Etudes Celtiques

Celtic dynastic themes and the Breton Lays

Rachel Bromwich

Citer ce document / Cite this document :

Bromwich Rachel. Celtic dynastic themes and the Breton Lays. In: Etudes Celtiques, vol. 9, fascicule 2, 1961. pp. 439-474;

doi : https://doi.org/10.3406/ecelt.1961.1476

https://www.persee.fr/doc/ecelt_0373-1928_1961_num_9_2_1476

Fichier pdf généré le 23/09/2021

CELTIC DYNASTIC THEMES AND THE BRETON LAYS

PAR
RACHEL BROMWICH

Persée creative commons

The predominance amongst the protagonists of the earlier Arthurian romances of *dramatis personae* whose names are recognisable as those of characters in antecedent Welsh heroic saga or mythology is a fact which has by now received ample demonstration. Where there is still wide disagreement among scholars, perhaps inevitably, is in the question of the extent to which story-themes which were attached to these characters in Celtic tradition may reasonably be believed to have survived with them the transference into the continental Arthurian *milieu*. I am inclined to be a sceptic in this matter; since in numerous instances it can be shown that a motive or story has been transferred arbitrarily and as occasion required from one hero to another, and this as often in the Celtic stage itself as in transition between the Celtic and the continental and English sources. To quote a few instances: the Challenge or Beheading Game, first recorded in connection with CúChulainn, was passed in turn to Caradoc Vreichvras (Carados), Gawain, and Lancelot (I believe in this order)[1]; the Celtic type of *Macgnímartha* or Boyhood

1. See Bruce, *Evolution of Arthurian Romance* II, 103, *n*. Both Caradoc and Gawain (see below pp. 470-71) were originally independent heroes who became drawn into the Arthurian orbit. Although it could hardly be

Deeds is attached variously to a wide range of Welsh, Irish and Arthurian heroes[1]; the *Compert* or Conception-tale in which a god becomes the father of a hero, or is re-

proved that either became associated with Arthur earlier than the other, Caradoc was clearly a far more prominent hero in Welsh saga than he appears in extant Arthurian romance. It is on the face of it more likely that Caradoc-stories became attached to the great Arthurian hero Gawain, than *vice-versa*. The publicity of a royal court would seem essential for the effective presentation of the Challenge theme as it appears in the English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and I suggest that the story passed over from its original Irish localization at the court of King Conchubar mac Nessa with its chief hero CúChulainn, to be localized in Wales at the court of King Arthur where it belonged originally to Caradoc Vreichvras, and was transferred from him to Gawain when the latter became established (in continental sources) as the chief Arthurian hero. A survival of the earlier attribution has come down to us in the *Livre de Carados*. Kittredge in his study of GGK (*A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Harvard 1916) missed the evidence for the actual passage of the story *through Wales*. *Kulhwch ac Olwen* provides evidence that the particular group of Ulster heroes concerned in the Beheading Game had become known in Wales, apparently through both written and oral sources (Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, p. 100). On the Welsh forms of the Irish names see Idris Foster in *Féil Sghríbhinn Eóin Mhic Neill* (Dublin 1940) pp. 28 ff. The *Marwnat Corroi* (Death-Song of Cú Roi mac Dairi) in the *Book of Taliesin* adds the names of Cú Roi and CúChulainn to the list of Ulster heroes known in Wales. In addition one might refer to the evidence provided by the tale of *Branwen* for the transference into Wales of another story-theme found in the Ulster sagas (that of the Iron House) along with direct evidence for the influence of Irish narrative technique (see P. Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llyr: A Study of the Irish Affinities and of the Composition of the Second Branch of the Mabinogi* (Cardiff 1958), pp. 28 ff., 188). Kittredge pointed out that there is reason to believe that in the instance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* the eighth-century Irish saga *Bricriu's Feast* may have been the actual ultimate source of the Arthurian versions. Dr Mac Cana *(op. cit.)* cites other possible instances of specific literary borrowings from Irish into Welsh, but none provide quite so striking an example as this is of the transference of a definite Irish saga into Arthurian romance, in which the essential features of the story are preserved, but the main character is altered from the chief of the Ulster heroes to a succession of Arthurian heroes who by turn superseded each other in popularity and prominence.

1. Cú Chulainn, Finn, Peredur-Perceval, Tyolet, Guinglain, Tristan. Traces in the tales of Pryderi, Labraid Loingsech, Niall Naoigiallach (see p. 446, *n.* 4 below), the Breton king Salamon (see p. 460, *n.* 2 below), *etc.*

incarnated in him, is told of the Irish hero Mongán, and is to be traced as underlying the extant version of the birth-tale of Pryderi[1] — so that when Geoffrey of Monmouth presents us with a rationalized form of the same story which he attaches to Arthur himself, we are left in complete doubt as to whether or not this theme was already associated with Arthur in British tradition, or whether Geoffrey simply transferred it to him from some other hero. The figure of Caradoc Vreichvras provides a classic instance of the manner in which a misunderstood Welsh epithet could be responsible for the association with an Arthurian hero of an entirely new story[2].

Since relatively little early Welsh narrative and almost none in Breton has survived, we can point only to rare instances of the opposite process; *i.e.* instances in which a theme or narrative known to have been associated with a given character in Celtic tradition has been transferred *together with the name of this character* into Arthurian romance. But there are a few clear cases in which such transferences can be shown to have taken place: Guinevere and her abductions spring to mind; and this theme so consistently associated with Arthur's queen can be vouched for in Welsh sources which may be regarded with considerable probability as independent of continental influence[3]. Similarly the widespread popular motive of *The Dragon*

1. W. J. Gruffydd, *Math vab Mathonwy* (Cardiff 1928) pp. 322 *ff.*, *Rhiannon* (Cardiff 1953) *passim.*

2. *Breich bras* ' strong arm ' became *brie bras* ' short arm ', hence Caradoc's adventure with the serpent (Bruce, EAR I, p. 91). A similar tale is told of the mother of the Breton saint Budoc (G. H. Doble, *Saint Budock*, Cornish Saints' Series No. 3, p. 2), so that perhaps the story of Caradoc was derived from Breton folklore, though of course it is also possible that the saint's life betrays the influence of the romance.

3. Caradoc of Llancarfan, *Life of Gildas* (*ed.* Hugh Williams, *Cymmrodorion Record Series*) p. 409 ; T. Parry, *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* pp. 172-3 ; 496.

Slayer must have been attached to Tristan from very early times, and is repeated more than once in the mediaeval romances[1]: in addition the sparse Welsh material affords some corroboration that the Celtic type of *Aithed* or Elopement tale was associated with him in British (as distinct from Irish) tradition. The situation of Mabonagrain as both prisoner and keeper of an enchanted prison in Chrétien's *Joie de la Cour* episode seems to owe something to traditions about the famous prisoner Mabon of Welsh narrative[2]. The *Tristan* story belongs ultimately to the realm of saga-tradition developed around a semi-historical nucleus, the other two instances to the realm of mythology; and I suggest that further progress in the study of the relation between the Celtic themes which reappear in Arthurian romance and antecedent Celtic tradition can be made only by attempting to distinguish as clearly as possible the elements of saga from those of myth. This in itself must await largely on further knowledge and investigation of the fundamental problems of Celtic mythology.

In the following pages I wish to examine two themes which are attached to figures of early Irish mythology and legend with a particular dynastic significance: these are the theme of the Transformed Hag[3] and the closely-related Chase of the White Stag[4]. Both recur in Conti-

1. I have discussed this in *Trans. Hon. Soc. Cymmrodorion*, 1953, pp. 38 *ff.*

2. *Erec et Enide ll.* 5669 *ff.* See W. J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon* pp. 92 ff.

