

**Crossing the Boundary: The Depiction of Transgression, Loss,
and Grief in Early Medieval Welsh and Irish literature**

Rebecca Burn

26000979

2021

A dissertation submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint
David in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
MA Celtic Studies.

Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

Declaration Form

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Name. Rebecca Burn

.....

Date 21st July 2021.....

2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

.....

Name...Rebecca Burn

Date 21st July 2021.....

3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.

A bibliography is appended.

Name...Rebecca Burn.....

Date: 21st July 2021.....

4. I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying, inter- library loan, and for deposit in the University's digital repository

Name Rebecca Burn.....

Date...21st July 2021.....

Supervisor's Declaration.

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the student's own efforts.

Signed:

Date:

Contents	Page
Abstract	4
Introduction	6
Chapter One: The motif of the Wild Man and the depiction of transgression, loss, and grief in medieval Welsh and Irish literature	9
Chapter Two: A feminine perspective: transgression, loss, and grief in <i>Canu Heledd</i> and poetry attributed to Gormlaith	25
Chapter Three: Transgression, loss, and grief through an eighteenth century lens – the ‘re-imagining’ of <i>Canu Llywarch Hen</i>	39
Conclusion	51
Bibliography	53

Abstract

It is acknowledged in medieval scholarship, that the interpretation of early literature is enhanced through analysis of analogous texts. Equally, comparative study of a body of textual sources is severely restricted by the imposition of linguistic and cultural boundaries. The universal themes of transgression, loss, and grief appear as a common trope in much Celtic literature, however, these themes have rarely been the focus of comparative analysis of corresponding texts. Lyric poems, characterised by a persona's emotional and psychological responses to personal suffering, constitute an extensive body of work in which transgression, loss, and grief are the prevailing themes. Conflict (physical or metaphysical) is often at the root of the individual's suffering, to which no simple answer is provided. They are depicted in the texts as hermit-type characters, removed from society and kin, and closely associated with the natural world. The dramatic personas of a number of analogous lyric poems, realistic and pseudo-historical in style, can be traced to the sixth and seventh centuries and are taken from the milieu of known historical figures. It is also possible, although contested, that these reflective poems may once have been part of longer prose narrative sagas.

The aim of this thesis is, firstly, to investigate the literary form and function of transgression, loss, and grief in a cross-section of texts (poetry and prose) from both Welsh and Irish medieval traditions; and secondly, to consider how these themes, as presented in the texts, correlate with the notion of 'crossing a boundary', specifically a moral boundary. In the ninth-century Welsh saga *englynion*, the *Canu Llywarch Hen* ('The song of Llywarch the Old'), Llywarch Hen inculcates the heroic code in his sons but in doing so, loses them in battle. He feels he has transgressed against his sons (a moral boundary) resulting in his conflicting inner turmoil, and sense of guilt. In *Canu Heledd*, ('Song of Heledd'), a transgression by the English (the crossing of a geographical boundary with Wales), results in the fall of the kingdom of Powys, of which Heledd is the last surviving member. Lamenting the loss of family and lands, she wanders aimlessly, experiencing obsessional sorrow. The notion of suffering as catharsis shares parallels with the wild man of the woods legend, as embodied in native Welsh tradition by Myrddin Gwyllt, and in Irish tradition by Suibne Geilt. The connections between these two literary personas are well-attested. The personal suffering and mental breakdown experienced by both personas is depicted almost as an act of atonement for crossing moral boundaries, (Myrddin's killing of his nephew at the north-

British battle of Arthuret (Arfderydd), in AD 573 and Suibne's killing of St Ronan's cleric, and subsequent loss of reason at the Battle of Mag Rath in 637). Similarly, in a small body of lyric poetry, *Triamhuin Ghormlaithe*, the Irish queen, Gormlaith (ob. 948) laments her pitiful state and the loss of her husband, Niall Glúndub who fell in battle in AD 919. The grief and madness suffered by Merlin in Geoffrey of Monmouth's poem *Vita Merlini* (1148-51) also accords with the native Welsh poems of Myrddin.

The depiction of transgression, loss, and grief in these texts reveals the nature of human suffering, as understood within Welsh and Irish medieval literary culture. This study, therefore, aims to consider these texts within the wider context of Celtic literary tradition, whilst also offering a fresh perspective on the medieval world view.

Introduction

This purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how the themes of transgression, loss, and grief are depicted in a selection of analogous literary texts from early medieval Welsh and Irish traditions. Transgression, loss, and grief are themes which appear as a common trope in much Celtic literature;¹ however, these pivotal motifs have rarely been the focus of comparative analysis of corresponding texts. The examination of the literary nature of these universal themes, therefore, is the central premise of this dissertation. Welsh saga *englynion*, together with lyric poetry and prose texts in Welsh and Irish tradition constitute an extensive body of work in which a persona's emotional and psychological responses to personal suffering are matched by themes of martial heroism, viewed through the prism of the grief and loss of the survivors. Moral boundaries are tested through conflict (physical or metaphysical) which is often at the root of the individual's suffering - suffering to which no simple answer is provided. The notion of 'crossing a boundary' also correlates with the recurring theme of transgression which may be observed in all the texts discussed in this study.

The aim of this thesis is firstly, to investigate the form and function of transgression, loss, and grief in these texts, and secondly, to consider how these themes, as presented in the texts, accord with the notion of 'crossing a boundary', specifically a moral boundary. The analysis of chronology, metrics, authorship and dating of these texts has been subject to considerable academic scrutiny and as such, falls beyond the scope of the present study. In contrast with traditional bardic panegyric, these texts are characterised by their narrative style. Delivered in the first-person singular, they are spoken by a literary persona taken from the milieu of known historical figures, whose origins may be traced to the sixth, seventh centuries and tenth centuries.

¹ Meirion Pennar, J. Gwenogvryn Evans, and James Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen* (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1989), p. 27. Pennar observes how these central themes have become characteristic of the tone of Welsh literature from the time of Gildas: 'The Welsh were great exponents of the literature of loss. They were well acquainted with recurrent calamities' and that 'our fate was put down to divisiveness, to sin'. Transgression is closely linked to sin, a religious motif which is also evident in contemporary Irish literature. J.G.O'Keeffe notes how, in Irish tradition, stories around Suibhne are clearly related to religious themes with Suibhne closely linked with St Moling (ob. 697) and St Ronan in *Buile Suibhne* and related literary texts. See *Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy Of Suibhne) Being The Adventures Of Suibhne Geilt, A Middle Irish Romance*, ed. by J.G. O'Keeffe (London, England: David Nutt, New Oxford Street, 1913), p xviii.

From Welsh tradition, this study will consider two ninth-century saga *englynion*, *Canu Llywarch Hen* and *Canu Heledd*, as transcribed in Llyfr Coch Hergest c.1382 (The Red Book Of Hergest)² and a body of poetry attributed to the legendary figure of Myrddin; transcribed in Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin c.1250 (The Black Book of Carmarthen)³, considered to date from the tenth-century.⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth's verse poem, *Vita Merlini* c.1150⁵ takes the native story of Myrddin in a new literary direction, offering a pseudo-history of Merlin which combines traditional and international sources to reflect contemporary aspirations in a literary style similar to Geoffrey's earlier work, *Historia Regum Britanniae* c.1136. Geoffrey's alternative treatment of transgression, loss, and grief reflects this new literary approach. From Irish tradition, the ninth-century prose tale, *Buile Suibhne* (The Frenzy Of Suibhne, A Middle Irish Romance)⁶, and a small body of lyric poetry attributed to the Irish queen, Gormlaith (ob.948) are also considered. In the latter case, two collections are consulted, *Triamhuin Ghormlaithe* and a collection of poems, edited by Osborn Bergin.⁷ The historical personas in each text commit transgressions, against kin, countrymen, the Church, and God. The grief, loss and suffering they experience is as a consequence of their actions. The literary expression of human experience is the common denominator which joins these texts and it is the power of this notion which retains its resonance in the present day. To illustrate this, where appropriate, comparisons with modern poetry and prose texts have been drawn.

