men with faces in their chests described in *The Wonders of the East*,[21] and the accursed men of Ethiopia who were all black except for their teeth, who also appear in *The Wonders of the East*.[22]

Oriental wonders also turn up in *The Bestiary* (*Bestiarium*), a work which became very popular towards the end of the twelfth century and into the thirteenth.[23] Bestiaries were catalogues of real and fantastic animals with descriptions and allegorical interpretations. They were usually lavishly illustrated. The text of *The Bestiary* was based on a work called *Physiologus*,[24] but it also incorporated some of

The Song of Roland (Harmondsworth, 1990).

[21] *Chanson de Roland*, *laisse* 94, lines 1213–18: *Chanson*, ed. Whitehead, p. 36; Burgess, *Song*, pp. 67–8. Cf. *The Wonders of the East*, §§15, 21: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 192–3, 196–7.

[22] *Chanson de Roland*, *laisse* 143, lines 1913–21: *Chanson*, ed. Whitehead, p. 56; Burgess, *Song*, p. 90. Cf. *The Wonders of the East*, §36: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 202–3.

[23] M. R. James, *The Bestiary: Being a Reproduction in Full of the Manuscript Ii. 4. 26 in the University Library, Cambridge*, Roxburghe Club Publications 190 (Oxford, 1928); T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts: being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (London, 1954; repr. 1984); F. McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, rev. ed., Univ. of North Carolina Stud. in the Romance Langs. and Lits. 33 (Chapel Hill, NC, 1962). The text of 'The Bestiary' was constantly evolving and survives in several different versions; see W. B. Clark, *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouilloy's Aviarium*, Med. and Renaissance Texts and Stud. 80 (Binghampton, NY, 1992), 316 for a list of published editions.

[24] *Physiologus Latinus: Éditions préliminaires versio B*, ed. F. J. Carmody (Paris, 1939);

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the fantastic beasts, for example the griffin and the phoenix, which are found in *The Wonders of the East*.[25] It testifies to a continuing interest in marvels and marvellous beasts in the twelfth century, but with a different attitude from that displayed in the *chansons de geste* and other crusading literature, in which Wonders of the East imagery was adopted to describe the evil, non-Christian enemy. In *The Bestiary* the Wonders were explicitly Christianised by making the beasts allegories for aspects of the Christian life. For example, the lion is said to sleep with its eyes open: 'In this very way, Our Lord also, while sleeping in the body, was buried after being crucified – yet his Godhead was awake.'[26] This is a reflection of an attitude towards the marvellous which was first propounded by Augustine but which was widespread in the twelfth century – that marvels are not contrary to nature as ordained by God but are all part of God's plan. Gerald himself held this attitude, as shown in his *Expugnatio hibernica* when he said:

> The Lord of Nature has … brought many things to pass which run contrary to Nature, so that these may make it absolutely clear and ever more apparent that God has more power than man has knowledge of, and that the power of God stretches far beyond all human knowledge.[27]

Thus he could believe in the wonders he described, because he believed them to be God's work, and could expect his audience to think the same.

I shall now briefly consider some other aspects of twelfth-century literature in order to place *Topographia hibernica* in context, and

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M. J. Curley, *Physiologus* (Austin, TX, 1979).

[25] 'The Wonders of the East', §§34, 35: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 202–3.

[26] White, *Book of Beasts*, p. 8.

[27] *Expugnatio Hibernica: the Conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis*, ed. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin, A New Hist. of Ireland Ancillary Publ. 3 (Dublin, 1978), 6–7.

to demonstrate how Gerald tried to reflect this context in his work. The writing of history was exceptionally popular in the twelfth century, especially the fabulous reconstruction of the far past. The most famous example of this is Geoffrey of Monmouth, who wrote his *Historia regum Britanniae* in the 1130s.[28] Despite the very dubious historical accuracy of this work it went on to become an bestseller in Britain and France, surviving today in over two hundred manuscripts. There were also many other historians writing, with various degrees of reliability, in twelfth-century Britain, for example William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, John of Salisbury, Simeon of Durham and Roger of Howden. Robert Bartlett has said that this interest in history in the early twelfth century was a response to the 'urge to save the shattered past … in the generations after the Norman Conquest'.[29]

Geoffrey's *Historia* also sparked off considerable interest in legends of the past, most famously the Arthur legend, which became extremely popular from the twelfth century onwards. This dovetailed nicely with the rise of French literature and its derivatives in Britain, in the form of the *chansons de geste* but also of romances. The romances told stories of heroic deeds, knightly prowess, mistaken identities and courtly love, in a language (Anglo-Norman, in Britain) which could be understood by (at least some of) the lay people of Britain. Some, for example the *Lai d'Haveloc*, which told of King Haveloc's retaking of his own Danish kingdom and his wife's English kingdom, attempted to construct a legendary past for the country, and these poems presumably reflected the interests of their patrons

and audience.[30]

To sum up: the Wonders of the East tradition had been popular in England since the Anglo-Saxon period and remained so in the twelfth century, helped by the interest in the East prompted by the Crusades and an interest in fantastic beasts demonstrated by *The Bestiary*. There was also an interest in the past, as evidenced by the large amount of twelfth-century historical writing, and the legends and romances which were imported from France and popularised by the use of the vernacular. I shall now consider how aspects of these popular literary forms can be seen in Gerald's *Topographia hibernica*.

Gerald did not, of course, borrow directly from *The Wonders of the East* in *Topographia hibernica*; his work was set in a different, indeed exactly the opposite, context. However, this did not stop him relating phenomena as fantastic as any from the East, and a few of them bear a certain resemblance to their Eastern counterparts. For example, Gerald mentioned a woman who 'had a beard down to her waist … also a crest from her neck down along her spine, like a one-year-old foal'. In *The Wonders of the East* there are bearded women who wear pelts and hunt with tigers and leopards, and others with hair to their ankles, boars' tusks and teeth, tails, white bodies and camel feet.[31] Gerald described a man who 'had all the parts of the human body except the extremities which were those of an ox', and a cow of which 'all the fore parts … were bovine, but the thighs and the tail, hind legs and the feet, were clearly those of a stag'; these bear some similarity to the composite creatures described in *The Wonders of the*

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[28] *The Historia regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth I: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568*, ed. N. Wright (Cambridge, 1985); L. Thorpe, *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1976).
[29] Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 4–5.

[30] *Le Lai d'Haveloc and Gaimar's Haveloc Episode*, ed. A. Bell, Publ. of the Univ. of Manchester 171 (Manchester, 1925), 176–220; J. Weiss, *The Birth of Romance: an Anthology: Four Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Romances* (London, 1992), pp. xxiii–xxix, 141–58, esp. pp. xxiv–v.
[31] O'Meara, 'Topographia', p. 145, and *Topography*, pp. 72–3; *The Wonders of the East*, §§26–7: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 198–201.

East, for example the *lertices* which have donkeys' ears, sheep's wool and birds' feet, and ants as big as dogs with grasshoppers' feet.[32]

There are also examples which are possibly intended to be a contrast to the East. When describing the animals of Ireland, Gerald commented that 'you will find the bodies of all animals, wild-beasts, and birds smaller in their species than anywhere else'.[33] This compares with the descriptions of very large beasts and men in *The Wonders of the East*. Also, Gerald described the land of Ireland as 'fruitful and rich in its fertile soil and plentiful harvests', and discussed the absence of poisonous reptiles. This brought to mind, by contrast, the story in *The Wonders of the East* of a land which is sterile because of the large number of snakes.[34] I would not care to push the point too far, as it is equally likely that Gerald included these features of Ireland simply because he observed them with his own eyes, but I consider it a possibility that he noticed the contrast with the East in these phenomena and deliberately took advantage of it. However, at the end of the first book of *Topographia hibernica* there is an explicit comparison of Ireland with the Orient. Gerald described in some detail how the East abounded in worldly riches like gold, gems, spices and silks, but its very air was poisonous and those who lived there could not expect a long life. In Ireland, however, the air was healthful and dangers such as earthquakes, storms, wild animals and poisons were completely absent. He said:

> The advantages of the West outstrip and outshine those of the East, and nature has given a more indulgent eye to the regions traversed by

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[32] O'Meara, 'Topographia', pp. 145, 146, and *Topography*, pp. 73, 74; *The Wonders of the East*, §§9, 14: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 190–3.

[33] O'Meara, 'Topographia', p. 129, and *Topography*, p. 48.

[34] O'Meara, 'Topographia', pp. 120, 130–1, and *Topography*, pp. 34, 50–2; *The Wonders of the East*, §6: Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, pp. 188–9.