3. Stith-Thompson, *Motif Index* n° D 732. Except for the British Isles and Iceland, only one instance is elsewhere recorded (from Northern Rhodesia) of a story in which physical union changes an ugly hag into a beautiful girl. The theme may be regarded as specifically Celtic, see R. A. Breatnach ' The Lady and the King: A Theme in Irish Literature ' *Studies* vol. XLII (1953) p. 321 *ff.*

4. In an illuminating study entitled ' The Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature ' *Études Celtiques* VII, pp. 76-114, 356-413, VIII, pp. 59-65, which has come to my attention since writing this article, Dr. Proinsias

nental and English Arthurian sources. It is my opinion that traces of the original dynastic significance of the White Stag motive have survived the transference of this theme into French, as it appears in the earliest Arthurian romances, *i.e.* in the 'Breton' lays[1] and in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec* (in which I contend that the White Stag episode is likely to be derived ultimately from such a lay). In all these instances the theme is associated with early Breton legendary heroes, and I suggest that it could have been attached to the same figures with dynastic significance in the original Celtic traditions underlying the lays in question. The romances of Peredur-Perceval and the (late English) material associated with Gawain present versions of these same themes, and I suggest that in these instances too we may have a reflection of the original dynastic connotation borne by the themes in relation to the early British heroes concerned. My reason for bringing the Gawain and Peredur-Perceval material into the present discussion is that the evidence which this

Mac Cana shows how certain aspects of the subject which I have discussed, *ie.* the mythological concept of the marriage between an Irish ruler and the euhemerized goddess who represents his country, recur in a number of Irish tales which are set within the historical period. The theme of transformation by a kiss, sometimes combined with the drinking-cup symbolizing marriage, is found in these stories — and this theme, as he emphasizes, recurs continually throughout Irish literary sources. Dr Mac Cana does not, however, allude in his study to the third essential concomitant of these stories, the pursuit of a magic (white) animal. Yet the motives of the White Stag and of the Transformed Sovereignty are essentially inter-related in the oldest Irish sources, and still preserve this relation in a number of the Arthurian texts. In the article referred to above, R. A. Breatnach shows that the Irish myth of kingship contained 'a hero, a hunt in which the hero is victorious over a wild animal, a search for water (in a royal cup), the encounter with the *puella senilis*, the coition (or oscultation), the metamorphosis (or promise) of Sovereignty.'

1. On the Celtic origin and implications of the word *lai* see my note in *Medium Aevum* XXVI, 36-8.

material provides, even when it is late or imperfect in character, is valuable as an indication that these themes existed not only in Ireland, but also in an early British dynastic setting. The striking recurrence of these same themes in a number of instances in the Breton lays is in itself highly significant in relation to Irish literary sources, but if my argument with regard to Gawain and Peredur-Perceval be accepted, then the significance of these themes in the Breton lays becomes even clearer, because we then have intermediary proof from Britain itself of their existence as British-Celtic origin myths. In later Irish and Scottish folk versions, it may be noted, the Transformed Hag appears to have preserved little, if any, of her original significance: similarly in Arthurian literature the White Stag becomes later a literary commonplace[1] — an 'inconstant element' which may be attached to any character indiscriminately, and which appears frequently as an opening gambit which can form a prelude to almost any kind of magical adventure.

The story of the Transformed Hag is familiar in English by reason of its association with Gawain in a ballad and a romance, and its use by Gower in his tale of *Florent*, and by Chaucer in the Wife *of Bath's Tale*[2]. Since the Gawain material presents the clearest Arthurian version of the theme, I summarize the story from the fifteenth-century metrical romance of *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell:*

Arthur is hunting in Inglewood forest, and is engaged in the pursuit of 'a greatt hartt and a fayre'. He is separated from his companions in the

1. For Arthurian *exx.* of the motive see K. G. T. Webster, *Guinevere: A Study of her Abductions* (Milton, Mass. 1951) *ch.* VI.

2. See G. H. Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale: Its Sources and Analogues* (London, 1901). A more recent survey of the same material is to be found in S. Eisner, *A Tale of Wonder* (John English and Co. Ltd, Wexford 1957).

chase, but eventually kills the hart. Suddenly there appears before him a ' quaint grome ' who calls himself *Gromer Somer Joure*. This monstrous knight accuses Arthur of having wronged him by giving his lands away to Gawain. Being unarmed, Arthur stands at Gromer's mercy, but he is allowed to depart on condition that he will return at the end of a year bringing an answer to the riddle ' What is it that women most desire?' If he fails in this test, Gromer will then slay him. At the end of the year, in spite of Gawain's assistance, Arthur has found no answer that completely satisfies him. Returning to the forest of Inglewood, he meets with a hideous hag (later revealed as sister to Gromer, *i. e.* no doubt the two are ultimately identical) who promises to give him the correct answer to the riddle, on condition that Gawain will marry her. Undaunted by the hag's ugliness, Gawain agrees. The answer is (as in Chaucer) that women love best mastery over men, and Sir Gromer is satisfied with this. After the wedding-feast, when Gawain has reluctantly gone to bed with the hag, she is transformed into a beautiful girl. She reveals that she has been transformed by her stepmother's spell, and that she could not be released until the best man in England should wed her. Since Gawain leaves it to her own decision whether henceforward she shall be ' fayre by day and foul by night ' or vice-versa, she wins the sovereignty which was required to liberate her completely from the curse, and can be fair always. The story illustrates Gawain's traditional courtesy[1].

It has long been recognised that there are two Irish stories which present a very striking analogy to Gawain's adventure with Dame Ragnell. Further, these stories deal with a theme which is fundamental in early Irish belief: that of the symbolical marriage of an Irish king with the deity representing the land itself, *flaitheas na h-Eirenn* ' the sovereignty of Ireland '. These are i) the saga *Echtra mac n-Echach* ' The (marvellous) Adventure of the Sons of Eochaid Mugmedón '[2] and ii) the brief episode introduced to explain the name *Lugaid Láigde* in the tract known as *Cóir Anmann* 'The Fitness of Names'[3]. There are in addition verse-renderings of

1. Madden, *Sir Gawayne*, p. 298 ff.; Maynadier, *loc. cit.*, p. 10 ff.
2. *Revue Celtique* XXIV, p. 191 ff; Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales* pp. 508 ff.
3. Windisch, *Irische Texte*, III, pp. 317 ff.

both stories[1]; but in spite of earlier MS. authority for these[2], it seems unlikely in either case that the verse preserves the story in an older form. With regard to ii) the opposite is clearly the case. I append summaries of both stories:

i) (The prose and verse are in substantial agreement). The five sons of the High King of Ireland, Eochaid Mugmedón, are Niall, who is the son of a bond-woman; and Brian, Fiachra, Fergus, and Ailill, who are the sons of the queen, Mongfind. The sons all go hunting together, and after having gone far astray, they settle down to cook and eat their quarry (in the poem this consists of a boar). It is decided that one of them shall go and look for water. Fergus agrees to go, and he encounters a hideous hag (*sean-luindi* ' an old woman; in the poem *ecess oenmná, lit.* ' a poetess of a single woman ') guarding a well, who will give water only in exchange for a kiss. Fergus, Brian, and Ailill each in turn refuse the ordeal; Fiachra gives a kiss but no more; Niall alone will both kiss and lie with the hag. Thereupon she is transformed into a beautiful girl, who tells him in a short poem that she is the sovereignty of Ireland[3], and that his posterity will rule the land[4]. A separate incident illustrating the superiority of Niall to his brothers has been interpolated into the two versions of the story at different points:

1. In the twelfth-century *Book of Leinster*. The story of *Echtra mac n-Echach* is given in a poem by Cuan Ó Lothchain (d.1024) ; *ed. Ériu* IV, pp. 91 ff. This may well derive from an oral version of the saga. The épisode of Lugaid Laigde is told in the *Dinnshenchas of Carn Mail* (E. Gwynn, *The Metrical Dinnshenchas* IV, pp. 134 ff.), and belongs to the late eleventh or early twelfth century.

2. Both prose texts are found in the fifteenth-century Books of Lecan and Ballymote; but linguistic evidence points to a date for i) in the eleventh century, and for ii) in the twelfth. On the greater antiquity of the *Cóir Anmann* version of ii) to that of the *Dinnshenchas* poem, see Nutt in *The Academy* 1892, p. 425. The text printed by Windisch is from a later *MS.; H.3-18.* in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, which was dated by O'Curry *circa* 1500. On the text of this version see p. 448, *n.* 1 below.

3. *A ri Temra, is mé in flaithius, albér ril a mormaithius, etc.*

4. And it was in fact the dynasty founded by Niall which gave Ireland her High Kings for the next 500 years; except, as the story points out, for two kings of the posterity of Fiachra, *ie.* Nathí and Ailill Molt. None of the descendants of the other sons succeeded to the High Kingship. In the poem it is the eldest brother Brian who consents to give the hag one kiss, and for this it is promised to him that he ' shall visit Tara '. Brian was the ancestor claimed by the provincial kings of Connacht, the *Ui Briuin.* These details are relevant to the consideration of the origins of the story.