Chapter One is a comparative analysis of the literary presentation of transgression, loss, and grief, as manifested in the Wild Man motif of Celtic tradition. This chapter examines the

² See *The New Companion To The Literature Of Wales*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 619. Llyfr Coch Hergest, Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111 is one of the most important Welsh manuscripts of the Middle Ages. It contains all the principle historical prose texts from Welsh tradition, notably *The Mabinogion* and the *Brut* of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

³ Ibid. p. 50. Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin, NLW, Peniarth MS. 1 is the oldest manuscript collection of poetry in the Welsh language. The contents consist almost entirely of poetry which may be dated to between two and four centuries preceding the writing of the manuscript. It includes poems containing elements of the Myrddin legend from Welsh tradition and also *englynion* from *Canu Llywarch Hen*.

⁴ Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads Of The Island Of Britain*, 4th. edition (University of Wales Press, 2017), p. 458. Two poems, the 'Cyfoesi' and 'Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin' (LIDC no. 1; ed. Jarman) were composed before 1100 which suggests that the nucleus of 'Yr Afallenau' and 'Yr Oianau' are at least as old.

⁵ Geoffrey Of Monmouth, *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlini*, ed. by Basil Fulford Lowther Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press [for] The Language And Literature Committee Of The Board Of Celtic Studies, 1973).

⁶ *Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy Of Suibhne) Being The Adventures Of Suibhne Geilt, A Middle Irish Romance*, ed. by J.G. O'Keeffe (London, England: David Nutt, New Oxford Street, 1913).

⁷ Bergin refers to the O'Gara MS. (23 F 16, RIA). Originally edited by Bergin in *Miscellany Presented to Kuno Meyer* (Halle a. S. 1912). Published as Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry* (Dublin: the Dublin Institute Of Advanced Studies, 1970). In *Triamhuin Ghormlaithe*, Ann O'Sullivan (ed.) refers to MS. No.200, p 140 (National Library of Ireland), as transcribed by Peadar O'Gealacan in 1839.

corpus of Myrddin poetry, *Buile Suibhne* (The Frenzy Of Suibhne), and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*. The depiction of transgression, loss and grief through the biblical and Celtic literary motif of the Wild Man reveals how human suffering, guilt, and loss is portrayed from differing perspectives. A central consideration in Chapter One is the interplay between the concepts of redemption and atonement, as manifested in the texts, and transgression, loss, and grief. These powerful motifs also resonate with modern literature, and the parallels between the depiction of trauma and suffering in the 'Wild Man' and shell-shock, or post-traumatic stress disorder in twentieth-century poetry are also highlighted to emphasise the relevance of these medieval texts in modern society. Feminist theory and gender studies provide a methodological framework for Chapter Two and the analysis of two texts with female protagonists. *Canu Heledd* and the body of poems attributed to Gormlaith consider the question of feminine sin and the apportioning of blame. The suffering experienced by these two female protagonists is magnified by the limitations of their gender in medieval society. By drawing comparisons with a corresponding poetic text from Anglo-Saxon literature, *The Wife's Lament*, this chapter considers how the feminine experience of transgression, loss, and grief crosses social boundaries to reflect the comparable experience of womanhood in European warrior societies. Reference is also made to the similarities between Heledd, Gormlaith and the suffering of the female protagonist in Kate Roberts' 1962 novella, *Tywyll Heno*, and the heroine of W.B. Yeats' 1902 play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. Chapter Three examines how transgression, loss, and grief are portrayed in the eighteenth-century reimagining of *Canu Llywarch Hen*. Edited and translated in 1792 by William Owen Pughe (working in collaboration with Iolo Morganwg) this edition reframes the original ninth-century poems to reflect contemporary concerns and anxieties. Transgression, loss, and grief are transposed from experiences of a personal nature, namely, the suffering of the individual, to express anxiety regarding contemporary public issues, specifically the desire to rebuild Welsh nationhood and national identity at the time of the Revolution in France, and in the face of an increasingly Anglo-centric society.

Through the analysis of transgression, loss, and grief, as depicted in these literary texts, this dissertation aims to facilitate an examination of the nature of human response to suffering; placing the topic within the wider context of Celtic literary tradition, whilst offering a fresh perspective on the medieval world view.

Chapter One – The motif of the Wild Man and the depiction of transgression, loss, and grief in medieval Welsh and Irish literature

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the interplay between transgression, loss, and grief and the ancient theme of the ‘wild man’ through comparative study of a selection of poetic texts from Welsh and Irish tradition. These texts demonstrate how penitential motifs, a sense of ‘otherness’, and the biblical notion of atonement shape and re-define the perception of the wild man as a literary figure. In a corpus of seven Middle Welsh poems,⁸ Myrddin Gwyllt, the poet and prophet of Welsh legend, is re-cast as a literary persona, a persona through which contemporary anxiety concerning the Norman invasion of Wales during the eleventh and twelfth centuries may be explored.⁹ In *Yr Afallennau* (The Apple-trees) and *Yr Oianau* (The Ohs of Myrddin) Myrddin is depicted as a ‘wild man’, who, having witnessed the horrors of war at the Battle of Arfderydd in 573, has lost his reason. He lives amongst the creatures of the forest of Celyddon, alienated from society, in a perpetual state of ‘otherness’. The Wild Man of the Woods motif is associated with a much earlier period in Welsh history, specifically the Old North¹⁰ traditions surrounding Merlin Caledonius, a sixth-century fugitive.¹¹ Myrddin’s epithet, *wyllt*– (from the Welsh, *-gwyllt*), is cognate with the Irish, *-geilt*, meaning ‘wild, deranged’. The origins of the motif can be traced to classical and ancient biblical texts in which clear parallels with the wild man of the medieval Celtic world may be observed. It is an international folk motif: ‘Man lives alone in woods like a beast’¹² and also has a notable antecedent in the ancient Babylonian tale, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, in

⁸ The poems are transcribed in a collection of manuscripts dating from between the 13th and 15th century. The main source is NLW, Peniarth MS. 1, Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin (The Black Book of Carmarthen) c.1250 with two poems, ‘Cyfoesi Myrddin a Gwenddydd ei Chwaer’, and ‘Gwasgargerdd Fyrrddin yn ei Fedd’ recorded in Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111, Llyfr Coch Hergest (The Red Book of Hergest), c. 1400. The exact date of composition of these poems is uncertain: however, two poems, the ‘Cyfoesi’ and the ‘Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin’ were composed before 1100. At least the nucleus of the ‘Afallannau’ and the ‘Oianau’ are probably as old. See Rachel Bromwich, *Triodd Ynys Prydein: The Triads Of The Island Of Britain*, 4th edn. (University of Wales Press, 2017), p. 458.