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the west wind than those traversed by the east.[35]

I think that Gerald was deliberately playing both sides of the Wonders of the East tradition of the twelfth century. With his descriptions of animals and of marvels and miracles in Ireland he drew parallels with *The Wonders of the East* and *The Bestiary*. Specifically, he was making the Irish out to be like the peoples of *The Wonders of the East* in the sense that they were 'other' than that which was considered normal in the West.[36] It is thought that the perception of the monstrous races in the Middle Ages was that they counted as human and were therefore capable of salvation by God, despite their obvious 'otherness'.[37] By drawing similarities to the races in *The Wonders of the East* when talking about the Irish, Gerald may have been suggesting a similar status for the Irish. On the other hand, by deliberately contrasting Ireland with the Orient, to Ireland's advantage, he also contrived to appeal to the xenophobic instincts of the audience of the crusading literature, which painted the East as the hell-hot home of the enemies of Christendom.

Gerald's use of *The Bestiary* in *Topographia hibernica* is rather more obvious. In the first book, describing the animals and birds of Ireland, he said that the eagle flies so high that its wings are scorched by the sun, and that it lives so long that it seems to be immortal.[38]

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[35] O'Meara, 'Topographia', p. 134, and *Topography*, p. 56.

[36] I am grateful to Alaric Hall for suggesting this at the Colloquium. See P. Freedman, 'The Medieval Other: the Middle Ages as Other', in *Marvels, Monsters and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. T. S. Jones and D. A. Sprunger, Stud. in Med. Culture 62 (Kalamazoo, MI, 2002), 1–24, esp. 1–12, for a discussion of the perception of 'other' in the Middle Ages.

[37] G. Austin, 'Marvelous Peoples or Marvelous Races? Race and the Anglo-Saxon *Wonders of the East*', in *Marvels, Monsters and Miracles*, ed. Jones and Sprunger, pp. 25–51, esp. pp. 43–51.

[38] O'Meara, 'Topographia', p. 124, and *Topography*, pp. 39–40.

This is an adaptation of the description of the eagle in *The Bestiary*, in which it is said that the eagle renews its youth by flying so high that it singes its wings in a ray of the sun, and then diving down into a fountain.[39] Also, Gerald's story of the crane which stands sentry over the flock and keeps itself awake by holding a stone in its foot, which, if the crane falls asleep and drops it, makes a noise which wakes the bird up, is also taken directly from *The Bestiary*.[40] Even some of the pictures in the manuscripts of *Topographia hibernica*, of the crane and the stork, are taken from Bestiary illustrations.[41]

In the third book of *Topographia hibernica*, the various invasions of Ireland from that of Cesara, the granddaughter of Noah, are described.[42] Though perhaps less exuberant in its detail, this account (derived from Irish vernacular pseudo-history) is of the same kind as Geoffrey of Monmouth's description of the origins of Britain and the legendary accounts in some of the twelfth-century romances. Gerald may have been attempting to create a similar history for Ireland as Geoffrey had for Wales and Brittany. It is unlikely that he did this from patriotic motives, as he was not Irish (as Geoffrey was Welsh) – his contacts with Ireland were all with its conquerors (many of whom were his relations), and he was writing for an Anglo-

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[39] White, *Book of Beasts*, p. 105.

[40] O'Meara, 'Topographia', pp. 124–5, and *Topography*, pp. 40–1; White, *Book of Beasts*, pp. 110–11.

[41] M. P. Brown, 'Marvels of the West: Giraldus Cambrensis and the Role of the Author in the Development of Marginal Illustration', *Eng. Manuscript Stud. 1100–1700* 10 (2002), 34–59, at 51; B. Yapp, *Birds in Medieval Manuscripts* (London, 1981), pp. 16–18, pls. 19, 20. For the crane, see for example Cambridge, University Library, Kk. 4. 25, 80r. The stork is obviously taken from a Bestiary-illustration and not from Gerald's own observations, as it is drawn with a snake in its mouth and Gerald specifically stated that there were no snakes in Ireland!

[42] O'Meara, 'Topographia', pp. 156–62, and *Topography*, pp. 92–100.

Norman audience. Therefore it would seem rather that he was trying to construct an account which would appeal to an audience who enjoyed reading about the far past in histories and romances.

There may also be evidence in the manuscripts of *Topographia hibernica* of the influence on Gerald of the Wonders of the East tradition, and of his desire to appeal to the audience of this tradition. There is an unusually large number of manuscripts of *Topographia hibernica* datable within Gerald's lifetime – fourteen of a total of forty-six – and some of these bear evidence which suggests that they were written under Gerald's supervision. Two of these, London, British Library, Royal 13. B. viii and Dublin, National Library of Ireland, 700 have a series of marginal illustrations.[43] Michelle Brown has recently argued that these illustrations originated from Gerald himself;[44] and if this is the case, I think it likely that Gerald had in mind the illustrations to *The Wonders of the East* and *The Bestiary* when he had *Topographia hibernica* illustrated. The illustrations to *Topographia hibernica* are marginal rather than integrated into the text as in those works, but this is probably because manuscripts of *Topographia hibernica* were not *de luxe* items as manuscripts of *The Bestiary* were, and space could not be spared. Illustration was an integral part of the Wonders of the East tradition (as demonstrated by Vitellius A. xv, in which only *The Wonders of the East* was illustrated) and Gerald sought to create a similar illustration-cycle for his work. Audiences who were used to looking at illustrated manuscripts of *The Wonders of the East* and *The Bestiary* would see something familiar – and illustrations would also be a visual aid to those less able to read the text.

In conclusion: Gerald used and combined the traditions of the

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[43] N. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts 1190–1285*, 2 vols., A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles 4 (London, 1982, 1988), I, no. 59, ills. 192–8.

[44] Brown, 'Marvels of the West', esp. p. 48.

types of literature which were popular at the end of the twelfth century – *The Wonders of the East*, *The Bestiary*, crusading literature, history and romantic legends – to create a work which would appeal to a wide audience. With illustrations, he even made the manuscripts of his work resemble those of popular literature. *Topographia hibernica* was his first work, written when he was still optimistic that he would secure patronage and advancement in his career; to this end, he wrote 'for the benefit of laymen and of princes who are but little skilled in reading',[45] the very people who could help him advance, despite his claims that he was writing for the benefit of posterity.[46] (It is notable that later in his life, when it became obvious to him that his career would advance no further, he turned to more earnest – and often bitter – theological and autobiographical accounts.) In adapting exotic tales of foreign places to a new context – combining the West and the East – he created an entirely new piece of literature.

Gerald may have been consoled to learn that, in the time since his death, *Topographia hibernica* has indeed become popular literature. In an interesting twist, extracts from *Topographia hibernica* were included in some thirteenth-century *Bestiaries*. *Topographia hibernica* itself survives, wholly or partly, in nearly fifty manuscripts (including a fourteenth-century translation into French[47] and a sixteenth-century one into English),[48] some of which also include Wonders of the East material (namely Jacques de Vitry's *Historia orientalis*,[49] Solinus's *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*[50] and various works on Alexander),[51]

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[45] *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. Scott and Martin, p. 3.

[46] O'Meara, 'Topographia', p. 119, and *Topography*, p. 32.

[47] London, British Library, Add. 17920.

[48] London, British Library, Harley 551.

[49] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 66A; London, British Library, Add. 19513 and Royal 14. C. xiii.

[50] Cambridge, University Library, Mm. 2. 18 and Leiden, Universiteits-

maintaining the connection of *Topographia hibernica* with the tradition of *The Wonders of the East*. In fact it may be considered to have achieved one of the pinnacles of modern popularity when it became a Penguin Classic, available for £6.99 from all good bookshops. This is a testimony to the enduring popularity of the Wonders of the East (and West) even today.

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bibliotheek, B. P. L. 13.

[51] Cambridge, St. Catharine's College, 3, London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra D. v and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, latin 4126.

King Alfred's Translations: Authorial
Integrity and the Integrity of Authority

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On 13 March of this year, Professor Malcolm Godden of Oxford delivered the H. M. Chadwick lecture to the Cambridge community. He titled his paper 'The Translations of King Alfred and his Circle, and the Misappropriation of the Past'.[1] Professor Godden's lecture was the inspiration for this paper. His fundamental premise was that Alfred did not indicate to his Anglo-Saxon audience when he made changes to the meaning of his Latin texts; furthermore, Alfred occasionally and intentionally presented his changes and additions as though they were written by the Latin author. In short, Alfred was inserting his ideas into the text and giving them legitimacy by making his audience think that they were the words and ideas of the original author.