Mongfind has expressed a wish that the inheritance should be decided, and the task of doing so is entrusted to the smith Sithchenn. He sets fire to his forge: each of the brothers saves some object from the fire, but it is Niall who brings out the essential anvil and bellows. The smith pronounces obscure prophecies about each of the brothers, which are suggested by the nature of their burdens[1].

ii) Dáire Doimthech, *alias* Dáire Sirchreachtach, has five sons, each of whom is called Lugaid, because it has been prophesied that a son of his called Lugaid will obtain the sovereignty of Ireland. Daire asks his druid to reveal which of them this will be. The druid replies that ' a fawn with a golden lustre upon it will come into the assembly, and the son that shall catch the fawn is he that will take the kingdom after thee.' The fawn appears and is hunted by all the company, but a magic mist separates Daire's sons from the rest of the men of Ireland. Lugaid Láigde catches the fawn (hence his epithet *Láigde* ' of the fawn ' or *Láeghfhes* ' fawn feast'); and each of his brethers similarly wins a distinguishing epithet from the part he plays in preparing and cooking the fawn. These names all purport to explain the names of different peoples in Munster, Leinster and Connacht[2]. The brothers hunt again, and they each come in turn upon a wonderful house lavishly equipped with food and drink (suggesting the typical Otherworld *bruidhen*) and inside there is a huge old woman wearing a diadem[3]. Each brother in turn refuses her invitation to lie with her, until it comes to Lugaid Laigde. By her union with him the hag is transformed, and tells Lugaid ' I am the Sovereignty, and the kingship or Ireland will be obtained by thee '[4]. The next morning the brothers awake on a

1. This incident occurs separately in the *Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories*, *ed. Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* VIII, p. 304; a text which probably dates from the eighth century. A translation is given by Gerard Murphy, *Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland* (Dublin 1955), p. 49. The testing by the smith suggests that we have here an incident from a very early tale in which conventional elements from the Celtic *Macgnimartha* pattern were appropriated to Niall. *Cf.* CúChulainn's fostering by a smith.

2. Perhaps originally there were six brothers; see *Genealogy of the Corcu Laigde* (*ed.* J. O'Donovan, *Miscellany of the Celtic Society* 1849, pp. 30-33). The *Dinnshenchus* poem claims seven Lugaids.

3. *senluinne moire acus etnech impi.* In the Lecan version *cailleach aduathmar* ' a fearsome old hag '.

4. *Missi in flaithius, acus géblhar rige nErenn úail.*

bare plain, with their hounds asleep beside them[1]. (A later Irish ballad suggests that their hounds had been lost in pursuit of the fawn)[2].

The *Dinnshenchas* poem gives a romanticized version of the tale, with the only important variant that at the conclusion it is linked clumsily with the name of Lugaid Mac Con, Lugaid Láigde's more famous son: the goddess states that she will sleep not only with the first Lugaid, but also with his son, who will be more famous than he. But no doubt the traditions of father and son refer ultimately to the same mythological figure. Lugaid mac Con was one of the early 'high kings' of Ireland according to the system of the Irish antiquarian or 'Synchronist' historians, who found places in their list of pre-historic rulers of Ireland for the legendary ancestors of the most important peoples of non-Goidelic stock, *i.e.* of the peoples who had occupied Ireland before the dynasty of Níall came to power in the fifth century[3]. And it would seem that it is the origin-myth of one of the most important of these pre-Goidelic inhabitants of Ireland that we have in the story of Lugaid Láigde. Dáire, who appears in other sources as the father of the famous Cú Roí[4], was

1. Windisch's published text of *Cóir Anmann* represents a more diffuse version than that given in the Books of Lecan and Ballymote (for these see *The Academy* vol. 41, p. 399; O'Donovan, *loc. cit.*, pp. 76-8). With respect to the Lugaid story, the text of *H.3-18.* is clearly a conflation of two versions. The epithets of the five Lugaids, representing the names of various *tuatha*, are allotted to them twice over; once as they prepare to cook the fawn, and again when the Sovereignty questions them as to their hunting. Twice Lugaid elects to sleep with the hag; on the first occasion she says *Missi in flaithius*, on the second *Missi banfhlaith hErenn* 'I am the womanruler of Ireland.'

2. Cf. p. 452, *n.* below. The rôle of the lost brachet in the *Peredur-Perceval* may be compared (p. 455 below).

3. Eóin Mac Néill, *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin ,1921) p. 22.

4. T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin 1946), p. 79 ff.

the mythical ancestor of the people known as the Érainn[1], who in early times dominated large areas in the south of Ireland, until displaced within the historical period by the in-coming Eóghanacht, of Goidelic stock. The Érainn are traditionally among the oldest inhabitants of Ireland, and are believed to have been in occupation there before the arrival of the Goidels. An important branch of these were the Corcu Láigde (in Co. Cork), and it is these who claimed descent from Lugaid Láigde. Lugaid's pursuit of the magic fawn and his union with the Transformed Hag is the myth representing their sovereignty—or more probably it is the myth that belonged to the Érainn as a whole[2]. And in the name of Lugaid it is probably fair to find the mythical ancestor from whom the Irish commonly traced descent—the god Lug[3].

In *Echtra mac n-Echach*, on the other hand, we have one of a group of stories concerned with the Sovereignty theme and Otherworld Voyages, which centre on the forebears of the chief ruling dynasty in Ireland in early historical times—Níall Naoígiallach and three generations of his nearer ancestors—Conn Cetcathach, Art Oinfer, and Cormac mac Airt. It is entirely reasonable to suppose

1. O'Rahilly, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

2. Cf. O'Rahilly, *op. cit.*, p. 77. Dr. Mac Cana shows (*op. cit.*, E. C. VII, p. 114 *et passim*) that in the stories of Mugain or Mór Muman we have what appears to be the tradition of ' a goddess of the Érainn transferred into the pedigree of the Eóghanacht. ' This development provides but another illustration of the re-adaptation in Irish sources of the basic mythological motive of the Sovereignty — a motive which may indeed have first originated among the Érainn, see below — to suit changing political conditions in Munster.

3. Mac Neill, *op. cit.* pp. 57, 61; *G. Murphy, Duanaire Finn* III (Irish Texts Soc. 1953), p. 205-8. The *Genealogy of the Corcu Láigde* (O'Donovan, *op. cit.*, p. 9) tells us that another name for Daire was Lugaid, and also that Lugaid Láigde was known as *Sen Lugaid* (' Old L'). This confusion suggests that the traditions refer to a single ancestor-deity named Lugaid, for whom Dáire was a by-name.

that this group of stories[1] were evolved by *filid* working in the interests of the later High Kings of the Uí Néill dynasty, and re-handling ancient legendary themes for their own propaganda purposes. The poetic version of *Echtra mac n-Echach* provides an instructive case in point: its author, the *file* Cuan Ó Lothchain was the chief poet to Maelsechlainn II, the last High King of Níall's line who was reigning when the break in this dynasty came, after five hundred years. Maelsechlainn was deposed by Brian Boru, and regained the High Kingship only after the death of Brian at Clontarf in 1014. Such official supporters of the Uí Néill dynasty might be expected to wish to further their patrons' interests by freshly adapting an ancient myth which portrayed the fundamental conception of the relationship between an Irish king and the land over which he ruled. And so profoundly felt was this conception of the marriage of the king with the goddess Ériu representing the land of Ireland, that it remains implicit throughout the bardic poetry of the mediaeval and early modern period, even when not brought forward by explicit references, and springs into vigorous life again as late as the eighteenth century in the cult of the *Aisling* poetry[2].

A comparison between i) and ii) shows that the two stories are closely related, while each preserves certain features in a clearer form. Níall's brothers encounter the

1. The earliest and most important of these texts is *Baile in Scáil* (' The Phantom's Frenzy ') in which Conn visits the Otherworld *tech* where a beautiful girl who announces herself as the Sovereignty of Ireland offers to him a cup symbolically representing marriage with her, after which the god Lug enumerates the successive kings of Conn's line. The text is of the eleventh century, based on a ninth century original (Dillon, *The Cycles of the Kings* p. 12 ff., *Ériu* XVI, p. 150, *n.* 1.

2. See Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland* (3rd edn. Dublin 1941) *Studies* vol. XLII, pp. 321 ff.

hag at a well to which they go for water after having cooked their game; and it should be remembered that the gift of a cup containing liquor was itself a symbol of marriage[1]. But the fact that the game which they caught must originally have consisted of the enchanted fawn[2] has dropped out of the story. The textual evidence cannot be regarded as conclusive as to the prior composition of the Níall story to that of Lugaid Láigde, since the Old Irish sagas are in the main very much earlier than the MSS. in which they are preserved. Indeed the contrary may well be the case, since other considerations suggest that it is more likely that the tale of the Transformed Hag who represents the Sovereignty was borrowed by the supporters of the Uí Néill dynasty of High Kings from the Érainn who had been established in Ireland long before them, than that the Érainn should have framed their origin-myth upon that of the Uí Néill. At whatever date *Cóir Anmann* was first put together[3], it is significant that the story of Lugaid Láigde appears there in the form of an interpolation of unusual length in the midst of genealogical material. And it is in just such geneaological *data*, whether in prose or in verse, that are preserved the very earliest traditions of the Celtic peoples[4].

1. *Ériu* XIV, p. 17. The meaning of the name *Medb* 'she who intoxicates' throws light upon the stories of the innumerable 'marriages' attributed to this Irish queen, who in reality represented the personified Sovereignty. This was shown by O'Maille, ZCP.XVII, pp. 129 ff. *Cf.* also Rowena's gift of a drink to Vortigern in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (Book VI, *ch.* 12).