⁹ Koch observes that all of the poems, with the exception of the earlier *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin* were probably composed during the Norman invasion of Wales. See *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. by John T. Koch (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 1322.

¹⁰ The name given to the fifth- and sixth-century ancestral territories of the Britons, which lay to the south of a line from Stirling to Loch Lomond and extended southwards over Cumbria, much of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and eastwards to the Humber estuary. See *The New Companion To The Literature Of Wales*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 541.

¹¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlini*, ed. by Basil Fulford Lowther Clarke, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press [for] The Language And Literature Committee Of The Board Of Celtic Studies, 1973), p. viii.

¹² F. 567, Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index Of Folk-Literature, Vol. 6.2, Index: (L-Z)* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995).

which the ‘nature man’ Enkidu is ‘created’ by ‘Aruru, the potter, the shaper’.¹³ Satyrs, fauns, and other *homines silvestres* are also evident in classical tradition: In Virgil’s epic poem, *The Aeneid*, the father of Aeneas, King of the Latins is the Roman horned god of the forest, Faunus. He is generally portrayed with a beard and fur over his lower body¹⁴ whilst the Hindu tale of *Rishyasringa*, features ‘legends of hairy anchorites or hermits leading solitary lives in the desert’.¹⁵ In the *Book of Daniel* (4:33), Nebuchadnezzar provides a literary prototype of a wild man in whom insanity is added to wildness: Insanity and wildness are manifested physically through Nebuchadnezzar’s transmutation from man to avian form: ‘he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen; and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws’.¹⁶ Transgression, loss, and redemption are central themes in the story of Nebuchadnezzar: In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar commits the transgression of sentencing to death Daniel and all the wise men of Babylon, and in 2 Kings 24, he is portrayed as one of a crop of corrupt and villainous kings of Judah. In Daniel 4:27, Daniel advises Nebuchadnezzar to ‘renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed.’¹⁷ To atone for his sins of pride and vanity, Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment is to suffer seven years of insanity. This portrayal of human disconnection and a shift towards ‘otherness’ resonates with the Myrddin poems in which the motif of the ‘wild man’ becomes a means of expressing both the real and existential fears of warrior societies, the pain of human loss, grief, and guilt.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century verse poem, *Vita Merlini*,¹⁸ Myrddin (now Merlin) becomes a literary persona through which ‘serious themes with undertones of political commentary are examined’.¹⁹ Merlin is a fugitive in the forest of Celyddon ‘Inde per estate totam nullique repertus/oblitusque sui cognatorumque suorum/delitu silvis obductus

¹³ *The Epic Of Gilgamesh*, trans. by Andrew George (Penguin Random House UK, 2016), p. xxxiii, ‘who washed her hands, pinched up some clay, and moulded the wild man Enkidu’.

¹⁴ See *The Aeneid*, Book VII, 47-51.

¹⁵ Jarman, A.O.H, ‘The Merlin Legend And The Welsh Tradition Of Prophecy’, in *The Arthur Of The Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts, 2nd edn. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 117.

¹⁶ See Daniel 4:33, Salem Web Network, *Biblestudytools* (2021) <<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/daniel-4-33.html>> [accessed 25 March 2021].

¹⁷ Salem Web Network, 2021.

¹⁸ *Vita Merlini* appeared c.1150. See Clarke, (ed.), *Life of Merlin, Vita Merlini*, p. vii.

¹⁹ Basil Clarke notes that the figure of Taliesin was available to Geoffrey directly in the literary tradition of Wales. He plays a special role in *Vita Merlini* and the learned information he imparts has a post-classical Latin source (in Isidore) and as such, is not particularly Welsh. See Clarke (ed.), *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlini*, p. 4 .

more ferino'.²⁰ before eventually regaining his sanity through spiritual and philosophical contemplation. This depiction of Merlin as a 'wild man' turned erudite visionary demonstrates how Geoffrey's Merlin is a conflation of characteristics taken from Merlin Caledonius, or Merlin Silvestris of the Old North, and Merlin Ambrosius, the prophetic child prodigy of Geoffrey's earlier work, *Historia Regum Britanniae*.²¹ This Merlin also experiences the pain of human loss. His grief over the death of his 'three dear brothers' in battle causes his descent into madness. Merlin, the wild man suffers an existential crisis which, in contrast to the Myrddin of Welsh tradition, is overcome through intellectual discourse with his companion, a mythologised interpretation of Taliesin.²² The concept of the 'wild man' is also central to the twelfth century Middle Irish saga tale of *Buile Suibhne*²³, in which the terror and bloodshed of the Battle of Magh Rath in 637 results in Suibhne Geilt's frenetic wanderings in his distraught *geltacht*, or wild man state. Suibhne's madness is marked by extremes of mood. He veers from a spiritually ecstatic state, in which the outcast life of the *naomhghéilt* (saintly madman) inspires bursts of poetic eloquence: 'Uisce Ghlinne Bolcáin báin, éistecht re a énlaithe n-ionláin, a srotha millsi nach mall, a innsi agus a abhann'²⁴ before misery descends and Suibhne experiences a sense of 'otherness'; he is, once again, alienated and alone in a hostile natural world. The pain of human loss and grief are present in *Buile Suibhne*; however, transgression is the dominant theme in the text. Cursed by St Ronan for the killing of one of his psalmists, Suibhne is compelled to atone for his sins. He obsessively seeks spiritual redemption through physical hardship, notably the absence of

²⁰ Ibid p. 57, v.80, 'So for a whole summer he stayed hidden in the woods, discovered by none, forgetful of himself and of his own, lurking like a wild thing'. (English translation by Clarke.)

²¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, 'History Of The Kings Of Britain', written c.1136, is described by Stephens as a 'pseudo-historical composition', reflecting Geoffrey's reputation in scholarship for literary inventiveness. See Stephens (ed.), *The New Companion To The Literature Of Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 319.

²² See Clarke, (ed.), *Life Of Merlin*, p. 4, for an introduction to Geoffrey's interpretation of the persona of Taliesin in *Vita Merlini*.

²³ *Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy Of Suibhne) Being The Adventures Of Suibhne Geilt, A Middle Irish Romance*, ed. by J.G. O'Keeffe (London, England: David Nutt, New Oxford Street, 1913). On linguistic grounds, O'Keeffe suggests a date of composition at any time between the years 1200 and 1500. However, reference to Suibhne Geilt is made in the ninth or tenth century early Irish law tract, the *Book of Aicill* indicating that the tradition which associated the madness of Suibhne with the Battle of Mag Rath widespread at an earlier date. See pp. xvi-xvii.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 110, v.54. 'Water of bright Glen Bolcain/listening to its many birds/its melodious/rushing streams/its islands and its rivers'. (English translation by O'Keeffe, p. 111.) The depiction of the natural world as either a pleasant and beautiful place or a hostile, unforgiving environment mirrors Suibhne's changing perceptions. Cf. the contrast between Suibhne's description of Glen Bolcain (the home of madmen) given above, with his experience of Benn Boirche, 'Cold to-night is Benn Boirche/'tis the abode of a blighted man/no place is it for food of milk/nor in storm and endless snow', (v.58, p. 115).