Professor Godden gave several examples of Alfred changing the meaning of the texts he was translating, or adding to the texts. I will not repeat them here. I will say that his observations were accurate and have been noted by generations of scholars. I will also say that Alfred's textual changes have provided an important window through which historians have been able to see the thought processes of the man Alfred.

Two interesting questions arose in my mind immediately after Professor Godden finished his lecture – questions about Alfred tampering with his texts. In fact, Professor Godden posed the first question at the end of his lecture. This question is: were Alfred and his circle acting out of ignorance (did they understand that they were changing the philosophical grounding of the texts), or were they deliberately changing the meaning of the texts (were they acting cynically or manipulatively), or were they playing with the texts to reveal ambiguities of textual and authorial authority (were they deconstructing the texts like modern day English professors)? Simply put, what was Alfred's intent? The second question that came to my mind – again revolving around Alfred's tampering with the texts without indicating his actions to his audience – is this: what did Alfred think about authorial and editorial authority? In short, in Alfred's mind, what gave him the right to change these texts?

Regarding the first question of intent – the question of whether Alfred was too ignorant to know that he was changing his texts, or so cynical that he intentionally made it seem that the Latin authors had written his (Alfred's) insertions, or so intelligent that he was playing with the concepts of authorship and integrity – I think that Alfred himself supplies the answer to this question. In his preface to his law code, Alfred wrote:

> Ic ða Ælfred cyning þæs togæder gegaderod, 7 awritan het, monega ðara ðe ure foregengan heoldon, ða þe me licodon; 7 ða ðe me ne licodon ic awearp, mid minra witena geþeahte, 7 on oþre wisan bebead to heoldáne; forþam ic ne durst gedÿrstlæcan þæra minra awuht feala on gewrita settan, forþan me wæs unwæs uncuþ hwæt þær þæm lician wolde ðe æfter us wæren; Ac þa þe ic gemette ahwær, oþþe on Ines dæge, mines mæges, oþþe on Offa mÿrcna cÿninges, oþþe on Æþelbÿrhtes, þe ærest fulwiht underfeng on angelcÿnne, ða þe me rihtost þuhton, ic þa heron gegaderod, 7 þa oþre forlæte. Ic ða Ælfred, westeaxna cÿning, eallum minum witum þær geeowde, 7 hio þa

[1] M. Godden, *The Translations of King Alfred and his Circle, and the Misappropriation of the Past*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 14 (forthcoming).

cwæþon, þæt him þæt licode eallum to healdenne.[2]

Then I, King Alfred, gathered these (laws) together, and ordered written (down) many of those (laws) that our forebears observed, those that pleased me; and those that did not please me I rejected, with the advice of my councilors, and instructed (them) to be observed in another way. For I dared not presume to set in writing many at all of mine, because it was unknown to me what would please them that came after us. But those that I ever judged, either from Ine's day, my kinsman, or from Offa's, king of the Mercians, or from Æthelberht's, the first who undertook baptism in England – these I have gathered and the others rejected. Then I, Alfred, king of the West Saxons, showed these to all my councilors, and they then said that they were pleased to observe these (laws).[3]

Alfred stated that he took the laws of his predecessors, kept most of them, but changed a few, threw out a few, and added a few new ones of his own. He did this with the advice and knowledge of his councillors. This is precisely what he did with his translations as well. He kept most of the texts intact, but changed some passages, threw out some passages, and added a few passages of his own. Certainly he was doing this by the later phase of his translation efforts.[4] The

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[2] Transcription of William Lambarde, *Archaionomia* (London, 1568); 25v–26v taken from R. Grant, *Laurence Nowell, William Lambarde, and the Laws of the Anglo-Saxons*, Costerus New Ser. 108, ed. C. Barfoot, H. Bertens, T. D'haen and E. Kooper (Amsterdam, 1996), 105–9.

[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[4] Alfred's first translation is considered to be the *Pastoral Care*, which shows the least variation from the Latin original. The sequence of Alfred's translations is discussed in D. Whitelock, 'The Prose of Alfred's Reign', in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 67–103 (repr. in her *From Bede to Alfred: Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Literature and History* (London, 1980), VI). Robert Stanton of Boston College has argued that a culture of loose translation existed in Anglo-Saxon England, and that Alfred was a product of this culture. However, the changes Alfred made in his translations are so frequently at odds with the Latin original, or are such new

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introduction to his law code is not the only place where Alfred stated what he was doing, although it may be the most direct statement of action.

In his preface to the *Soliloquies* (Alfred's most profound re-writing of the Latin original, incidentally), Alfred spoke metaphorically of building his own philosophical house based upon the wisdom contained in the philosophies of the Church Fathers. He wrote:

> Gaderode me þonne kigclas and stuþansceaftas … bohtimbru and bolttimbru, and, to ælcum þara weorca þe ic wyrcan cuðe, þa wlitegostan treowo be þam dele ðe ic aberan meihte. Ne com ic naþer mid anre byrðene ham þe me ne lyste ealne þane wude ham brengan, gif ic hyne ealne aberan meihte. On ælcum treowo ic geseah hwæthwugu þæs þe ic æt ham beþorfte. Forþam ic lære ælcne ðara þe maga si and wæn hæbbe, þæt he menige to þam ilcan wudu þar ic ðas stuðansceaftas cearf, fetige hym þar ma, and gefeðrige hys wænas mid fegrum gerdum, þat he mage windan manigne smicerne wah, and manig ænlic hus settan, and fegerne tun timbrian, and þær murge and softe mid mæge on eardian ægðer ge wintras ge sumeras, swa swa ic nu ne gyt ne dyde.

> I then gathered for myself staves and props … and crossbars and beams, and for each of the structures which I knew how to build, the finest timbers I could carry. I never came away with a single load without wishing to bring home the whole of the forest, if I could have carried it all – in every tree I saw something for which I had a need at home. Accordingly I would advise everyone who is strongest and has many wagons to direct his steps to that same forest where I cut these

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philosophical additions, that I cannot explain Alfred's actions by culture alone. Alfred was doing something more drastic than loosely translating into Old English, but I do not agree with Stanton that Alfred was intentionally creating a new, vernacular literary tradition. I would argue that Alfred was trying to create a culture of wisdom, and a by-product of this effort was an enhancement of the vernacular literary tradition. For Stanton's ideas concerning Alfred's translation programme, see his *The Culture of Translation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 55–100.

props, and to fetch more for himself and to load his wagons with well-cut staves, so that he may weave many elegant walls and put up many splendid houses and so build a fine homestead, and there may live pleasantly and in tranquillity both in summer and winter – as I have not yet done.[5]

In this famous metaphor Alfred spoke of building his own house of wisdom by reading the wisdom of previous philosophers. Alfred said that he took from each philosopher something that he could use in furthering his own wisdom. This is similar to Alfred's collecting the laws of his predecessors and keeping those which he could use for his own law code. He looked to the past for material he could work with today. In building his own wisdom, he borrowed bits freely from the various philosophers he had encountered. Alfred directed others to follow his example, and directed them to the philosophers he had read, where he had found useful 'props'. Alfred concluded the passage by stating that his house of wisdom was not yet finished – he had more philosophizing to do.

Before pressing ahead, the issue of 'usefulness' should be briefly addressed. Usefulness and utility were important to Alfred. In the passage just quoted, Alfred made the point that the forest of philosophers is there to be *used*, to help people better their own lives. Later on in his preface to the *Soliloquies*, Alfred prayed:

> Se ðe ægðer gescop and ægðeres wilt, forgife me þæt me to ægðrum onhagige: ge her nytwyrde to beonne, ge huru þider to cumane.[6]

> May he who created both [the temporary earth and the eternal heaven] and rules over both grant that I be fit for both: both to be *useful* here and to arrive there. (italics mine)

Alfred prayed that he would be useful (*nytwyrde*) here on earth because

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[5] Quote and translation from Malcolm Godden's Chadwick lecture handout.

[6] *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies*, ed. T. A. Carnicelli (Cambridge, MA, 1989), p. 48.

he believed utility was a virtue. Indeed, throughout the *Soliloquies* Alfred either contradicted or explicated Augustine in such a way that it is clear that Alfred valued utility highly. I cite the following example to illustrate this point.