2. This appears as a boar in Cuan Ó' Lothchain's poem, and it will be seen that a boar replaces the fawn or stag in some of the Arthurian versions.

3. The Munster section of this work, in which the story of Lugaid Láigde is found, appears to represent the original nucleus of the whole, and to be a re-working of material considerably older than the twelfth century. See M. Dobbs, *Sidelights on the Táin Age* (Dundalk, 1917) pp. 58 ff., who would date this nucleus as early as the seventh century.

4. Late folk-variants of the theme of the Transformed Hag have been

A relationship between the Irish stories of the Transformed Sovereignty and the English poems in which this theme is attached variously to Gawain or to an indefinite or un-named character[1] can admit of little doubt. In its essentials the story is the same, although in *Dame Ragnell* the rôle of Arthur has encroached upon that of Gawain, who is the real hero of the tale; and in all the English

collected in both Ireland and Scotland. These are *Scilg Ghleanna an Smóil* (J. O'Daly, *Trans. of the Ossianic Society*, 1858, VI, pp. 75 ff); *Níghean Rígh fó Thúinn* (J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* III, pp. 421 ff.); *Bioultach* (W. Larminie, *West Irish Folk-Tales*, pp. 59-61). The first two versions cited show the theme of the Transformed Hag taken up into the Fenian cycle, as were many other Irish literary motives of great antiquity. But these versions are late popular re-workings of older material; we have no *early* Fenian texts which embody the theme. Campbell remarked of the Scottish tale that 'it shows one of the Ossianic heroes (Diarmaid Ó Duibhne) in a very mythological character.' Although Diarmaid was the ancestor-hero of another Munster *túath*, the *Corcu Dhuibhne*, one would perhaps be rash in claiming that this late folk-tale could preserve a trace of the dynastic theme attached to Diarmaid with original significance. And there is no question of the retention of original significance in either of the other versions, any more than there is in the late Arthurian examples of the White Stag (p. 442, *n.* 4 above). The Fenian lay *Seilg Ghleanna an Smóil* gives a highly disjointed and incoherent presentation of the theme, and is complicated by extraneous elements which are not fully worked out. Yet it preserves all the essential features: the chase of the white doe, followed by the darkness of night which causes the Fianna to lose their hounds, by a meeting with a beautiful woman, and then with an ugly hag wearing a crown of gold (and who, as in the earlier Irish stories, is remarkable for her long teeth and black hair). Finn identifies the hag as being the same as the white doe, and refuses to marry her; Goll then fights with her and slays her; *ie.* the story is contaminated by the popular Fenian theme of fights with wiches and monsters. This lay shares with the English poems the fact that the hag owes her form to having been placed under spells by a hostile character; *ie.* a fresh motivation was introduced when the theme of the Sovereignty ceased to be intelligible.

1. In Gower 'Florent'; in Chaucer a 'lusty bacheler' of Arthur's court; in the ballad of 'King Henry' it is unlikely that any specific king of this name is intended. Gawain is the only *specific* legendary character with whom the theme is associated in English sources; *ie.* his name is not used in isolation but implies a reference to the whole *corpus* of Gawain traditions in existence at the time.

versions as they have come down the original significance of the Sovereignty theme has inevitably ceased to be recognised[1], and so a fresh explanation for the heroine's transformation has been introduced. Originally this transformation needed no explanation: it was simply an explanation of the 'divine right' of the pre-destined ruler. Just as the stone of Fál at Tara would cry out under the feet of the man fated to be king of Ireland[2], so the intended ruler was set apart from his companions (in the stories he is separated from them in the hunt, either by nightfall or by a magic mist), and would inevitably and inspite of deceptive appearances[3], come together with the goddess representing his appointed territory. The hag's transformation is merely an instance of the shape-shifting in which all divine beings in Irish mythology[4] are adepts. But in two of the English versions (*Dame Ragnell* and Gower) this transformation is explained as due to spells imposed by a hostile character[5], and in addition the riddle-motive 'What is it that women most desire?' is

1. Any connection between the *sovereyneteе* desired by women and *flaitheas na h-Eireann* may be ruled out as entirely fortuitous. *Flaitheas* denotes kingship or royal rule, and could not possibly be applied to a conception so banal as that intended in the English poems.

2. R. A. S. Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Erenn*, IV, p. 106.

3. *ie.* Niall is at a disadvantage as compared with his brothers in being the son of a bondwoman. It may be noted that the hostile stepmother is already present in this version.

4. Even in the Irish texts the significance of the union with the goddess has lent itself to elaboration. In the two versions of the Niall story the transformation of the goddess is allegorically explained as illustrating the transition in a king's reign from harsh to prosperous fortune (RC XXIV, p. 200; *Ériu*, IV, p. 106, v. 56). This explanation in itself serves to indicate that the Niall version of the story was fabricated at a later date than that of Lugaid Láigde.

5. As in the Fenian lay, p. 452 *n.* above, and in the Norse version given in *Hrolfs Saga Kraka.*

appended to the story in these versions, as it is in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*[1].

Turning now to the continental Arthurian texts, it is on the whole surprising that no link between the Irish and English versions of the Transformed Hag has survived either in an intermediate Welsh version, or in Old French stories of Gawain. But related material, sufficient to attest the existence of this theme in Old French literature, is to be found among the complex of stories bearing on Peredur-Perceval and the Grail. The episode of the Chessboard Castle and the Hunt of the White Stag is found in three versions of the Perceval story, where it appears as a lengthy and meaningless interpolation among the protracted adventures of the Grail quest. These versions are the Second Continuation of the *Conte del Graal*, the *Didot Perceval*, and *Peredur*[2]. The story is narrated most fully in the Second Continuation, from which I summarize it here[3] :

Perceval comes by chance upon a castle which appears to be totally devoid of inhabitants, but where he finds laid out a set of chessmen made of precious stones, upon a board of gold. He idly moves one piece, and finds his move responded to by one of the pieces on the other side. The game continues, and to his disgust, Perceval is checkmated. When this has happened three times in succession the hero loses his temper, and is about to throw the board and pieces out of the window giving on to the moat below, when a beautiful girl arises from the water, and tells him to desist. He agrees to do so if she will come to him through the window, which she does. Perceval falls in love with her, but she stipulates that she will withhold her favours until he shall bring her the head of *le cerf blanc* which is to be found in the near-by forest. To assist him in the hunt, she lends him her treasured white brachet. The hero quickly succeeds in slaying the stag,

1. The riddle-introduction is unknown except in the English versions, and may be assumed to have its origin in the literature of *exempla*.

2. There are hints also of a knowledge of this story in *Perlesvaus*, where the hero's shield is adorned with a white stag (ed. Nitze, l. 628) and a brachet is left behind at Arthur's court for him by the damsels of the Cart. The magic chessboard is discovered by Gauvain at the Grail castle (l. 2337).

3. Potvin, *ll.* 22,395 ff.

but unfortunately the brachet is stolen from him by *une pucele de malaire*, and in attempting to regain it he is robbed also of the stag's head by a strange knight. Only after many adventures does he eventually regain both, and returns to the Chessboard Castle to be requited by his lady.

Though it is to be concluded that Chrétien's continuators drew largely on sources independent of, and perhaps more primitive than Chrétien's own, yet this account has been commonly regarded as the source for the versions of the episode which appear in the *Didot Perceval* and *Peredur*[1]. Nevertheless both these versions offer significant variants which suggest that this is not the case, and that there existed other traditional versions of the story besides that given in the Second Continuation[2]. In the *Didot Perceval*, *une vieille* takes on the rôle of the *pucele de malaire* in stealing the brachet[3], and later on we receive the highly significant statement that she is *quant ele vuelt, li plus bele demisele que tu onques veis*[4]. In *Peredur* we find a more authentic version of the self-propelled chessmen, in which, as in another and un-related early Welsh source[5], the two sides play against each other without human intervention. But it is difficult to account for the curious form in which the stag appears in this tale: a unicorn-like creature,

1. Bruce, *Evolution of Arthurian Romance* I, p. 302, *n.* 17 ; Weinberg, ' The Magic Chessboard in the *Perlesvaus* ' PMLA L, pp. 25-33.

2. Thurneysen argued for the independence of *Peredur* from the two other versions, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* VIII, p. 187.