sleep, food, company and music. Suibhne's metamorphosis into a 'bird man',²⁵ enacting Ronan's curse, also connotes 'otherness'. His powers of levitation and avian characteristics make him a liminal figure, one who exists outside society. Suibhne's trauma is portrayed as schizophrenic in nature. He vacillates between real fears (the danger inherent in a solitary life in the wild) and existential fears.²⁶ The depiction of Suibhne's terror at the Battle of Mag Rath may also be a manifestation of a psychological breakdown; his continued suffering as a fugitive alone in the legendary Glen Bolcain, a place sacred to the 'madmen of Ireland',²⁷ a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder.²⁸ In *Sweeney Astray*, the poet Seamus Heaney describes the terrifying vision experienced by Suibhne on the battlefield in visceral terms. The poetic imagery used by Heaney is also suggestive of the symptoms of shell-shock, as experienced by soldiers in the First World War. The experience of battlefield trauma in the life of the warrior is a-historic in nature and transcends time. As a warrior, poet and prophet driven mad in battle and living in the wild, the persona of Suibhne therefore resonates with the Myrddin of Welsh tradition and Geoffrey of Monmouth's Merlin in *Vita Merlini*. Grief, loss and trauma are the catalysts for madness in all three bodies of texts; however, the treatment of transgression varies considerably between the three personas.

In *Buile Suibhne*, the text infers that the catalyst for the onset of Suibhne's madness is the transgression he committed against St Ronan. In the Myrddin poems and *Vita Merlini*, however, the depiction of transgression is approached in an oblique manner. In the poems, *Yr Afallennau* (The Apple-trees) and *Yr Oianau* (The Ohs of Myrddin) the cause of Myrddin's madness is not specified but in *Yr Afallennau*, he feels responsibility for the death of the son

²⁵ When Suibhne heard the cries of the battle-hosts, 'his weapons fell naked from his hands, so that through Ronan's curse he went, like any bird of the air, in madness and imbecility'. See O'Keeffe (ed.), *Buile Suibhne*, p. 15.

²⁶ Ibid. p. xxxv. O'Keeffe notes how the levitation theme in Suibhne is 'curious' and there is little to suggest a legendary influence in this. Suibhne's continued suffering centres on the value of human life and his conscience; his physical changes (including feats of levitation) reflect his mental turmoil. The poem Suibhne recites after he resolves to return to Dal Araidhe and entrust himself to his people is redemptive in tone, the imagery reminiscent of Christ's suffering on the cross: 'I am in great grief to-night/the pure wind has pierced my body/wounded are my feet, my cheek is wan/O great God! it is my due', v.61, p. 119.

²⁷ Ibid. p. x.

²⁸ Erynn Rowan Laurie argues against viewing the suffering of the *geilt* as an allegory for some other meaning in academic discussion, such as Shamanism or Christian ascetic sainthood. She notes that Suibhne Geilt, Myrddin Wyllt, and others within Celtic literary tradition 'fled their homes and social roles after trauma, with symptoms that in modern terms resemble such emotional and psychological disabilities as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic, paranoia, schizophrenia, and depression'. See Erynn Rowan Laurie, 'Since Feathers Have Grown On My Body: Madness, Art, And Healing In Celtic Reconstructionist Spirituality', in *Disability And Religious Diversity: Cross-Cultural And Interreligious Perspectives*, ed. by Darla Y. Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus, 1st edn. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 47-69 (p. 47).

of his sister, Gwenddydd: 'Och iessu. Nadyffv wynihenit. kyn dyffod ar willave lleith mab guendit'.²⁹ The sorrow he expresses has a marked retributive tone; a desire for redemption and release through punishment, namely his own death. He is able to confront the nature of human mortality without fear, as without Gwenddolau, his protector, he is alienated from society, alone in the wild: 'Guydi da diogan aditan kertozion'.³⁰ The remorse Myrddin exhibits over his involvement in the death of Gwenddydd's son contrasts with the resentment he feels as a discarded warrior bereft of a king's support: 'a guydi guendolev nep riev impeirch'.³¹ The Myrddin poems reveal how he was once a warrior of status: 'ac igueith aryw derit. oet eur. Wy gozthozch'.³² However, having suffered many bouts of madness Myrddin now longs for peace everlasting: 'Buyf guaf guinwydic. gan guledic gorchortion'.³³ In *Yr Oianau*, Myrddin expresses his sense of loss and grief for his former lord, Gwenddolau, who fell in battle against Rhydderch: 'y dan vyguerid rut nv neud araf. Pen teernet gog[i]eet llaret mvyhaw'.³⁴ There is a biting sense of irony in Myrddin's description of Rhydderch, the enemy king, which is particularly marked in *Yr Oianau*. Myrddin describes Rhydderch in contradictory terms: 'erwis ritech hael ruyfadur fit'.³⁵ He is 'fierce' but also the master, or controller, of the 'faith'.³⁶ It is interesting to note, however, that Myrddin expresses no remorse or guilt over his loyalty to a pagan king, Gwenddolau,³⁷ whilst his visceral fear of

²⁹ Meirion Pennar, J. Gwenogvryn Evans, and James Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen* (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1989), p. 69. 'O Jesus, would that my end had come, before coming on my hand/the blood of the son/of Gwenddydd'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 74.) Jarman notes that Gwenddydd is named as Myrddin's sister in the *Cyfoesi*. She appears to refer to an estrangement between herself and her brother in this poem but also shows concern for his well-being, both physical and spiritual. See A. O. H. Jarman, *The Legend Of Merlin*, 3rd edn. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1960), p. 118.

³⁰ Pennar, Evans, and Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen*, p. 69. 'Only lack does now keep me company'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 74.)

³¹ Ibid. p. 69. 'Now that Gwenddolau's gone, no king respects me'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 73).

³² Ibid. p. 69. 'And in the battle of Arfderydd I wore a golden torque'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 73).

³³ Ibid. p. 69. Myrddin now longs to be 'A blissful hireling with the Lord of the Hosts', following 'twenty bouts of madness with the wild ones in the wild', (Cf. 'Dec mlinet adev ugein in y gein anetwon. it vif in ymteith gan willieith aguyllon'), ibid, pp. 69, 74. (English translation, Pennar.)

³⁴ Ibid. p. 78. 'Under my red earth is he now/ all quiet like, the greatest king of the North'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 88.)

³⁵ Ibid. p. 77. Pennar translates 'erwis', meaning 'pack of hounds' as 'fierce', 'fierce Rhydderch the Generous, the tiller-man of the faith...'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 87.) However, the text does not support this translation. I suggest 'away from Rhydderch Hael's hounds' is preferable. (Cf. GPC s.v. erchwys.)

³⁶ Pennar, Evans, and Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen*, p. 24. This first stanza may retain 'the doubted tradition that Rhydderch in defeating pagan Gwenddolau was also furthering the cause of Christianity'.

³⁷ Rachel Bromwich notes Gwenddolau's significance as an historical figure closely associated with literature and legend. The lines which refer to him in 'Yr Oianau' could be a surviving fragment of an elegy from a story comparable with the early *englynion* which commemorate the death of Urien Rheged. 'Although there is no mention of Gwenddolau in the extant *chwedlau*, his development from a heroic figure into a figure of legend is evinced by the attribution to him of the possession of magic birds (triad 32), and of a magic chessboard'. See Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 375.