In Book I of the *Soliloquies*, Reason asked Alfred's Augustine why he loved his friends. Alfred's Augustine answered:

> Đa cwæð ic: Ic hi lufige for freondscype and for geferædenne, and þa þeah ofer æalle oðre, þe me mæstne fultum doð to ongyttanne and to witanne gesceadwisnesse and wisdom, æalra mæst be gode and beo urum saulum. Forðam ic wot þæt ic mæg æð myd heora fultume æfter spurian þorme ic butan mæge.

> Đa cwæð heo: hu þonne gyf hi nellað spurian efter þam þe þu spurast?

> Đa cwæð ic: Ic hi wille læran það hi wyllan.

> Đa cwæð heo: Ac hu þonne gyf þu ne meaht, and hi beoð swa recelease það hi lufiað oðer þincg ma þonne þæt þæt þu lufast and cwæðað þæt hi ne magon oððe nellað?

> Đa cwæð ic: Ic hi wylle þeah habban; hi beoð me on sumum ðingum nytte, and ic eac heom.[7]

> Augustine: I love them for friendship and for companionship, and above all others I love those who most help me to understand and to know reason and wisdom, most of all about God and about our souls; for I know that I can more easily seek after Him with their help than I can without.

> Reason: How then if they do not wish to inquire after the One whom you seek?

> A: I shall teach them so that they will.

> R: But what then if you cannot, and if they are so foolish as to love other things more than that which you love, and say that they can not or will not?

> A: I, nevertheless, will have them: they will be *helpful* to me in some

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[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 73–5.

things and I likewise to them.[8] (italics mine)

Here, Alfred contradicted his Latin original. Augustine said that he would reject those friends that interfered with his pursuit of wisdom,[9]

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[8] H. L. Hargrove, *King Alfred's Old English Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies, Turned into Modern English*, Yale Stud. in Eng. 22 (New York, 1904), 25. I have updated Hargrove's language.

[9] Augustine wrote:

> Reason: ...Sed quaero abs te, cur eos homines, quos diligis, vel vivere vel tecum vivere cupias?
>
> Augustine: Ut animas nostras et deum simul concorditer inquiramus. Ita enim facile, cui priori contingit inventio, ceteros eo sine labore perducit.
>
> R: Quid, si nolunt haec illi quaerere?
>
> A: Persuadebo ut velint.
>
> R: Quid, si non possis, vel quod se invenisse iam vel quod ista non posse inveniri arbitrantur vel quod aliarum rerum curis et desiderio praepediuntur?
>
> A: Habebo eos, et ipsi me, sicut possumus.
>
> R: Quid? si te ab inquirendo etiam impediat eorum praesentia, nonne laborabis atque optabis, si aliter esse non possunt, non tecum esse potius quam sic esse?
>
> A: Fateor, ita est ut dicis.

> Reason: ...But let me ask you this: why do you want those people whom you love either to live at all or to live with you?
>
> Augustine: So that we may together, with one mind, seek to know our souls and God. For in that anyone who is the first to discover something can easily lead the others to that same point.
>
> R: But suppose they don't want to search for these things?
>
> A: I shall persuade them so that they will want to.
>
> R: But what happens if you are not able to do that? They might, for instance, think that they have already found them, or, on the other hand, think that these things cannot be found, or, again, they might be held back from enquiry by concern or even longing for other things.

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but Alfred's Augustine stated that he would keep his friends around him even if they were not helpful in his pursuit of wisdom. The reason he would keep them was that they might be helpful to him in some other enterprise, and he helpful to them. This is Alfred valuing utility in his own words in the *Soliloquies*. We must always remember that utility was extremely important to Alfred. It was fundamental to his actions.

At this point I feel confident that we are closer to answering the first question of Alfred's intent. Alfred, it seems, had a penchant for emending texts to suit his specific needs – to be useful to him and his readers. He knew that he was tampering with his texts. He was not, therefore, completely blind to what he was doing; he was not acting in complete ignorance. Furthermore, I suspect that toying with the concepts of authorship and textual integrity would have been perceived by Alfred as a waste of time – it served no useful purpose. I can think of no statement made by Alfred or his circle of advisors that may be construed as an indication that Alfred was manipulating his texts for the purpose of challenging conceptions of authorship and textual integrity. Conversely, I can think of several statements of intent by Alfred and his circle that indicate Alfred was spreading wisdom and Christian righteousness (as he perceived it) to his

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> A: I will teach them and they will teach me, as best we can.
>
> R: But suppose their presence even holds you back from enquiry: will you not be bothered by this and wish that, if they cannot be otherwise, it would be better that they weren't with you at all than be like this?
>
> A: I agree: that would be right.

Saint Augustine: Soliloquies and Immortality of the Soul, ed. and trans. G. Watson (Warminster, 1990), pp. 50–5. It is clear that Alfred directly contradicted Augustine in this passage. Alfred consistently re-valued worldly goods that his Latin authors had devalued. In each case, Alfred stated that the worldly goods possessed utility.

people.[10] Therefore, I conclude, Alfred was manipulating his texts intentionally.

To address the second question – what gave Alfred the right to change these texts, where he got the authority – we must delve into the king's belief system. A discussion of this alone would require far more time than we have now, so I will merely touch upon the fundamental beliefs that shed light on our particular question.

Starting at the very top, Alfred believed in a Christian God who was active in the affairs of men. For example, God sent the Vikings as a punishment for the sins of the Anglo-Saxons.[11] Alfred believed that God had a divine plan in which all creatures had a role, regardless of rank. Alfred believed that God utilized his creatures, both angelic and mortal, to implement and fulfil his plan. For example, God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he could defeat him and show the Egyptians that God was supreme.[12] Alfred believed that all creatures

were God's tools. He believed that heaven had a definite hierarchy: God was the king, beneath him were the nine orders of angels, the apostles, prophets, saints and, at the bottom, the saved, ordinary souls. I think that all medieval people shared this basic model of the divine world. Alfred alluded to this hierarchy several times in both his *Consolation of Philosophy* and his *Soliloquies*. Alfred believed that the earthly hierarchy mirrored the divine hierarchy in structure and function.[13] The counterpart to the heavenly king was earthly kings – this would be Alfred, Charlemagne etc. Beneath the king was the witan – the elite made up of ealdormen, bishops, close familiars – and beneath these were the thegns, freemen and the unfree. All had a role. Alfred was the first that we know of to write of the tripartite division of labour. He wrote:

> [...buton tola ic wilnode þeah 7 andweorces to þa weorce þe me beboden was to wyrcanne; þæt was þæt ic unfracodlice 7 gerisenlice mihte steoran 7 reccan þone] anwald þe me be[fæst wæs. Hwæt, þu] wast þæt nan [mon ne mæg] nænne cræft cyðan [ne nænne an]weald reccan ne stio[ran butu] tolu 7 andweorce. [Þæt bið ælces] cræftes andweorc [þæt mon] þone cræft buton wyrcan [ne mæg. Þæt] bið þonne cyninges [andweorc 7] his tol mid to ricsianne, þæt he hæbbe his lond fullmonnad; he sceal habban gebedmen 7 fyrdmen 7 weorcmen. Hwæt, þu wast þætte butan þissan tolan nan cyning his cræft ne mæg cyðan. Þæt is eac his ondweorc, þæt he habban sceal to ðæm tolu þa þrim geferscipu biwiste. Þæt is þon heora bewist: land to bugianne, 7 gifta, 7 wæpnu, 7 mete, 7 ealo, 7 claþas, 7 gehwæt þæs ðe þa þre geferscipas behofiað. Ne mæg he butan þisu þas tol gehealdan, ne

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[10] Alfred's prefaces to the *Pastoral Care*, the *Soliloquies*, and to Wærferth's translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* are but three obvious examples of Alfred stating his intent to spread Christian wisdom.

[11] It is uncontroversial to say that medieval people believed God sent afflictions to punish sinful peoples. Ælfric, writing in 1014, stated in his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* that the Vikings were the instrument of God's wrath, come to punish the sinful English. Alcuin, in one of his letters (Dümmler no. 17), explained the sack of Lindisfarne in terms of divine punishment upon the Anglo-Saxons for their sins. Gildas wrote in his *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* that the Anglo-Saxon 'invasion' was God's punishment for the sins of his wayward Britons. I suggest that the idea of invaders as a form of divine punishment was also current in Alfred's day. Of course, the idea of God punishing a sinful nation with invasion did not originate with Gildas. Augustine wrote his *De civitate Dei* as a response to those pagan Romans who explained the sack of Rome in 410 as punishment sent by the traditional Roman gods for their being supplanted by the Christian God. There are also several biblical precedents of the Hebrew God punishing his wayward chosen people with invasion and captivity.