3. W. Roach, *The Didot Perceval* (Philadelphia 1941) p. 171.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

5. The *Gwyddbwyll Gwenddoleu* (chessboard of G.), one of the *Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Prydein:* ' if the pieces were set, they would play by themselves. The board was of gold, and the men of silver '. The tract enumerating the Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain is found in numerous MSS. from the fifteenth century onwards but its contents are likely to be considerably earlier; as is in fact proven for some of them by their inclusion among the *anoetheu* or ' difficult things ' to be provided by the hero in *Kulhwch ac Olwen*. For recent editions of the *Tri Thlws ar Ddeg* see Eurys Rowlands *Llên Cymru* V, pp. 269 ff., and my *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* pp. 240 ff.

wearing a golden collar around its neck, who lays waste the surrounding countryside[1]. And in this version it is the hideous Grail Messenger, who seems to retain some of the physical characteristics of the Transformed Hag[2], who plays the part of the fairy who rises from the water and reproves Peredur for throwing away the chessboard. She makes it clear by her words that she is the representative of Peredur's fairy-mistress. Thus both the *Didot Perceval* and *Peredur* in their handling of this incident seem to preserve traces of the Transformed Hag combined with the Chase of the White Stag; while the former theme has been eliminated from the version given in the Second Continuation. Since the underlying connection at various points of the Grail theme with the Irish tales of the Sovereignty is becoming increasingly recognised[3], it is the less surprising to find that it is among the complex traditions embodied in the *Perceval* romances that there are retained the only clear indications to be found in French sources of the theme of the Transformed Hag.

I consider that Miss Weston was right in her contention that Perceval's original mistress was a fairy whom he won as a result of the Chase of the White Stag[4]. Such an explanation would account plausibly for the lengthy interpolation of the accompanying Chessboard Castle episode (which contributes nothing to the Grail story) in two of the French versions, and for its preservation in *Peredur*. Now the central or 'independent' sections of *Peredur* (which may be so called because they contain

1. Gwyn Jones and Thos. Jones, *Mabinogion* (Everyman) p. 225; G. Evans, *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch col.* 176.

2. Like her she is distinguished by her blackness and enormous teeth, *etc.* On the comparison see Maynadier, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-73; Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition*, p. 416.

3. Loomis, *op. cit.*, pp. 376 ff.

4. *Legend of Sir Perceval* (London 1906) I, pp. 116-7, *et passim.*

incidents which are not paralleled in any of the continental texts)[1] offer some corroborative evidence on this point. These sections offer three separate accounts of the hero's fight with a monster, variously called *sarff* 'serpent', *pryf* 'worm', and *addanc*, perhaps 'water-monster'[2]. In two of these encounters he wins from the monster a precious talisman; in the third he slays the *addanc* with the help of an undoubted fairy-mistress, who is discovered sitting upon what appears to be a *sídh* mound, bestows on the hero a magic stone of invisibility, and then vanishes[3]. In view of early parallels elsewhere[4], it is clear that these

1. Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, pp. 203-217; Thurneysen's sections Ib and II (*Z. f. c. Ph.* VIII, p. 186). Thurneysen was wrong, however, in claiming that the two sections are quite un-related; one of the versions of the monster-fight occurs in Ib.

2. *Mabinogion*, pp. 206, 209, 212, 214; *Llyfr Gwyn cols.* 149, 154, 158, 161.

3. *Mabinogion*, p. 211; *Llyfr Gwyn* col. 156. Before vanishing the lady tells Peredur to seek her *parth ar India* 'towards India'; later she receives the pseudonym *amherodres Cristinobyl* 'empress of Constantinople'. These eastern references are thin disguises for her Otherworld origin.

4. Notably in the *Bel Inconnu* cycle (*circa* 1190-1200) which combines *enfances* of the Perceval type with the motive of the *fier baiser*. The parallel offered here of a serpent-lady who is disenchanted with a kiss suggests that the *addanc* in Peredur may simply be a variant form of the Transformed Hag, and represent Peredur's fairy-mistress in disguise. Another early Arthurian instance of the *fier baiser* theme occurs in Ulrich von Zatzikhofen's *Lanzelet* (trans. Webster and Loomis, p. 132). For serpent-mistresses, Map's story of *Henno-cum-dentibus* should be compared (*De Nugis Curialium* trans. M. R. James, pp. 189-91) and also the whole *Melusine* group. In mediaeval sources these stories tend to have dynastic connotations (*eg. Melusine* itself deals with the origin of the Lusignan family), and may well go back ultimately to traditions similar to that of the Transformed Hag. It is interesting that the hero of *Le Bel Inconnu* is *Guinglain*, son of Gawain, and that one of the versions of the poem states that the heroine can only be disenchanted by Gawain, or one of his race (Schofield, *Studies in Libeaus Desconnus*). I suspect, in company with Miss Weston, that there was a close early relationship between Peredur-Perceval and Gawain, and that the former may have taken over the adventure of the Transformed Hag from the latter (see Weston, *Legend of Sir Perceval*, II, 201-2).

sections of the *Peredur* are not the invention of the Welsh redactor, though it is hardly possible to prove that they derive directly from a native Welsh tradition about Peredur. Like the Chessboard Castle episode they may come from the common continental stock of Perceval incidents, or they may derive from Welsh folklore previously unrelated to any particular saga-hero[1].

Nevertheless the evidence just considered suggests that a story about the winning of a fairy-mistress was attached at an early stage to Peredur-Perceval, and that it has been subordinated though not suppressed in the extant versions of the Perceval romance; and that this motive was introduced, as in the case of Gawain, by the adventure of the Chase of the White Stag combined with the Transformed Hag. But the latter has become a very dim figure in the versions which have come down. Presumably the necessity felt by mediaeval writers to 'rationalize' the Transformed Hag worked against her retention in these stories : she became either one be-spelled by a hostile stepmother, or else she was commuted into a serpent. A more difficult question is whether this story-motive belonged originally to a Welsh hero named Peredur, or has merely been transferred to him from his French counterpart Perceval. But the impression one forms from the romance of *Peredur* is that early dynastic traditions lie behind the name and identity of the hero. The name *Peredur* is attested in early chronicle and poetic sources from North Britain[2], while that of his

1. The episode of the *addanc* and of the Sons of the King of Suffering, together with that of the Nine Witches of Gloucester, has parallels in Gaelic and in Breton folk-tales about a hag with a pot of healing ointment, who has the power to resuscitate the dead. The English *Sir Perceval of Gales* seems to draw upon folktale material of this kind, with its hag-mother of the Red Knight, who also is able to bring the dead back to life.

2. *Peredur arueu dur* (' of hard weapons ') is mentioned in the *Gododdin*

father *Efrawc* perpetuates the name of the city of York[1], and also corresponds to that of one of the semi-mythical early British figures who make up the list of kings between Beli Mawr and Brutus: in the Welsh *Bruts Efrawc kadarn* is the father of *Brutus Taryanlas* ('Green Shield') and corresponds to Geoffrey of Mommouth's *Ebraucus*[2]. And it may be pointed out that *Peredur* is a name attested in the earliest Welsh sources, while there is no occurrence of that of *Perceval* in any source earlier than the twelfth century: and further, that *Perceval* seems to have been a name unfamiliar to the French redactors of the romances, judging from their clumsy attempts to analyse it[3]. It is almost certainly to be regarded as a substitution for the Welsh name of *Peredur*. I believe that the Transformed Hag combined with the Chase of the White Stag is one of the oldest elements in the story of Peredur-Perceval; while the early Welsh records make it possible that such a tradition could have been attached originally to a Welsh hero *Peredur* who belonged to one of the British kingdoms in northern England in the sub-Roman period. It may

l. 359; and the two brothers *Gwrgi* and *Peredur* figure in the *Annales Cambriae* (with an *obit* in the year 680), in the *Triads*, and in the *Descent of the Men of the North*.

1. Pokorny suggests that *Peredur ap Efrawc* is to be derived from *Praetor ap Eburaco* (*Beiträge zur Namenforschung* I (1950), p. 38). This ingenious explanation would solve the difficulty as to how Peredur's father comes to have a name which is that of a place and not of a person, though it hardly accounts for the other occurrences of the name *Peredur* in early Welsh sources. It is attractive also as indicating the substratum of remote Romano-British memories underlying a part of the traditions of early Wales.

2. Griscom, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, pp. 258-9; H. Lewis, *Brut Dingestow*, p. 24.

3. Bruce, EAR I, pp. 251-2, *n*. The name *Perceval* is first attested in a poem by the troubadour Rigaut de Barbezieux composed before 1160 (see Rita Lejeune in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (*ed.* R. S. Loomis, Oxford 1959), p. 396.

well be that we have in it a dynastic tradition from Celtic Britain parallel to the instances of this theme recorded from Ireland. The confused condition in which the two inter-related motives have been transmitted in the Peredur-Perceval romances on the whole favour their antiquity.