Rhydderch Hael³⁸ keeps him a fugitive in the forest. Whilst Myrddin has to settle uncomfortably with his piglet companion, he observes with bitterness how Rhydderch the Generous is unaware of his physical and emotional suffering: ‘Bychan a wir rydderch hael heno y ar y wlet. Aporthaise neithuir o anhunet. Eiri hid impen clun. gan cun callet. Pibonvy imblev. blin wy rysset’.³⁹ Myrddin’s predicament, his physical suffering and mental anguish are perpetuated by his (unexplained) fear of Rhydderch and his companions. In *Yr Afallennau*, from the cover of his apple-tree, Myrddin soliloquizes his fears. He is ‘hated’ by Gwasawg, Rhydderch’s protector: ‘Oes kas gan gwassauc guaessaf Rydirch. Ry rewineif y mab ae merch. aghev aduc paup. pa rac nam kyueirch’.⁴⁰ Myrddin’s sense of alienation and ‘otherness’ is heightened by Gwasawg, ‘the defender of riches’: ‘Ryssorri guassauc guaessaf. meufit/Duywith atheirgueith. pedeirgueith in vn. dit’.⁴¹ It is unclear how Myrddin brought about the ruin of Gwasawg’s son and daughter; however, the association between (an unspecified) transgression committed by a literary protagonist and its consequences, namely human suffering, loss and grief, appears to be a trope found elsewhere in Welsh medieval literary tradition. In *Canu Heledd*, and *Canu Llywarch Hen*, Heledd and Llywarch feel intense guilt over the loss of their kin in battle. Llywarch claims responsibility for the loss of his twenty-four sons.⁴² Heledd mourns the death of her brother Cynddylan and all her kin.⁴³ Myrddin too suffers catastrophic loss but in contrast to Heledd, he does not wander the land alone. He is not diminished by the ravages of old age, as experienced by Llywarch.⁴⁴ In *Yr*

³⁸ Rhydderch Hael is a historically attested figure, a prominent late sixth century ruler of the Northern Britons. *The Life of St Kentigern* by Jocelyn of Furness, c.1180, represents Rhydderch (Rederech) as the champion of Christianity in north Britain, and as the supporter of St Kentigern, patron of the see of Glasgow. In chapter 37, his epithet ‘generous’ is earned for feeding a visiting *joculator* (bard) a dish of mulberries in the middle of winter. In *Vita Merlini*, Merlin’s sister, Ganiada is married to one *Rodarcus*. See Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 494.

³⁹ Pennar, Evans, and Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen*, pp. 80, 81. ‘Rhydderch the Generous/at his carousal/little does he know tonight/the extent/last night/of my insomnia. Snow to my thighs/surrounded by dingoes/icicles in my hair, my glory gone’. (English translation by Pennar, pp. 91, 92.)

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 69. ‘I am hated by Gwasawg, Rhydderch’s protector: I brought about the ruin/of his son and daughter. Death took everybody away, that is why they don’t talk to me’. (English translation by Pennar, p. 73.)

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 69. ‘That Gwasawg the defender of riches fulminates against me, not twice but three times, four times in one day’. (English translation by Pennar, p. 73.)

⁴² Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study And Edition Of The Englynion* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Boydell & Brewer, 1990). See ‘Marwnad Gwên’, line 28b, p. 408: ‘through my tongue they have been killed’. (English translation by Rowland, p. 480.) See Chapter 2 for more detailed discussion of *Canu Llywarch Hen*.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 436. See ‘Ffreuer’, line 57c. (English translation by Rowland, p. 488.) Heledd laments that ‘Because of the misfortune of my tongue they have been slain’. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of *Canu Heledd*.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 418. See ‘Can yr Henwr’, line 17a,b,c *Vym pedwar prifhas eirmoet/yt gyueruydynt yn vn oet/pas a heneint heint a hoe*. ‘I am old, I am lonely, I am shapeless and cold/after (having had) an honourable sleeping place, I am wretched, I am bent in three’. (English translation by Rowland, p. 476.)

Afallennau, Myrddin finds a form of refuge, an alternative kingdom of his own in Celyddon in which the apple-tree will provide protection and sanctuary from Rhydderch: 'Awallen pen atif in llanerch. yhangert ae hargel rac riev Ryderch'.⁴⁵ In *Yr Oianau*, Myrddin advises his piglet to keep away from the fierce Rhydderch: 'Nachlat dy redcir ympen minit. Clat in lle argel in arcoedit'.⁴⁶

As the old order (Gwenddolau) is replaced by the new (Rhydderch), Myrddin is a warrior displaced and his 'otherness' is confirmed through his existence in a wild kingdom, alienated from his previous life. The question of guilt and moral responsibility is a pertinent one in the Myrddin poems.⁴⁷ It is a question which goes beyond the portrayal of a legendary figure for literary purposes to reflect greater social anxieties about a loss of national identity in the face of Norman aggression. The literary origins of a sense of guilt and loss within the culture of the Britons are meshed with the historical perception of the character of the Britons, as instigated by Gildas. In his historical and moral exegesis, *De Excidio Britanniae*, Gildas connects the fate of the Britons with the divisiveness and sin of their kings. In *De Excidio*, 27-36, Gildas places squarely moral responsibility on the kings who are willing to wage war at any human cost: 'quid stupes, animae carnifex propriae? quid tibi flammam inferni voluntarie accendis nequaquam defecturas?'.⁴⁸ Although no extant medieval prose version of the Myrddin legend remains, the Welsh Triads indicate that the Battle of Arfderydd was the subject of a saga, whether oral or written, in which Myrddin's overlord Gwenddolau figured prominently.⁴⁹ The Battle of Arfderydd is listed alongside the Battle of Goddau and Camlan in the Welsh Triads as one of Three Futile Battles, on account of its having been fought 'because of a lark's nest'.⁵⁰ The 'worthlessness' of the cause of the battle heightens the sense

⁴⁵ Pennar, Evans, and Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen*, p. 68. 'Sweet apple-tree/that in Llanerch grows/ its mystique will hide it from Rhydderch the king'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 73.)

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 77, 'don't dig about in your sty/on top of the mountain, forage in the hidden place/in Argoeddydd'. (English translation by Pennar, p. 87.)

⁴⁷ Jarman, 'The Merlin Legend And The Welsh Tradition Of Prophecy', in Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts (eds.), *The Arthur Of The Welsh*, p. 118. In 'Yr Afallennau', 'a moral dimension' is present, 'perhaps associated with the cause of the fateful battle [Arfderydd] and Myrddin's subsequent and possibly retributive suffering'.

⁴⁸ Gildas, *The Ruin Of Britain And Other Works*, trans. by Michael Winterbottom, *Arthurian Period Sources*, 7 (London: Phillimore, 1978), 29.1, p. 30. 'Come, executioner of your own soul, why are you stupefied? Why do you of your own free will light for yourself flames of hell that will not die down?'.

⁴⁹ Jarman, 'The Merlin Legend And The Welsh Tradition Of Prophecy', in Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts (eds.), *The Arthur Of The Welsh*, p. 120.