[12] Exodus XIV.4: '...et indurabo cor eius ac persequetur vos et glorificabor in

Pharao et in omni exercitu eius scientque Aegyptii quia ego sum Dominus feceruntque ita'. *The Vulgate Bible*, The Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service, Univ. of Sydney Library (http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/vulgate), 1 July 2003.

[13] I have examined Alfred's belief system and his models of human and divine hierarchies in an earlier work; see: R. Smythe, 'King Alfred's Theory of Friendship' (unpubl. M.A. dissertation, Southern Methodist Univ., 2002).

buton þisu tolu nan þara þinga wyrcan þe him beboden is to wyrcenne.[14]

…but I desired instruments and materials to carry out the work I was set to do, which was that I should virtuously and fittingly administer the authority committed to me. Now no man, as you know, can get full play for his natural gifts, nor conduct and administer government, unless he has fit tools, and the raw material to work upon. By material I mean that which is necessary to the exercise of natural powers; thus a king's raw material and instruments of rule are a well-peopled land, and he must have men of prayer, men of war, and men of work. As you know, without these tools no king may display his special talent. Further, for his materials he must have means of support for the three classes spoken of above, which are his instruments; and these means are land to dwell in, gifts, weapons, meat, ale, clothing, and whatever else the three classes need. Without these means he cannot keep his tools in order, and without these tools he cannot perform any of the tasks entrusted to him.[15]

Alfred said that God entrusted to him the performance of certain tasks – tasks central to the divine plan. God gave him tools in the form of people, land and things. It was up to Alfred to fulfil his role in the plan, and since Alfred was a king at the top of the earthly hierarchy, he perceived that his central role was getting his people to fulfil their roles in the divine plan. This was a very big charge for Alfred, and one which he took seriously. In fact, Alfred came up with his own plan in order to accomplish his part in the divine plan. He would teach his people to be wise, which meant education. Education meant books. Alfred wrote in his Preface to Gregory's *Pastoral Care*:

Forðy me ðyncð betre … ðæt we eac sumæ bec, ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne, ðæt we ða on ðæt geðiode wenden

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[14] *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius' 'De Consolatione Philosophiae'*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), p. 40.

[15] W. J. Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Version of the Consolations of Boethius, Done into Modern English* (Oxford, 1900), p. 41. I have updated Sedgefield's language.

ðe we ealle geenawan mægen, & ge don swæ we swiðe eaðe magon … ðæt[te] eall sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen, sien to leornunga oðfæste…[16]

Therefore it seems better to me … that we should turn into the language that we can all understand certain books which are most necessary for all men to know, and accomplish this … so that all free-born young men now in England who have the means to apply themselves to it, may be set to learning…[17]

Alfred's biographer Asser mentioned in chapter 75 of his *Vita Ælfredi* that Alfred's youngest son was educated in both Latin and English:

Æthelweard, omnibus iunior, ludis literariae disciplinae … cum omnibus pene totius regionis nobilibus infantibus et etiam multis ignobilibus, sub diligenti magistrorum cura traditus est. In qua schola utriusque linguae libri, Latinae scilicet et Saxonicae, assidue legebantur, scriptioni quoque vacabant …[18]

Æthelweard, the youngest (son) of all was given over to training in reading and writing … under the attentive care of teachers, in company with all the nobly born children of virtually the entire area, and a good many of lesser birth as well. In this school books in both languages – that is to say, in Latin and English – were carefully read; they also devoted themselves to writing…[19]

I wish to make two points here. The first is that Alfred believed that it was his responsibility to make good use of the tools God had entrusted to him. These tools were primarily people, but also included

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[16] *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. H. Sweet, 2 vols., EETS os 45, 50 (London, 1871–2), I, 7.

[17] S. D. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's 'Life of King Alfred' and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), p. 126.

[18] Asser, *De rebus gestis Ælfredi*, ch. 75: *Asser's Life of King Alfred; Together with the Annals of St Neots Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), p. 58.

[19] Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, p. 90.

things. The second point is that Alfred perceived that his tools were not prepared to accomplish the tasks before them (wisdom was lacking in his people). Therefore Alfred actively engaged with the problem – he created schools and translated books for his people so that they could become educated and useful. Alfred responded pragmatically.

Thus far I have addressed Alfred's belief in the divine order and its associated responsibilities and authority in a rather general way. I think that the most direct statement of Alfred's authority can be found in the prologue to his law code, in the section generally referred to as *The Biblical Prologue*.

Few would disagree that *The Biblical Prologue* to Alfred's law code is one of the least studied parts of the Alfredian corpus. I suspect it has received so little attention for a couple of reasons. Firstly, *The Biblical Prologue* is a boiling down of the tradition of biblical lawgivers and law giving. It paraphrases large chunks of Mosaic law. In short, *The Biblical Prologue* is nothing new and a better version of Mosaic laws can be found in the Old Testament. Secondly, the popular and modern editions of the law code omit *The Biblical Prologue* altogether. Most editions begin with Alfred's statement of intent which I quoted at the beginning of this paper (where Alfred kept most of the laws, but threw out a few, changed a few, and added a few). This statement of intent occurs at the end of *The Biblical Prologue* and right before the laws themselves. Hence the full *Biblical Prologue* is neglected.

Fortunately, the full text of *The Biblical Prologue* is now in print. It was included in *Laurence Nowell, William Lambarde, and the Laws of the Anglo-Saxons*, edited by Raymond Grant, published in 1996.[20] In 1994, Michael Treschow published an article in *Florilegium* titled 'The

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[20] Grant, *Laurence Nowell*, pp. 94–137.

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Prologue to Alfred's law code: Instruction in the Spirit of Mercy',[21] and in 1999 Patrick Wormald addressed *The Biblical Prologue* in the first volume of his *Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*.[22] These works discuss *The Biblical Prologue* and put it in its context. Furthermore, they help us appreciate what Alfred was thinking. Fundamentally, Alfred, as a Christian king, was following in the tradition of biblical and Christian law-givers. Alfred believed that he had the right and obligation to make, modify and implement useful laws. He was situated in the philosophical tradition of Western medieval Christianity, of a particularly Carolingian bent. Patrick Wormald wrote:

> It is evident that Hincmar [the archbishop of Rheims] and Alfred had the same conception of the structure of human legal history. Both saw Mosaic law as basic. For both, Christ's Advent and the Holy Spirit's descent on the Apostles and their successors preserved the essential continuity of God's legal revelation, by modifying and complementing its details. The role of written royal law, asserted by Hincmar was put into effect by Alfred. Alfred's code demonstrably met the archbishop's criterion that man's law should so far as possible resemble God's.[23]

Professor Wormald said that Alfred saw Mosaic law as the basic building block for legal codes. Indeed, Mosaic law was so fundamental to Alfred's code that it comprised one-fifth of his code;[24] this fifth is more commonly called *The Biblical Prologue*. By beginning with Mosaic law, Alfred created the context for his laws. After Mosaic law came Christ and the fulfilment of the law. This meant that Mosaic law was not the final word in legal codes. It was

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[21] M. Treschow, 'The Prologue to Alfred's Law Code: Instruction in the Spirit of Mercy', *Florilegium* 13 (1994), 79–110.

[22] P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century I: Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 416–29.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 425.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 265, 418.

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just the beginning. Christ and his apostles modified the law; the rightful heirs of Christ and his apostles – such as anointed Christian kings – could and should modify and supplement the law to suit the particular needs of their peoples. Divine law (that is, God's law in heaven) was immutable and eternal. The law God gave to Moses was correct for the Hebrew people living in that age of the world. When Christ came, a new age was ushered in, and the law of Moses, being fulfilled, was in need of updating. As Christianity spread beyond the Hebrew people to other peoples, the law had to be recast and supplemented to suit the needs of those peoples.[25] In this context, Alfred had the divine right to tamper with biblically-based written laws so that they suited the needs of his people. The law had to be useful to Alfred's people.

To summarize this point about the law: God's law was eternal and unchanging. Man's additions to God's law were temporary and mutable, though worthy of respect since they were formed in the tradition of Biblical law making. Thus Alfred could modify and supplement the law, but he certainly did not jettison the codes he inherited and start all over. Rather, he applied his wisdom to them and made them more useful and relevant to his people.