Since the Transformed Hag is a receding figure, only faintly delineated, in the versions just considered, it is the less surprising to find that elsewhere in Old French literature the Chase of the White Stag has survived in isolation as a preliminary to adventures of a similar kind to those introduced by the combined motives. The Breton lays, pre-occupied as they are with the fairy-mistress theme[1], preserve an impressive number of instances of the Chase of the White Stag and variants upon it. This motive is found in the lays of *Graelent*, *Guigemar*, and *Tyolet;* in *Guingamor* a white boar has been substituted[2]. *Graelent* gives the story in what appears, as will be seen, to be its most primitive form:

A knight called *Graelent* is a vassal of the king of Brittany. The Queen falls in love with him, but Graelent rejects her advances and thus antagonises her. Henceforth he is impoverished, because the jealous Queen instigated the king to withhold the pay which is his due. Graelent goes off into a near-by forest, where he sees a white hart which he pursues, and is thus led to a clearing where a beautiful girl is bathing in a pool. He seizes her clothes, and so has her at his mercy; nevertheless, she quickly consents to his love, for she had come on purpose to meet him. Before leaving her,

1. See *Medium Aevum* XXII, 61 ff. The lays relevant to this discussion are those of Type I only.

2. As in Cuan O'Lothchain's version of the Níall story. Map tells a story which should be compared of the Breton king Salomon who, reared in obscurity, distinguished himself at the age of fifteen by slaying an enormous boar (*De Nugis* trans. M. R. James, p. 215). Clearly the typical Celtic pattern of *macgnímartha*, of which this is a fragment, was attached to Salomon. The chase of a marvellous boar, like that of the White Stag, became generalized as an introduction to a magic adventure, as can be seen in *Manawydan*.

she makes Graelent promise not to reveal her name or identity. She gives him a horse, and a servant who henceforth supplies him with all the wealth he can want. At the Feast of Pentecost the king holds a great assembly, at which he calls on all the court to join in asserting the queen's pre-eminence in beauty. Only Graelent refuses to do so, and thus he is provoked by the Queen's wrath into saying that he knows a fairer woman than she. The king decrees that he must prove this seditious claim upon pain of death. But now that he has named his fairy-mistress he can no longer find her, nor will she visit him, and so he has to submit himself to the king's judgment. As this is being passed, his mistress comes riding into the court and confounds all by her beauty; thus Graelent is exhonerated from his rash boast. The fairy leaves the court, but Graelent rides after her, until they come to a deep river. In attempting to cross it he is nearly drowned, but his lady has pity on him, and carries him across the water to her own land. Here the Bretons say that Graelent still lives with his mistress[1].

Marie de France's *Lanval*[2] narrates a story which is closely similar to this, but which has been given an Arthurian setting. Both the Chase of the White Stag, and the encounter at the bathing-pool[3] have been omitted. Thus it is clear with respect both to what it includes and to what it omits that *Graelent* preserves a more primitive version of the tale; and as has been shown[4], there is reason to suppose that this lay is in fact earlier than *Lanval*. Another variant is *Guingamor*[5], which combines the motive of the queen's jealousy with the hunt of the magic boar, and retains the encounter at the pool and the sojourn with a fairy-mistress in a country reached by crossing water; while to these has been added the popular folk-motif

1. Roquefort, *Poésies de Marie de France* (Paris, 1819) I, p. 486 ff.

2. A. Ewert, *Lais of Marie de France*, p. 58 ff.

3. This is an essentially primitive feature, paralleled in the Old Irish saga of the Birth of Conchubar (Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, p. 132). A further instance, no doubt derived from older Breton sources, is found in the thirteenth-century (?) *Life* of *St. Hervé* (*ed.* A. de la Borderie). It may be noted also that it is beside a well that Niall met with the Transformed Hag.

4. PMLA 63 (1948) pp. 392-404; *Med. Aev.* XXII, p. 63.

5. Karl Warnke, *Die Lais der Marie de France* (3rd. edn, 1925) pp. 233 ff.; summary *Med. Aev.* XXII, p. 65.

of the supernatural lapse of time. *Guigemar*[1] retains nothing of the original theme except the chase of a white doe (clearly enchanted, since she has the power of speech as the prelude to an episode of love. Indeed it is apparent that the two 'doubtful' lays of *Graelent* and *Guingamor* preserve better versions of the primitive theme than do the lays which are generally accepted as Marie's work: it would seem that Marie tended to substitute literary models for older popular elements in her sources.

Nevertheless in Marie's lay of *Guigemar*, the introductory description given of the hero may well provide an important clue to the significance of the Chase of the White Stag in these Breton lays. Marie tells us that Guigemar was the son of the lord of *Liun* (Léon). The German Celticist Heinrich Zimmer who first investigated the proper names in the Breton lays[2], pointed out that *Guigemar* represents the Breton Guihomarc'h[3], a name which was borne several

1. Ewert, *op. cit.*, p. 3 ff.

2. *Zeitschrift für franz. Spr. u. Litt.* XIII, 1 ff. It must be regarded as uncertain whether this is the same name as *Guïngomar*, *Guingamor*. Brugger (*Z. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt.* XLIX, 203 ff.) points out that the *n* in this name postulates a different origin from *Guigemar*< *Guiemar*< *Guihomarc'h*. Guingomar must derive either from an un-attested form *Guingomarc'h (both elements of which occur separately) or from a variant spelling of *Gingomar*, which Loth records as a French rendering of Breton *Iuncomarc'h* (*op. cit.*, p. 119, *n.* 4). But owing to the general similarity between the two names, and the fact that the story of Guingamor corresponds closely with the pattern of *Lanval* and *Graelent*, it is difficult to rule out a connection between the name of *Guingamor* and that which was popular among the counts of Léon, and we may conclude that the name *Guihomarc'h* has had its first element influenced by the common adjective *guin* ' white '. References to *Guingomar in* Chretien's *Erec* (*ll.* 1954 ff.), in the First Continuation of the *Conde del Graal* (Roach, *ll.* 15271 ff.) and in Malory (Bk. VII, ch. 26) indicate that a lay was known referring to Guingomar's liaison with a fairy mistress, which went back at least to the first half of the twelfth century (see Brugger, *loc. cit.*, pp. 212-216).

3. Earlier *Uuiuhomarc'h* ' horse-worthy '; Loth, *Chrestomathie Bretonne* p. 176, from the *Cartulaire de Redon*.

times during the eleventh and twelfth centuries by the Counts of Léon[1]. This fact encourages examination of the name of *Graelent*, which as Zimmer showed[2], is easily recognisable as that of *Grallon* or *Gradlon Mor*, the traditional founder of the Breton kingdom of Cornouailles in the sixth century. A more easily recognisable form of this name is preserved in Chrétien's *Erec*, where we read that *Guingomar* and *Gralemuer* were brothers[3] : a statement which is no doubt due to recognition of the fact that a story of liaison with a fairy-mistress and removal to the Otherworld was told of both. We have then a tale of the pursuit and capture of a magic white animal (doe, hart, or boar) which still retains traces of its origin as a transformed fairy, and which occurs as a preliminary to an Otherworld visit. This tale is associated with the founder of one of the Breton kingdoms, and also with a character whose name was borne by several early rulers of another. The similarity is obvious with the dynastic legends of Niall and Lugaid Láigde, and with

1. *Z. f. fr. Spr. u. Litt.* XIII, p. 9.

2. *Loc. cit.*, p. 4. King Gradlon (cf. Old Welsh *Grat laun* ' replete with grace ', *Bk. of Llandaff*, ed. Rhys and Evans, p. 237) is first heard of in the ninth-century *Life* of *St. Winwaloeus* by the monk Wrdisten, here the king is reproved by the saint for his luxurious and riotous living. Gradlon was a traditional figure about whom much folklore collected in the middle ages, and he appears also in the mediaeval lives of *St. Corentin* and *St. Ronan*.

The Breton hagiographer Albert le Grand, writing in 1636, drew upon older traditional sources when he associated him with the folktale of the submersion of Ker Is. See Doble, *Saint Winwaloe* (Cornish Saints' Series, no. 4) p. 32. M. Bachellery kindly points out to me that Gradlon (Glazranus) figures already in association with this story in a Breton text of an earlier date, the miracle-play *L'Ancien Mystère de Saint Gwénolé* (ed. Ernault, *Annales de Bretagne* vol. XL, XLI) ll. 474-887. This can be dated on reliable textual and linguistic evidence as belonging to the latter part of the sixteenth century.

3. *Erec*, ll. 1954 ff.

the stories of Otherworld visits told of Niall's forebears Conn, Art, and Cormac.

Further investigation among such early French sources as might possibly preserve traces, in however shadowy a form, of the Celtic traditions of Brittany, suggests comparison with the episode of the Chase of the White Stag in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*. Here, at the opening of the story, Arthur and his court are engaged in the 'custom' of hunting the White Stag. The prize for the hunt is the kiss to be given to the fairest lady; in the story as we have it the winner is Arthur, and with the consent of all he eventually gives the kiss to Enide. But one may surely conclude that Enide herself was in an earlier version the prize to be won from the hunt[1], and that originally the hero of this adventure was Erec, the hero of the romance, and not Arthur[2]. Once more the name and identity of the hero of this story are of the first importance. *Erec* is the French form of Breton *Guerec*, earlier *Weroc*, a name borne by more than one of the rulers of the eastern Breton kingdom of Vannes, and in particular by the founder of the dynasty which ruled this kingdom, who died *circa* 550, and whose exploits are described by Gregory of Tours[3]. Henceforth the old tribal territory of the Vĕnĕti, Bro Wened[4], bore also the name of its conqueror, *Bro Weroc* 'the land of Guerec'. The French name *Erec* is thus derived from the name of the country, in its eleventh-century form; *Bro Werec* giving *Bro Erec* (the initial *g* is regularly lenited, while

1. The Welsh tale of Gereint preserves a slightly better version here, in that Arthur presents the stag's head to Enide.

2. In the same way Arthur has taken over a large share of what must originally have been the role of Gawain, in *Dame Ragnell*.