⁵⁰ The battle of Arfderydd was fought possibly over possession of Caerlaverock, 'Lark's Fort', north of Carlisle. Triad 84 states 'This is why those (Battles) were called Futile: because they were brought about by such barren causes as that'. See Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p.217.

of loss and grief experienced by Myrddin in his Wild Man state. Myrddin does express remorse for the transgressions he has committed against his own kin but perhaps greater blame may be apportioned to the kings, the consequences of whose actions have led to Myrddin's suffering as a forgotten warrior. A similar contrast between the suffering of the Wild Man and the 'petty' causes of battles is also manifested in the literature surrounding the persona of Suibhne Geilt.⁵¹ The seemingly trivial cause of the battle of Magh Rath adds to the poignancy of Suibhne's subsequent suffering, particularly as he fought on the side of Congal Claen, the battle aggressor. The poetic embodiment of the Wild Man's abrupt loss of a former life of status and social belonging following the battle in which he was a committed warrior, acts as a powerful reminder of the Wild Man's disconnected existence and 'otherness', as an exile from civilisation and without identity.

The theme of transgression is also evident in the tale of Lailoken, the literary antecedent of Myrddin/Merlin and Suibhne. The legend of Lailoken has two narrative strands which have import in the portrayal of transgression, loss, and grief in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*. In the *Life of St Kentigern* (c.1180), Jocelin of Furness portrays Laloecen (Lailoken) as a 'certain *homo fatuus*, or fool'.⁵² Jocelin's portrayal of Laloecen the fool is evident in one of two earlier, freestanding tales.⁵³ In the second, shorter tale, entitled *Lailoken and Meldred*, Lailoken has been captured by King Meldred and held in his fort. On seeing the queen enter court with a leaf caught in her shawl, he laughs loudly but refused to explain his laughter unless promised his freedom. Once his freedom was granted, Lailoken informed the king that the queen had committed adultery and that the leaf had betrayed her.⁵⁴ In this earlier tale, the theme of transgression is manifested in the actions of the unfaithful queen who also has

⁵¹ A lay spoken by Domnall, the High King and Son of Aed, alludes to the offence taken by Congal Claen, the battle instigator, at a banquet held by Domnall. 'I offered Congal Claen/when we were together the blessing of all the men of Erin/great was the mulct for one egg'. See O'Keeffe (ed.), *Buile Suibhne*, v. 16 p. 21. Congal objected when 'a goose-egg was placed on a silver dish before every king at the board except Congal, a hen-egg on a wooden dish was given him'. See O'Keeffe (ed.), *Buile Suibhne*, footnotes to v.16, p. 163.

⁵² Jarman, *The Merlin Legend And The Welsh Tradition Of Prophecy*, in Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts (eds.), *The Arthur Of The Welsh*, p. 121, suggests that he was 'perhaps court jester, with a gift of prophecy who lived at the court of the sixth-century King Rederech (Rhydderch)'.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 122. Laloecen first appears in two tales (preserved in a fifteenth-century Scottish manuscript) which are probably derived from an earlier twelfth-century *Life of St Kentigern* than that by Jocelin. In these tales, called respectively *Lailoken and Kentigern* and *Lailoken and Meldred*, Laloecen's name takes the form of Lailoken (or Lailochen). In the first tale, Lailoken is portrayed as a naked, hairy madman whom Kentigern meets while praying in a lonely wood. The second, shorter tale, *Lailoken and Meldred*, tells of Lailoken's capture and imprisonment by King Meldred.

⁵⁴ Jarman, *The Merlin Legend And The Welsh Tradition Of Prophecy*, in Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts (eds.), *The Arthur Of The Welsh*, p. 123.

Lailoken killed in an act of revenge. This text has a clear correlation with Geoffrey's treatment of transgression in *Vita Merlini* in which the same episode is repeated. Geoffrey's subtext, however, suggests that Merlin's laughter, in this case, is a sardonic response to the immorality of his sister, Queen Ganiada, the queen's actions and Rhydderch's blindness to her transgression: 'Flexit ad hoc oculos vates risumque resolvit astantesque ' viros fecit convertere vultus in se mirantes quoniam ridere negarat'.⁵⁵ Rhydderch presses Merlin for an explanation but he refuses Rhydderch's promise of gifts in abundance. Merlin finally admits the reason for his laughter when Rhydderch agrees to free him. Merlin's response is curious and indicates he views the king as a love-blinded fool: 'Iccirco risi quoniam Rodarche fuisti facto culpandus simul et laudandus eodem'.⁵⁶ Queen Ganiada's reaction to the public exposure of her adultery by her brother is suggestive of Geoffrey's ambiguous presentation of transgression, loss, and grief in *Vita Merlini*. Ganiada has committed a transgression but is not (initially) morally compelled to confess, or atone for her wrong-doing. She is portrayed, in the first instance, as deceitful and 'unperturbed': 'Mota set illa nichil vultu ridente purdorem celat et alloquitur tali sermone maritum. 'Cur tristaris, amans? Cur sic irasceris ab re meque nec ex merito dampnas, credisque furenti qui ratione carens miscet mendacia veris?'.⁵⁷ In contrast to Suibhne and Myrddin, Geoffrey's Merlin is contradictory and appears almost as an observer of the life around him, emotionally unattached from events. Although he experiences loss and grief for his fallen companions on the battlefield, this Merlin is the visionary bard, and friend of Taliesin. This mystical pairing perhaps indicates that Geoffrey intended to place Merlin on morally 'higher ground' than those around him. Whilst contemplating his wife Gwendoloena's forthcoming marriage to another man, Merlin is depicted perched on a high peak, uttering prophetic thoughts and contemplating natural philosophy: 'Sidereum cursum vates spectabat ab alto monte, loquens tacite sub divo talia dicens. Quid sibi vult radius Martis?'.⁵⁸ Merlin is capable of transgression, as his savage dispatching of Gwendoloena's new bridegroom demonstrates; however, Geoffrey's

⁵⁵ Clarke (ed.), *Life Of Merlin*, lines 262-264, p. 66. 'The prophet turned his eyes on this scene, and laughed. It made the men standing nearby turn to look at him in surprise, since he had been refusing to laugh. (English translation by Clarke.)

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 66, lines 286-287, 'The reason I laughed, Rodarch, was that in one and the same act you earned both approval and disapproval.' (English translation by Clarke.)

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 67, lines 297- 301, 'But she, unperturbed, hid her shame behind a smile and addressed her husband thus: "Why so gloomy, my love? Why so angry over this, and so unjust in your blame of me, and why do you believe a lunatic who muddles lies and truth together because he is out of his wits?" (English translation by Clarke.)

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 75, lines 429-430, 'the prophet was watching the stars in their courses from a high hill. He was out in the open, talking to himself and saying: What means this ray from Mars?' (English translation by Clarke.)

interpretation of Merlin's insanity and the Wild Man motif seems almost to excuse this act of violence as a consequence of, or reaction to, the brutal existence he has been leading, far removed from civilisation: 'Qui nemus ingressus fuerat rituque ferino vivebat, paciens concrete frigoris alge sub nive sub pluvia sub iniquo flamine venti idque placebat ei potius quam jura per urbes exercere suas gentesque domare feroces'.⁵⁹ Merlin's philosophical rejection of society may indicate the presence of political commentary by Geoffrey. Geoffrey depicts his Merlin as a high-status individual, a king and prophet to the *Demetae* but unlike other literary wild men, Merlin is a thoroughly modern intellectual, a quality which reflects Geoffrey himself.