Finally, extrapolating from this point about the law, wisdom could be divided into eternal wisdom and man's wisdom, just as the law could be divided into eternal law and man's law. Eternal wisdom was God's wisdom, and was immutable, perfect, complete.[26] Man's wisdom was imperfect, changing, incomplete. The philosophies of men were useful only so far as they helped men perceive and apply the eternal wisdom of God. Therefore, the philosophies of men were open to emendation by other wise men so that these philosophies could be made more helpful in discerning divine truth. Alfred believed that this was his task, and who was better placed than he for it? After all, Alfred stood firmly in the line of Biblical law-givers. Alfred had been anointed lawful king in both papal and Anglo-Saxon coronation rituals.[27] Alfred had steeped himself in the wisdom of the Church Fathers and the bible itself. Alfred was required by God in his divine plan to bring his people closer to God. Alfred had both the right and the authority to change the Latin texts he was translating so that they would be more useful to himself and to his people. Alfred had the authority from God. What gave him the integrity was his own pursuit of knowledge, so that he could discern wisdom, and apply his wisdom to justice and the uplifting of his people. Had Alfred made changes to the law and his Latin texts without first having acquired wisdom, then his changes, though possessing authority, would have lacked integrity.

The title of this paper is 'King Alfred's Translations: authorial integrity and the integrity of authority'. I hope that I have demonstrated that the concept of authorial integrity (in this case the integrity of the original Latin works) was not absolute. Just as the law was open to emendation and updating, so too were other works such

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[25] For a fuller discussion of the stages of legal development, see *ibid.*, pp. 420–8.

[26] *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius*, ed. Sedgefield, pp. 147–9. In his ch. 42, Alfred discussed things eternal and the eternal nature of God, juxtaposed against man's limited abilities and understanding.

[27] Whether Alfred realized that he had received a ceremonial title instead of a full kingship when Pope Leo IV anointed him at the age of five (see Asser ch. 8) is to miss the central idea of the ritual. From Alfred's perspective, the important thing was that he had been anointed by the pope in a regal ceremony that possessed some of the same ritual elements of his West Saxon royal coronation. Having been anointed by both the pope and the West Saxon church (and presumably acclaimed by the West Saxon people), Alfred was imbued with righteous, divinely-bestowed power and therefore had more right than any other person in England to alter the texts he encountered.

as philosophical tracts open to emendation. Utility required that these texts be updated in order that they might be more relevant to Alfred and his audience. Alfred was not being covertly cynical when he altered his texts, he was being overtly practical in the pursuit of divine wisdom; he wasn't doing something bad, he was doing something good – he was spoon-feeding wisdom to his people so that they could perform their functions in the divine plan. Alfred got the authority to alter his texts ultimately from God. God placed Alfred at the top of the earthly hierarchy. This privileged position entailed a great deal of responsibility. Alfred was an anointed Christian king, which legitimised and confirmed his authority. This placed him squarely in the mainstream of Christian law-givers, where making informed and wise changes to the law was perfectly acceptable. In this vein, and with the purpose of making the philosophies of Boethius and Augustine in particular useful to his people, Alfred made informed changes. Alfred had the authority of Christian kingship backing him up, but it was his pursuit of wisdom that gave integrity to his authority.

In all honesty, I have only partially answered the first question 'did Alfred know that he was changing the philosophical underpinnings of his texts?'. He knew that he was changing the texts themselves. He knew that occasionally he was contradicting what the Latin authors had written – because he did not agree with the authors. But I cannot say with complete confidence that Alfred understood fully the ramifications of the changes he made. As to the second question – what gave Alfred the authority to change his texts – this question I hope I have answered more fully.

Eastern Asceticism versus Western Monasticism: a Conflict of Ideals in the Old English Translations of the Works of Sulpicius Severus?

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The purpose of this paper is threefold. Firstly, it is my intention to briefly survey the history of eremitic-asceticism and its contemporary partner, coenobitism, highlighting some of the differences in emphasis between the two. This will be followed by a short section on the spread of eastern religious ideals to the West and the part played by St Martin in their development. Finally, I shall focus upon late Anglo-Saxon England and the conflict between asceticism and coenobitism revealed in the monastic literature translated there.

THE HISTORY OF ASCETICISM AND ITS RELATION TO MONASTICISM
Deriving from the Greek *askētēs* meaning monk, asceticism is defined as the practice of severe self-discipline and abstention from all forms of pleasure. Based upon the belief that the individual soul has the potential, by self-transformation, to achieve unity with Christ, eremitic-ascetics are famed for their desire for isolation and complete renunciation of the physical world. The roots of Christian asceticism can be found in the letters of St Paul to the Corinthians, in which he urges the early Christians to imitate his own continence as far as is possible. It is not, however, until the example set by Antony, a young Egyptian born in 251 to farming parents in Alexandria, that eremitic-asceticism assumed any widespread popularity within the Christian

community. Inspired by the example of the apostles, Antony sold his inheritance, gave his money to the poor and withdrew to a life of abstinence and isolation. By Antony's death in 356, the ascetics in Egypt could be numbered in their thousands. Meanwhile, Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, translated into Latin by Evagrius some time before 374, soon made the eremitic ideal known to those who lived far beyond the boundaries of Egypt, and across Europe.

Roughly contemporaneous with Antony was the appearance in Egypt of coenobitism (deriving from the Greek *koinos* meaning 'common' and *bios* meaning 'life'), whose followers were distinguished from the eremitic-ascetics in that their religious beliefs were dominated by the concerns of a community and their lifestyles determined by a rule or established precept, whether written or not. Coenobitism owes its origins to Pachomius, the son of wealthy pagan parents who, inspired by the charity of Christians whilst conscripted in the army, became the leader of an Egyptian ascetical group. Despite the scarcity of evidence regarding Pachomius's ideals and beliefs, from the later history of his first community at Tabennese it is clear that this was a purposeful establishment quite unlike any of the settlements associated with Antony. Situated on the fertile plains on the edge of the Nile, Tabennese appears to have been associated with the villages and towns surrounding it. Adopting a more hands-on approach to the spiritual welfare of his followers than the desert hermits, moreover, Pachomius determined that all who wished to place themselves under his guidance 'should be subject to his authority, live, as far as possible, under one roof, and observe one and the same rule'.[1] The Tabennisiot congregation was a highly organised society, and, according to Ryan, 'in many respects, indeed, more

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[1] J. Ryan, *Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Development* (Dublin, 1931; repr. Shannon, 1972), p. 28.

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highly organised than any monastic brotherhood known in the Church until the rise of Cluny'.[2] Essential to the success of such a system was a strong, centralised government placed in the hands of a single superior, to whom complete obedience was owed. The latter virtue assumed an importance quite alien to the eremitic life, and would exercise a long-lasting influence upon western monasticism. Likewise, work, which had previously been seen as an extension of prayer and purely sedentary in character, assumed a prominence never previously held. The combination of strict obedience and rigorous work was to generate amongst the coenobites an awesome machine with an unparalleled capacity for production. This feature, together with later endowments, was to transform the simple, early *koinonia* into powerful economic units upon whom the societies around them became increasingly dependent.

Turning to the West, we find religious practices distinct from and yet related to both coenobitism and eremitic-asceticism. It is the combination of these two different eastern religious lifestyles that defines western monasticism. According to its etymology, the word 'monastery' derives from the Greek *monazō* 'to live alone'. At first sight, therefore, it would seem to better describe the conditions experienced by the hermit alone in the desert inspired by the Origenist idea of self-transformation. However, according to the rule of Augustine, the word *monachus* becomes associated with unity as opposed to singularity, and applied to the concept of the church as a single body:

> *monos*, that is 'one alone' is correct usage for those who live together in such a way as to make one person, so that they really possess, as the Scriptures say, 'one heart and one soul' – many bodies but not many

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

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souls, many bodies but not many hearts.[3]

Influenced by his neo-Platonic past, however, Augustine's conception of monasticism was not entirely divorced from the eastern emphasis upon the movement of the individual soul towards the one God. Thus he combined the ideals of the solitary and the unified to create a synthesis; and it is to this synthesis that the title 'monasticism' shall be applied. Used thus, the term acknowledges the historical co-existence of eremitic-asceticism and coenobitism in the West, and the close association there found between hermits and established religious institutions.

THE SPREAD OF ASCETICISM TO THE WEST

Eastern religious ideals were not entirely unknown to the West prior to the dissemination of Evagrius's translation of the *Life of Antony*; several varieties of eremiticism and coenobitism were practised by western Christians as early as the second century. If there was one single force that perhaps determined the spread of specifically Eastern ideals and revived the practice of eremitic-asceticism, however, it was the spread of Arianism and the various exiles experienced because of it. During his period as a refugee in Trier and later in Rome, we might assume that St Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria and biographer of Antony, played some part in the dissemination of Egyptian religious ideals and the 'cult' of St Antony. Another exile as a result of the Arian heresy, Eusebius of Vercelli (344–71), is thought to have established an ascetic community in Italy. By the 370s a number of Italian cities boasted religious communities of men or women living according to the example established in third- and fourth-century Egypt.