3. *Historia Francorum* V, 16, 26 ; IX, 18.

4. Earlier *Giunel*, *Gunell* (Holder, *Alt-Celtischer Sprachschatz*, III, 160).

the *w* became lost in pronounciation between two vowels)[1]. This leads me to make a suggestion as to the origin of the name of the heroine *Enide*, a name which has never been satisfactorily explained[2]. May not *Enide* derive from the territorial name *Bro Wened* which gave a spoken form **Bro-ened*, just as *Erec* was derived from *Bro Werec* reduced in pronunciation to *Broerec*[3]? Again the Irish material offers a persuasive analogy, since it is the goddess *Ériu*, representing the land of Ireland itself, who mates with Níall and Lugaid, and repeatedly with the rulers of Ireland throughout the bardic tradition[4]. With respect to the tale of Erec and his union with the goddess who represented the old territory of the Věněti, there is even here a suggestion that the motif of the Transformed Hag was once present but has been suppressed, either by Chrétien, or, more probably, already by his source. Erec irrationally insists that Enide shall ride to court in her old tattered garments, and these are only to be exchanged when the queen herself shall give her a dress[5]. With the arrival of the pair at Arthur's court Chrétien clearly indicates that the first part of his narrative is at a close

1. See Loth in *Revue Celtique* XIII, 483-4. The earlier name for the territory, *Bro Ueroc* appears as *Bro Uuerec* in the eleventh century *Cartulaire de Redon* and as *Broerec* in the *Cartulaire de Quimperle* (12th cent.).

2. Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition*, p. 100.

3. The attributive genitive is regularly lenited after the feminine substantive *Bro*, thus *gw*, *gu*>*w*. For a fuller discussion of the origin of the name *Enide* advocated here, see my note in the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* XVII, pp. 181-2. If the solution here suggested be correct, it would settle finally the question as to whether the Breton *Erec* or the Welsh *Gereint* was the earlier protagonist about whom the story was told : it is indisputably of Breton origin. *Gereint* is a name borne by several rulers of insular Dumnonia from the sixth century onwards, but the story must have been transferred to him from his continental counterpart, *carrying the name of the heroine with it.*

4. *Ériu* XIV, pp. 17-18.

5. *Erec ll.* 1374-8.

(l. 1844); and it is perhaps fair to conclude that this first part of his poem was derived from a Breton lay describing Erec's Stag Hunt and the winning of his fairy-mistress[1].

Old French sources have therefore preserved what appears to be a genuine survival of the lost Celtic literature of Brittany: a Breton dynastic tale corresponding to the Irish story-pattern which is attached to the names of Níall and Lugaid Laigde. This was appropriated to the traditional founders in the sixth century of two of the early kingdoms—Cornouailles in the west, and Vannes in the east[2]. In this story the hero is engaged in the hunt of a magic animal (usually a stag) who is an enchanted fairy, and who may (like the goddess Ériu appearing as the Transformed Hag) represent the territorial deity of

1. Elsewhere in the poem (*l.* 6188) Chrétien refers to a *lai* composed about the *Joie de la Cour* — an equally self-contained incident. The view that Chrétien's ultimate sources consisted of un-related Breton lays has in this instance much to recomment it. R. Harris ' The White Stag in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* ' (*French Studies* X, 1956, pp. 55-60) emphasizes the mythological appearance of the opening episode in *Erec*, and its disjointed character in relation to the rest of the poem. He points out that ' as often with Chrétien, one gains the impression of a poet handling material the significance of which he himself did not fully understand '. His association of the ultimate significance of the theme with an ancient European deer-cult does not in any way conflict with my argument as to the more immediate affinities of the White Stag in terms of existing Celtic literature.

2. Zimmer's argument that *Lanval* represents the version of the fairy-mistress story which belonged to the Vannes district, is to be rejected; see *Revue Celtique* XIII, p. 481; PMLA XV, p. 177. Zimmer associated the hero's name with the plane-name *Lanvaux* in the Morbihan, but Loth showed that the twelfth-century form of this name was *Lanvas* (*Rom.* XXIV, p. 520). In any case the secondary character of the lay of *Lanval* to *Graelent* is obvious, and *Erec* provides a far more satisfactory counterpart for the kingdom of Vannes. This eastern kingdom early became a Breton-French bilingual area, and must have been the most important district for the dissemination of Breton traditions among the French, a consideration that seems relevant to the highly altered and overlaid state in which the Vannes story has come down, in comparison with that of Cornouailles.

his kingdom. Essential features paralleled elsewhere in early Celtic sources are i) the fairy has loved the hero without seeing him, and has herself come to meet him *(Graelent, Lanval, Desiré);* ii) the encounter at the fountain, at which the hero steals the heroine's clothes *(Graelent, Guingamor);* iii) the taboo against speaking the heroine's name *(Graelent, Lanval);* iv) the hero departs with the heroine to the Otherworld *(Graelent, Lanval, Tyolet, Tydorel).* Early in the literary stage there seems to have been combined with the Breton versions of this theme a tale of the type of *Phaedra and Hippolytus*, or *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*[1]*:* the wife of the hero's overlord offers him her love, and is incensed by his rejecting it. The combination with this theme shows considerable artistry, since it throws into relief the hero's inability to love elsewhere, because of his liaison with the fairy: it must have been popular, since it is found in *Graelent*, *Lanval*, and *Guingamor.* The last lay provides evidence that the same dynastic story became attached to the north-western kingdom of Léon, but since it has been handed down in connection, not with the founder of this kingdom, but with the names of rulers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it appears most probable that this version was based upon one of the other two[2]. The versions of both Vannes and Cornouailles may well represent variants of a common Celtic theme which in ultimate origin are as old as the period of the sixth-century Breton settlements: *Erec* and *Graelent* differ to an extent which precludes the possibility of mutual influence except at a very remote date.

1. *Motif-Index* No. T. 418. This story also was known in Ireland, and an elaborate version is preserved in the tenth-century saga *Fingal Rónáin* ed. K. Meyer, RC XIII, 368 sqq., D. Greene, Dublin 1955.

2. *Cf.* Ewert, *Lais of Marie de France*, p. XVI.

The general popularity of fairy-mistress stories in the twelfth century is probably responsible for the traces of the theme we have been considering which are found elsewhere in the Breton lays. These are likely to be secondary and derivative; and I do not suggest that the theme has retained any original significance (in the sense defined above) in the lays of *Tyolet*, *Tydorel*[1] or *Desiré*[2]. In *Tyolet* the hart who changes back into a knight is indicative of a confused rendering of the original theme. *Tyolet* preserves the quest for the foot of a white hart, the prize for which is an (evidently) fairy bride; and the hero, like Perceval, is assisted in his task by a white brachet[3]. In both *Tyolet* and *Tydorel* the hero is at the conclusion transported to the Otherworld, from which he does not return. But *Tydorel* is given a sister from whom it is claimed that the later Counts of Nantes are descended[4]. This in itself looks like an attempt to fabricate a suitable dynastic tradition for a *parvenu* line, since it may be noted that in the lays of *Graelent*, *Guingamor-Guigemar*, and in *Erec*, there is no indication that subsequent rulers actually claimed *descent* from the fairy-liaison, and the same appears to be true of the Irish versions. In the lays, the departure of the hero for the Otherworld definitely precludes such an issue. Nor is a resulting posterity to be expected in any of these

1. *Rom.* VIII, pp. 40, 66.

2. F. Michel, *Lais inédits des XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, pp. 5 ff.

3. With the brachet in these stories compare the hounds which accompany Lugaid Láigde and the Fianna in *Seilg Ghleanna an Smóil* (p. 452, *n.* above). In the latter version the hounds are lost in the pursuit of the magic doe, and this seems to be implied by the conclusion of the former version also.