Geoffrey's portrayal of Merlin's madness and transformation into a wild man in *Vita Merlini* veers away from the suffering of Myrddin, the displaced warrior, and the purgatorial, condemnatory visions experienced on the battlefield by Suibhne. Merlin's reaction to the events occurring around him is not driven by a sense of guilt but by an all-consuming sense of loss and grief for his three fallen 'brothers' on the battlefield of Arfderydd: 'deplangitque viros nec cessat fundere fletus. Pulveribus crines spargit vestesque rescindit et prostratus humi nunc hac illacque volutat'.⁶⁰ Neil Thomas observes how Geoffrey's treatment of transgression represents a 'reconceptualisation' of the original legend. In *Vita Merlini*, unlike Myrddin and Suibhne, Merlin is not trammelled with guilt for any wrong-doing. There is no suggestion of retributive or penitential suffering to Merlin's wild man existence in the woods.⁶¹ Geoffrey's Merlin, therefore, is 'a man driven not by guilt or fear but by a disgust at the homicidal effects of battle – *contemptus mundi*'.⁶² Given Geoffrey's acknowledged literary inventiveness, and gift for 're-purposing' Brittonic legends and literary material, it is possible to argue that Geoffrey uses Merlin's madness as a literary trope, to express his own moral views on human grief, suffering, and loss after battle. Certainly, the narrative arc of Merlin's three lapses into madness and return to 'reason' are described in logical, humanistic terms. Geoffrey's logical, humanistic world view stands in stark contrast with the emotive portrayal of Suibhne, compelled to flee the battlefield of Magh Rath in terror, fearful of

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 73, lines 416-420, 'Merlin had entered the forest and was living an animal life, existing on frozen moss in the snow, in the rain, in the angry blast. Yet that satisfied him more than administering the law in cities and ruling over a warrior people.' (English translation by Clarke.)

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 54, lines 65-67, 'He mourned for his heroes; his flooding tears had no end. He threw dust upon his hair, tore his clothes and lay prostrate on the ground, rolling to and fro.' (English translation by Clarke.)

⁶¹ Neil Thomas, 'The Celtic Wild Man Tradition And Geoffrey Of Monmouth's 'Vita Merlini': Madness Or 'Contemptus Mundi?', *Arthuriana*, 10.1 (2000), 27-42 (p. 32).

⁶² Ibid. p. 34.

human contact. In contrast to Suibhne and Myrddin's visceral response to their individual situations, the depiction of Merlin's exit from the Battle of Arfderydd and escape to the woods implies a level of presence and self-awareness. He refuses food and deliberately conceals his flight from others: 'Jam tribus emensis defleverat ille diebus respueratque cibos, tantus dolor usserat illum. Inde novas furias cum tot tantisque querelis aera complisset cepit furtimque recedit et fugit ad silvas nec vult fugiendo videri'.⁶³ In *Buile Suibhne*, Suibhne's transgressions are explored in the text through his depiction as a wild man in avian form, cursed by madness, and driven by an obsessive quest for atonement for his sins. Suibhne, a petty king of the Dal Araidhe, suffers the onset of madness on the battlefield of Magh Rath having witnessed a terrifying vision in the sky. He is cursed twice by St Ronan, once for throwing Ronan's psalter into the lake in a fury after hearing the cleric marking out a church in Suibhne's territory, and again at the battle of Magh Rath, for killing one of Ronan's psalmists.⁶⁴ Suibhne's transgressions continue when he throws a spear at Ronan himself: 'Dorad andara hurchar don fhogha faobrach uillenngér dochum an chlérigh budhdhén go rosben isin chlog robháoi for a ucht/go rosging a crann as a n'airde isin aer'.⁶⁵ This image of the spear flying into the air is echoed in Ronan's curse. He condemns Suibhne to live in the wild like a bird and to go 're gealtacht gan chairde'.⁶⁶ The poetic imagery in this verse is important as it foretells the repercussions of Suibhne's transgressions, his suffering and madness. Ronan curses Suibhne specifically for his attack on the holy bell: 'Mo mallacht for Suibhne/rium is more a chionaidh/a fhogha blaith builidh/dosaith trem c[h]log creadhail'.⁶⁷ The bell becomes a poetic conceit for the Church. Suibhne's attack on the bell, as a symbol of the Church, therefore, represents his transgression against God: An clog sin roghonais

⁶³ Clarke (ed.), *Life of Merlin*, p. 56, lines 70-73. 'So for three long days he wept, refusing food, so great the grief that consumed him. Then, when the air was full with these repeated loud complainings, a strange madness came upon him. He crept away and fled to the woods, unwilling that any should see his going.' (English translation by Clarke.)

⁶⁴ O'Keeffe, (ed.), *Buile Suibhne*, v.8, p. 10. It is important to consider Suibhne's motivation for killing Ronan's psalmist. Ronan's community were sprinkling the host with holy water. They sprinkled some on Suibhne which he understood as them mocking him. The text is suggesting that Suibhne is guilty of taking a life but also the pride of sin, as suggested in Proverbs 16:18, 'Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall'. See Salem Web Network, *Biblestudytools*, 2021.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 10, v.9, 'He made another cast with the edged, sharp-angled dart at the cleric himself, so that it pierced the bell which was on his breast and the shaft sprang off it up in the air.' (English translation by O'Keeffe, p. 11.)

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 12, v.10, 'in madness, without respite!'. (English translation by O'Keeffe, p. 13.)

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.12, v.10, 'my curse on Suibhne! Great is his guilt against me, his smooth, vigorous dart he thrust through my holy bell'. (English translation by O'Keeffe, p. 13.)

Notchurfi-si ar cráobhaibh Gurbat aon re henaibh, An clog naomh re náomhaibht'.⁶⁸ Ronan's condemnation of Suibhne's actions has a condemnatory and retributive tone. Suibhne's 'wounding' of the holy bell and his fate, to become the 'bell of saints before saints' infers an element of judgement.⁶⁹ For the assault he has committed on the Church, Suibhne will be sent into the heavens in his bird form to be judged by the saints for his sins. In the tale of *Lailoken and Kentigern*,⁷⁰ Lailoken's interactions with St Kentigern exhibit a penitential motif which is mirrored in Suibhne's friendship with St Moling.⁷¹ Lailoken's desire to receive the sacrament is reflected in the theme of atonement and redemption, as manifested in *Buile Suibhne*. Mongan, Moling's jealous swineherd who spears Suibhne in the side and kills him whilst he eats the meal of milk left for him by Mongan's wife, Muirghil, is condemned for his transgression by St Moling who gives Suibhne the sacrament and promises him that he will be in heaven as long as himself: 'I comhaitte frium-sa for nimh dhuit, roráidhset an laoidh-si eatura ina ttriur .i. Suibhne, Mongán, Moling'.⁷² One of Moling's community speaks a lay which indicates that through atonement and redemption, Suibhne has regained his lost identity. He is no longer a Wild Man of the Woods but has himself become a conflation of hierarchical figures; from condemned figure, a 'bell of saints' to a king once

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 12, v.10, 'That bell which thou hast wounded will send thee among branches, so that thou shalt be one with the birds - the bell of saints before saints'. (English translation by O'Keeffe, p. 13.)

⁶⁹ Ronan's curse on Suibhne mirrors the retributive tone of the Day of Judgement, as told in the Book of Revelations. 'Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done.' Rev 20: 11-12. See Salem Web Network, 2021.