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[3] M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: from the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2000), p. 65.

A similar situation can be seen in Gaul: Hilary of Poitiers spent four years in exile in Phrygia from 353, returning upon the consecration of a new, non-Arian Emperor. His greatest disciple was, of course, St Martin of Tours, who spent the period of Hilary's exile on the island of Gallinaria off the Ligurian coast in ascetic conditions. Upon Hilary's return Martin established himself at the 'hermitage' of Ligugé, where he closely imitated the practices of the Egyptian eremitic-ascetics. Like Antony, however, Martin's lifestyle soon attracted followers for whose needs he felt obliged to cater. Consequently he established what might be viewed as the first monastic settlement: a community adhering to the combined ideals of eremitic-asceticism and coenobitism. Thus Sulpicius places Martin's own eremitic-ascetic practices within the context of a community in which, he tells us, the monks dressed in the camel hair of the hermits, assembled together for food and prayer and 'no-one there had anything which was called his own; all things were possessed in common'.[4] Martin's episcopate thus lay at a crucial point in European ecclesiastical history, for his ascetic practices were to provide a model for subsequent generations of religious not only in Gaul, but in areas as remote as St Patrick's Ireland. Martin was one of the first Christians in the Latin-speaking world to embrace the ascetic way of life as modelled by Antony, yet he remained sensitive to his social obligations, successfully combining his pastoral duties with the strict demands of the semi-eremetic way of life.

ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

Throughout its history, eremiticism had been viewed with suspicion

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[4] 'Nemo ibi quidquam proprium habebat; omnia in medio conferebantur'. Sulpicius, *Vita Martini* X: *Sulpice Sévére: Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. J. Fontaine, 3 vols. (Paris, 1967–9); A. Roberts, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh, 1991), XI, 1–54.

amongst certain circles. With the outbreak of Pelagianism in the second decade of the fifth century, following shortly upon Jerome's denunciation of the work of both Origen and Evagrius, eremitic-ascetics had been on the defensive against claims of heresy. Even amongst its supporters, those such as Basil the Great of Caesaria (Cappadocia), having experienced both the coenobitic and eremitic-ascetic life, advocated the coenobitic life, arguing that the solitary life held too many dangers. Likewise, figures as influential in Anglo-Saxon England as Gregory the Great and Bede admitted the superiority of the eremitic life, but in practice advocated a compromise between eremitic-asceticism and coenobitism: what was later to be known as the 'mixed' life. During the Benedictine reform the ideal of community and coenobitism was, naturally, at the forefront. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that there was any reduction in the number of hermits during the period – as Mary Clayton has pointed out, although direct evidence is lacking, Ælfric made familiar reference to an anchorite in a letter to Sigefyrð concerned with chastity.[5] Moreover, that the anchoretic lifestyle was not entirely without status is evidenced by the survival of late Old English *Lives* of Mary of Egypt and Guthlac and the *Vitae patrum*, to name but a few texts. This having been said, however, that certain writers remained uneasy with the potential for excess encouraged by eastern asceticism remains apparent in a number of works. Thus in the *Vercelli Book*'s *Life of St. Guthlac*, Guthlac rejects the devil's suggestion that the saint should fast for seven days lest on account of it he should fall into pride ('forþon hie þa ealle idle and unnytte ongeat', 134v, line 19).[6] Similarly, in *Lives of Saints* XIII, Ælfric

[5] M. Clayton, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. P. E. Szarmach (New York, NY, 1996), pp. 147–75, at pp. 157–8.

[6] É. Ó Carragáin, 'How Did the Vercelli Collector Interpret "The Dream of the

pointed out that the practices of the Egyptian desert are not suitable for those living on the edge of the world, echoing a point made by Sulpicius in the *Dialogi*:[7]

> Þes eard nis eac ealles swa mægen-fæst
> her on utewearden þære eorðan bradnysse
> swa swa heo is to-middes on mægen-fæsten eardum
> þær man mæg fæstan freolicor ðonne hér.[8]

As an analysis of the translations of Sulpicius's works as found in the *Vercelli Book*, *Blickling Homilies* and *Catholic Homilies* will reveal, similar caution appears to have been applied to the treatment of St Martin, whose links with eremiticism these translators have all but severed. Instead, we find in these texts a portrayal of Martin which focuses upon features particular to the coenobitic life – upon his humble obedience, his interaction with those around him and concerns for the greater good of the community as a whole.

As mentioned above, Egyptian eremitic-asceticism was distinguished from coenobitism by the fact that it involved a radical withdrawal from society by men of humble origins. When we turn to the Old English translations of the *Life* of St Martin, however, these two defining features, not ignored by Sulpicius, are neglected entirely

Rood"?', in *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen*, ed. P. M Tilling (Coleraine, 1981), pp. 63–104, at p. 69.

[7] Sulpicius, *Dialogi* I.8: *Sulpicius: Dialogues*, ed. C. Halm, CSEL 1 (Vienna, 1866); Roberts, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, XI, 1–54.

[8] 'This country is not as full of strength,
> here, on the outer edge of the earth's brim,
> as is that in the middle, in the strong region,
> where men can fast more easily than here'.

Ælfric, *Lives of Saints* XIII.106–9: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 2 vols., EETS os 76, 82, 94, 114 (Oxford, 1881–1900; repr. London, 1966), I, 290; translations mine unless otherwise stated.

by the Anglo-Saxon adapters. In the first instance, in line with the particularly western developments of monasticism, Martin is introduced as one born of a noble family, a feature which was to become a *topos* amongst saints' *Lives*. More significant, however, is the fact that the translators of *Vercelli Homily* XVIII and *Blickling Homily* XVIII clearly sideline Martin's eremitic leanings by omitting all reference first to Martin's childhood desire to withdraw to a hermitage, and then later his accomplishment of this, first in Gallinaria and later upon the banks of the river Loire. Turning to Ælfric's treatment of these sections of Martin's life in the *Catholic Homilies*, we find reference made to Martin's poisoning on Gallinaria, but the isolation of the retreat is concealed. That Ælfric was capable of interpreting Martin's lifestyle whilst in exile as essentially eremitic is made clear, however, by his description of the saint's companion – not mentioned in the earlier version – in the later *Lives of Saints*. Here, he adds a detail not found in Sulpicius, who describes the priest simply as 'of distinguished excellences':

> and he ferde swa þanon to sumum ig-lande
> gallinaria ge-haten mid anum halgum mæsse-preoste
> se leofode on wæstene be wyrta morum lange.[9]

Elsewhere, however, Ælfric is keen to emphasise that Martin himself did not engage in excessive fasting. Thus where Sulpicius describes the saint as practising 'self-denial', Ælfric relates that Martin 'ormæte eadmodnysse mid eallum geðylde'.[10] Likewise, in the *Lives of Saints*

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[9] 'and so he departed from there to an island
 called Gallinaria with a holy priest
 who had lived long in the desert on vegetable roots'.
Ælfric, *Lives of Saints* XXXI.193–5, ed. Skeat, p. 232.
[10] *Catholic Homilies* II XXXIV.23: *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series*, ed. M. R. Godden, EETS ss 5 (Oxford, 1979), p. 288.

Martin is described as having such temperance that he might be considered a monk rather than a soldier:

> Swa micele forhæfednysse he hæfde on his bigleofan
> swilce he munuc wære swiðor þonne cempa.[11]

That excessive fasting was a concern of Ælfric is demonstrated elsewhere in his *Lives of Saints*, when he warns that:

> Fela dyslice dæda deriað mancynne
> oððe for anwylnysse oððe for ungerade
> Swa swa sume menn doð þe dyslice fæstað
> ofer heora mihte on gemænelicum lenctene
> swa swa we sylfe gesawon. oðþæt hi seoce wurðon
> Sume fæston eac swa þæt hi forsawon to etanne
> buton on ðone oðerne dæg and æton þonne grædiglice.[12]

When Martin does eat, moreover, it is communally, whether with his companion during his days as a soldier, or later amongst his fellow monks.