4. *De ceus istra li quens Alains, Et puis ses filz Conains* (ll. 147-8). The *Alains* here referred to is Alan VI, duke of Brittany 1084-1112, the *Alan Fyrgan* of Welsh tradition.

early versions, which still retain traces of the original significance of the fairy-bride as representing the Sovereignty, the symbol of the hero's relationship to the kingdom over which he ruled. *Tydorel* therefore strikes a false note in that it is explicitly concerned with utilizing the older myth in relation to the ancestry of the twelfth-century Counts of Nantes, although it does so in a half-hearted fashion, deriving the line from the sister of the hero, since it was impossible to do so from the hero of the supernatural adventure himself. The story may represent a late rival tradition for eastern Brittany to that on which *Erec* is based. In *Desiré* we have the encounter with the fairy-mistress at a fountain, and the taboo against revealing her identity. Again, though the hero is transported to the Otherworld, he manages to leave a son and daughter after him. This idea of *descent* from the fairy-union undoubtedly represents a late and secondary accretion to stories of this type. We may compare the Welsh folktale of *Meddygon Myddveu*, which tells how a famous family of doctors were descended from just such a fairy union, and owed their skill to the powers of healing transmitted from their supernatural ancestress[1].

Since my argument depends in the main on the analogy which exists between certain stories preserved in early Irish and in continental sources, it is perhaps well to make

1. J. Rhys, *Celtic Folklore* I, p. 11-12. Another folktale, recorded as early as the sixteenth-century, tells how Urien Rheged met with a fairy at a ford, and from his union with her sprang his even more famous son Owein *(Yvain)*. (G. Evans, *Report on Welsh Mss.* I, p. 911). Some corroborative evidence for the antiquity of this tradition is to be found in the triad *Tri Gwyndorllwyth*, see *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* no. 70. But such tales of the half-supernatural descent of dynasties are essentially different in their emphasis from the Sovereignty or 'fairy-mistress' type of dynastic theme which is under consideration above.

clear that I do not believe that in any but occasional and isolated instances is there a possibility of direct influence from Ireland upon Arthurian romance. Where Irish themes appear in continental sources, a Welsh intermediary must normally be postulated. In this case the only extant evidence for the existence of the combined motives of the Transformed Hag and the Chase of the White Stag is (except for the slight suggestion in *Erec*) the valuable but doubtful evidence of the Chessboard Castle episode in the *Peredur-Perceval* romances: doubtful because the immediate source of the Welsh version must be a continental text, but valuable as indicating the possibility that the combined theme was known as a dynastic tradition in at least one early British principality. Presumably it is simply because the Transformed Hag motive did not recommend itself to twelfth-century French taste that it has all but disappeared both from the *Peredur-Perceval* and from the *Erec* version, and that the Breton lays concentrate entirely upon the companion motive of the Stag Hunt. And it may be for this reason too, that no French prototype has survived for Gawain's adventure with Dame Ragnell. But the Gawain tradition presents a problem which is in some ways unique, and the question arises as to whether we are to allow for an exception here, and to concede the possibility of direct transmission of the story from Ireland to England without a French intermediary. This view was advocated by Maynadier[1], who suggested the Irish settlement in Galloway as a possible means of transmission of the story of the Transformed Hag from Ireland into British Strathclyde, and thence into England. A passage from Strathclyde southwards to Wales, and thence perhaps to Brittany would

1. Maynadier, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, pp. 103-108.

be in accordance with the normal movement of British-Celtic heroic traditions[1].

More recent work enables us to be somewhat less cautious in this matter. Irish penetration into Galloway is likely to have followed within a century or two of the Irish settlement of Argyll in the late fifth century[2], and numerous Gaelic place-names in Dumfriess and Galloway bear witness to the intensity of Irish colonization at various periods, while there is evidence also for an earlier British substratum in the population. Whether or not Galloway formed part of Urien's kingdom of Rheged in the sixth century, it would seem likely that British and Gaelic-speaking peoples lived here side-by-side over a very long period[3]. It may therefore be regarded as a matter of some interest that the earliest reference to Gawain *(Walwen)*[4] (and one which antedates Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum* by some years) appears in William of Malmesbury's *De Rebus Gestis Regum Anglorum* which appeared in 1125. A well-known passage which is found in the earliest drafts of this work specifically states that Gawain 'reigned' in Galloway:

Tunc (*ann.* 1066-87) in provincia Walarum, quae Ros vocatur, inventum est sepulchrum Walwen, qui fuit haud degener Arturis ex sorore nepos.

1. *E.g.* the tradition of Owein ab Urien must have reached Brittany in this way. See my discussion of this subject in *Studies in Early British History* (*ed.* N. K. Chadwick, Cambridge, 1954) pp. 121-3.

2. W. J. Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926) pp. 179-80.

3. Gaelic was spoken in Galloway until at least as late as the seventeenth century; see K. Jackson ' Common Gaelic ' (*Proc. Brit. Acad.* 1951) p. 78; *Antiquity* xxix, pp. 85-6.

4. *Galvaginus* figures on the Modena archivolt, and the form *Walwanus* is recorded as a proper-name near Padua in 1136 (Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition*, p. 146). The texts of Geoffrey give numerous variant forms of this name: Griscom records *Gualguanus, Galgwainus, Walwanius, etc.*

Regnavit in ea parte Britanniae quae adhuc Walweitha vocatur, miles virtute nominatissimus[1].

This statement should be considered in relation to the persistent association between Gawain and Galloway which is maintained in the *Conte del Graal* and its Continuations[2], as well as the essentially northern connections of Gawain in English Arthurian romance. I do not find it easy to reject these combined indications that the traditions of Gawain refer ultimately to a saga-hero who belonged to the mixed Gaelic and British district of Galloway. But it is more probable that these traditions were brought into English in the normal manner, through Welsh and French, than that there should have been any direct transmission between Irish and English.

Apart from general considerations of probability, the

1. *De Rebus Gestis* (*ed.* Stubbs, London 1889) III, 287, p. 342. No proof has been adduced that this passage is an interpolation, and it seems at least possible that it gives information which is derived from insular Celtic sources (*eg.* the statement about Walwen's grave and the absence of any grave for Arthur should be compared with the Welsh *Beddau* stanzas). Indeed since William of Malmesbury's evidence for the dissemination of the *nugae britonum* before Geoffrey is so important, it is unfortunate that there should be so little evidence for the possible sources of Celtic tradition available to him. Apart from the statement that Walwen was Arthur's nephew, there is nothing in the above passage which could be claimed as betraying the influence of Geoffrey or the romances. But Gawain was not the only independent hero to be drawn into Arthur's orbit in insular sources even before the Arthurian material was adopted by continental writers. The problem of Gawain is confused by the fact that Welsh sources render this name by the etymologically-unrelated *Gwalchmei*, apparently under the influence of a native hero *Gwalchmei ap Gwyar* who figures in the *Triads* and elsewhere; thus the Welsh *Bruts* separate Geoffrey's Gualguanus into two characters, reserving the native patronymic *ap Gwyar* for the second only. The same uncle-nephew relationship between Arthur and Gwalchmei appears in *Kulhwch ac Olwen*, (*Llyfr Gwyn*, col. 471-2).

2. Bruce, EAR II, 98-9; Weston, *Sir Perceval* I. 186 ff. In the *Awntyrs of Arthur* it is Galeron of Galloway whose lands have been given to Gawain; in *Dame Ragnell* Gromer Somer Joure makes a similar complaint.

fact that the *Dame Ragnell* theme was used also by Chaucer and Gower makes it difficult to rule out a French intermediary as the common source for all the English versions of the Transformed Hag. Is it possible that this lost French romance[1] could have derived ultimately from a genuine dynastic myth which had attached itself to an early or eponymous ruler of Galloway, and that, although the intervening link has been lost, a trace of this tradition has come down in the English *Gawain* poems? It has been seen that these are closer than any of the continental versions we have considered to the early Irish form of the story. Can the fifteenth-century romance of *Dame Ragnell* really preserve a theme which, as attached to Gawain, has original significance? And, one might add, do the multiple traditions of Gawain and his various *amours* conceal an original liaison of this hero with a fairy-mistress? At least, Galloway in the tenth and eleventh centuries appears to be a likely area for the intermingling of Gaelic and British myth and saga: the *Yvain*-Owein tradition suggests that the fairy-mistress theme[2] may have had a place in British narrative in this area, though a better version is found in Peredur-Perceval. And the Gawain tradition also, if authentic, must originate from the narrative material of the northern British kingdoms. I agree with Miss Weston[3] in suspecting some deep fundamental connection between the figures of Gawain and Peredur-Perceval; though she did not observe, in her

1. And in fact, the suggestion has already been put forward that a Breton lay was the common source for all the English versions (Wells, *Manual of Writings in Middle English*, p. 68). Gaston Paris made the same suggestion as to the source of the *Wife of Bath's Tale* (*Hist. Litt.* XXX, p. 102).

2. Cf. *Yvain-Iarlles y Ffynnawn*, which may possibly originate in a story of this type.

3. *Legend of Sir Gawain, passim.*

penetrating discussion of this matter, that these two northern-British saga heroes are the only two figures of British insular tradition to whom there is evidence that the dynastic themes which we have considered were at one time attached.

Cambridge. Rachel Bromwich.