By excluding episodes detailing the ascetic dimensions of Martin's career in this way, the communal nature of his life is automatically thrown into focus. The saint is depicted constantly

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[11] 'He had as great temperance in his food
 as if he had been a monk rather than a soldier'.
Ælfric, *Lives of Saints* XXXI.47–8, ed. Skeat, p. 222.
[12] 'Many foolish deeds injure mankind,
 either through self-will or from lack of thought.
 Some men do such when they foolishly fast
 beyond their strength in the universal Lent
 until they become sick, as we ourselves have seen.
 Some also fast such that they refuse to eat
 except on alternate days, and then they eat greedily'.
Ælfric, *Lives of Saints* XIII.91–7, ed. Skeat, p. 290.

surrounded by his brethren, for whom he is willing to stall the pleasures of heaven should God so desire. The intimacy of Martin's relationship with his monks is fully revealed when they learn of his imminent death and is further accentuated in the anonymous homilies by divorcing the grief shown by the religious communities from the sorrow expressed by the lay people of the district. For where in Sulpicius' *Letter to Bassula* all the villagers are described as mourning, in the *Vercelli* and *Blickling* homilies the final scene is that between Martin and his monks.

Consistent with the emphasis upon community values is the concern demonstrated in these translations with obedience and humility. According to Benedict of Nursia, coenobites are the *fortissimum genus*, the strongest type of religious, because they have humbly submitted to the discipline of a rule and have thus learned the virtue of obedience. When we turn to the anonymous Old English translations of Sulpicius's *Vita Martini*, the effects of this emphasis are revealed in the treatment of two episodes in which Martin has dealings with men of authority. According to Sulpicius's *Vita Martini* – and it is with the *Vita* alone that I am here concerned, since we have no evidence that these translators were familiar with the *Dialogi* – Martin had dealings with individual members of the ruling classes on two occasions: once with the Emperor Julian (ch. IV), and again with the Emperor Maximus (ch. XX). In both instances, Martin is directly confrontational and challenges the authority of those of higher rank. In the first instance, Martin refuses to fight for Julian and abandons the army, in the second he refuses to dine with Maximus until convinced otherwise, and having done so he offers the cup to his priest in preference to the emperor. Turning to the anonymous Old English translations, we find no mention of either of these episodes. Instead, Martin is depicted as a consistently humble and obedient servant; a characteristic accentuated by the

translators' sparse reference to his episcopal rank. Indeed, these virtues are explicitly called upon when it is remarked that one might not find anything in his heart 'buton arfæstnesse 7 mildheortnesse 7 sibbe 7 eaðmodnesse'.[13] The only remnant of either of these episodes is the comment that:

> In þyssum he þonne wæs ealles swiðost to herigenne, þæt he næfre nænigum woruldricum men ne cyninge sylfum þurh lease olihtunge swiðor onbugan wolde þonne hit riht wære. Ac he a in eallum soð 7 riht don wolde.[14]

When we turn to Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies II* XXXIV, reference is made to the conflict of opinion between Martin and Julian, whose apostasy is twice mentioned within a few lines, an element of his personality which perhaps rendered his judgement flawed.[15] That the opinion of a superior might be flawed is a circumstance provided for by Benedict's *Rule*, where – following the writings of Basil and the pseudo-Basilian *Admonition to a Spiritual Son* – he allows a monk to explain to his superior the impossibility of the task, allowing the latter to judge whether or not to continue with the order.[16] Martin's dispute with Maximus, however, is cut entirely from the *Catholic Homilies* version, and no reference to the saint's handling of kings is made.

That we should find our Anglo-Saxon translators omitting or re-

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[13] 'except faith and mercy and peace and humility'. *Vercelli Homilies* XVIII: *Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D. G. Scragg, EETS os 300 (Oxford, 1992), p. 303; L. Edman, *Vercelli Book Homilies: Translations from the Anglo-Saxon*, ed. L. E. Nicholson (Lanham, MD, 1991), pp. 117–26, at p. 123.

[14] 'In this he was most of all to be praised, that he would never, through false flattery, bow to any man having worldly power nor to the king himself, more than it was right, but he wished to do always in all [things] truth and right'. *Vercelli Homilies* XVIII.212–15, ed. Scragg, p. 303; Edman, *Vercelli Book Homilies*, p. 123.

[15] *Catholic Homilies II* XXXIV.45–58, ed. Godden, p. 289.

[16] M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 117.

interpreting these particular episodes should hardly surprise if we bear in mind the background against which these works were written, and the mixed audience of clergy and laymen at whom we assume they were aimed. The attitude here expressed is one fully in line with the Benedictine reform as it was expressed in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England. For, central to the reform and re-foundation of monasticism in England at that time was the work of King Edgar (959–75), to whom we therefore should expect gratitude to be expressed. For, more than any other king in England or on the Continent, he founded and generously endowed a significant number of abbeys, and it is possible, though not certain, that it is from within such institutions that our translations originated. Moreover, in a text to be read by or preached to members of the laity, suppression of incidents in a saint's life in which he demonstrates an anti-authoritarian stance must have been standard. For as the *Vercelli* homilist concludes:

> Ac utan we la tilian, men þa leofestan, þæt we þæs halgan weres,
> sanctus Martinus, lif 7 his dæda onherien þæs þe ure gemet sie.[17]

Turning to the version of the *Life* of Martin found in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, however, we find full reference to Martin's dispute with Julian, his repudiation of Maximus, his shaming of Valerian[18] and his pacification of Avitianus.[19] The opposition expressed by the Gallic bishops at his ordination is likewise mentioned where it is omitted from the other Old English translations, including his own *Catholic Homilies*.

Nor are these the only instances in which Ælfric adopts a line in

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[17] 'But let us now, indeed, strive, O brethren, that we the life of the holy man St Martin, and his deeds imitate as our capacity may be'. *Vercelli Homilies* XVIII.306-8, ed. Scragg, p. 305; Edman, *Vercelli Book Homilies*, p. 126.

[18] Sulpicius, *Dialogi* II.5.

[19] *Ibid.* III.4.

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the *Lives of Saints* quite distinct to that of the other Old English translations here considered. Thus he includes mention of the fact that as a child Martin wished to retire to the desert, an ambition which he fulfilled at his desert location two miles from Tours:

> Sume hwile he hæfde hus wiþ þa cyrcan
> þa æfter suman fyrste for þæs folces bysnunge
> and for þære unstil-nysse he ge-staðelode him mynster
> twa mila of þære byrig and seo stow wæs swa digle
> þæt he ne ge-wilnode nanes oþres wæstenes.[20]

Of interest is the fact that Ælfric explicitly says that Martin did this for the example of the people, suggesting that he might have expected his own audience to emulate such behaviour. That the ascetic life is not without its dangers is made clear, nevertheless, by Ælfric's decision to include the episode in which a solitary becomes so confused by the machinations of the devil that he determines to have his wife – who has also adopted an eremetical life – share his cell.

From the above evidence, then, we may conclude that Ælfric's decision to include these episodes might have been motivated by two linked factors: his increasing faithfulness towards Sulpicius in his second translation, and the fact that his intended audience were in orders, and their response to his translations, therefore, would be more controlled. As far as the first point is concerned, it becomes apparent that faithfulness towards Sulpicius involved for Ælfric an

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[20] 'For some while he had a house close to the church,
  but after some time, as an example to the people
  and because of the lack of quiet, he established a monastery for himself
  two miles from the city; and the place was so secret
  that he desired no other desert'.
Ælfric, *Lives of Saints* XXXI.310–14, ed. Skeat, p. 238.

acceptance of an ideal based upon a mixed life encompassing both the eremitic-ascetic and coenobitic to a far greater extent than seen in his earlier works. That he was willing to do so must, however, relate to our second point: that the *Lives of Saints* were aimed at quite a different audience to his *Catholic Homilies*. Immersed in the ideals of the Benedictine reform as his clerical audience must have been, he may have felt under less pressure to emphasise the Benedictine model and more at liberty to advocate the mixed life. As a disciple of both Bede and Gregory, moreover, it seems likely that Ælfric would have assented to their view that the eremitic life was the highest of all religious forms, but that it was suitable only for those with both devout intent and long monastic experience. Thus Ælfric offers to his clerical readers an insight into what it truly means to be a monastic, whose aims were always to balance the claims of individualism with the demands of a unified community. Even during the Carolingian period, when the coenobitic spirit of the Benedictine reform was at its strongest, the eremitic ideal never entirely languished. Martin's example of a synthesis between the coenobitic and eremitic-ascetic was thus an attractive model for a multitude of translators throughout the medieval period, each of which tilted the balance in favour of one or the other according to the time, place and context within which he was working.[21]