⁷⁰ See Jarman, *The Legend Of Merlin*, p. 19. Lailoken encounters Kentigern on several occasions and 'ultimately prophesied that that he was about to die a threefold death and implored Kentigern to give him the sacrament'. 'The same day Lailoken was waylaid by the shepherd of King Meldred who beat him with cudgels and threw him into the Tweed, where his body was pierced by a stake. He thus died in three ways simultaneously, by blows, by drowning and by transfixion'.⁷⁰ Cf. Suibhne's death at the hands of Mongan in O'Keeffe (ed.), *Buile Suibhne*, p. 144-145.

⁷¹ It is interesting to observe that penitential motifs are notably absent from the Myrddin poems and *Vita Merlini*. It is possible that this may reflect resistance by the Celtic Church in Wales to increasing Anglo-Roman influence from the fifth-century onwards. 'The fundamental principles to which the Celtic people clung everywhere was their own ecclesiastical tradition. The Welsh and the West Britons were keenly alive to the danger of placing themselves under a neighbouring Saxon, or at least an Anglo-Roman archbishop. His home was among the powerful Saxons whom the Celtic ecclesiastics must have regarded as parvenus in religion'. See Nora K. Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church: Delivered at King's College in the University of Durham on 22, 23, and 24 March 1960*, The Riddell Memorial Lectures, 32, Rev. edn., reprint (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1997), p. 140.

⁷² O'Keeffe, *Buile Suibhne*, p. 146, v. 82, '...even that you be in Heaven as long as I shall be, and the three uttered this lay between them, that is, Suibhne, Mongan, and Moling'. (English translation by O'Keeffe.)

more, a ‘saint’ and a ‘saintly madman’: ‘Truagh sin, a mhucaidh Moling, Dorighnis gníomh talchair tinn, Mairg domharb a los a neirt *An rígh, an [n]áomh, an náomhgeilt*.⁷³

Arguably, through a process of conflation, the religious themes of penance, atonement and redemption have become inextricably woven into the original tale of a warrior gone mad. Indeed, the penitential motif in *Buile Suibhne* is directly linked to Suibhne’s *geltacht* condition which can be read as an ascetic form of penance for the transgressions he has committed against Ronan. The concept of the warrior gone mad through the trauma of battle is a motif which underpins the Myrddin poems, *Vita Merlini* and the tale of Suibhne Geilt. Both Myrddin and Suibhne are portrayed as loyal warriors who have suffered and become ‘madmen’ due to the ‘petty’ causes of battles. The devastation wrought on Suibhne through Ronan’s curse is embodied in the terrifying vision he experiences on the battlefield of Magh Rath. On hearing the cry of the battle-hosts reverberating in the sky, Ronan’s curse comes to pass and Suibhne is overcome with terror: ‘rofhéach Suibhne suas iarum co rolíon nemhain dobhar dásacht fáoinnel fúalang foluamain udmhaille, anbsaidhe anfhóistine, miosgais gach ionaidh ina mbíodh sear gach ionaidh noco roichedh’.⁷⁴ Reflecting Merlin’s contempt for the world, Suibhne’s desire to retreat and escape is overwhelming.⁷⁵ The thirteenth-century Norse text, *Konungs Skuggsjá* contains a detailed description of the *gelt*, as manifested in Irish tradition: ‘When hostile forces meet and are drawn up in two lines and both set up a terrifying battle-cry, it happens that timid and youthful men who have never been in the host before are sometime seized with such fear and terror that they lose their wits and run away from the rest into the forest, where they seek food like beasts and shun the meeting of men like wild animals’.⁷⁶ In this text, cowardice or fear in battle are identified as the cause of the *gelt*’s flight to the forest, rather than a heavenly vision and an imputation of transgression and

⁷³ Ibid. p. 144, v.80. ‘Sad is that, O swineherd of Moling, thou hast wrought a wilful, sorry deed, woe to him who has slain by dint of his strength *the king, the saint, the saintly madman*’. (my italics) (English translation by O’Keeffe, p. 145.)

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 14, v. 11, ‘he looked up, whereupon turbulence (?), and darkness, and fury, and giddiness, and frenzy, and flight, unsteadiness, restlessness, and unquiet filled him, likewise disgust with every place which he had not reached’. (Question mark indicating unclear translation is O’Keeffe’s.) (English translation by O’Keeffe, p. 15.)

⁷⁵ Laurie notes that ‘in the Celtic literary tradition, *geltacht* (DIL, s.v. *geltacht*), defined as ‘panic, terror, frenzy, insanity,’ is a specific response to trauma involving violent death or battle, acted out in mythic territory’. ‘The hypersensitivity and hyperawareness of the *geilt* makes being around others uncomfortable, generating responses of paranoia and panic that can be eased only by self-imposed isolation. Civilization is experienced as painful, ugly, and horrifying’. See Laurie, *Disability And Religious Diversity*, p. 48.

⁷⁶ Laurence Marcellus Larson, *The King’s Mirror (Speculum Regale - Konungs Skuggsjá)* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1917), p. 100.

guilt, as in the tales of Lailoken and Suibhne. In the tale of *Lailoken and Kentigern*, Lailoken experiences a vision in the sky; the heavens have opened and a voice accuses him of his crime. He then sees ‘a vision of intolerable splendour, countless troops of warriors brandishing fiery lances and shining weapons as him’. ‘An evil spirit thereupon seized him and drove him to the forest’.⁷⁷ The presence of ‘an evil spirit’ that drives Lailoken from the battlefield is suggestive of desertion from the battle. Suibhne too has much to lose as a king who flees the battle. The role of the warrior traditionally emphasises masculine traits as ‘innate essences, unchanging and ahistorical’. This essentialist view of masculinity draws on the binary opposition between the (heroic) self and the (antiheroic) other.⁷⁸ The notion of flight from the battlefield resonates with the charge of cowardice and ‘lack of moral fibre’, as experienced by soldiers in the First World War, a concept which is explored in the literature of the period.⁷⁹ Pividori observes how ‘The idea of cowardice as providing an exact mirror of the anxieties and fears of the soldier hero is distinctive of World War One literature. The coward is an outsider that inspires fear and rejection’. The literary depiction of physical suffering in the wild man in his *geltacht* state finds similarities with soldiers suffering from shell-shock (or post-traumatic stress disorder). Leys notes how the military psychiatrist William Brown ‘reasoned that when a soldier was confronted with the need to maintain self-control and army discipline in front-line conditions of unremitting physical and psychological stress, he was likely to respond to any significant trauma by breaking down. Unable to discharge his powerful emotions directly, through action or speech, he unconsciously ‘materialized’ them by converting them into physical or bodily symptoms’. Brown’s diagnosis of shell-shock was characterised by ‘stupor, confusion, mutism, loss of sight or hearing, exhaustion, sleeplessness, depression, and terrifying, repetitive nightmares’.⁸⁰ In *Sweeney Astray*, the poet Seamus Heaney portrays Suibhne’s unearthly vision on the battlefield at Magh Rath using powerful imagery reminiscent of Wilfred Owen’s visceral and bloody depictions of trench warfare:⁸¹

⁷⁷ See Jarman, ‘The Merlin Legend And The Welsh Tradition Of Prophecy’, in Bromwich, Jarman, and Roberts (eds.), *The Arthur Of The Welsh*, p. 122.

⁷⁸ Cristina Pividori, ‘Resisting the Hero’s Tale: The Trope Of The Cowardly Soldier In The Literature Of The Great War’, *Nordic Journal Of English Studies*, 13(4) (2014), 111–31 (p. 111) <<https://doi.org/DOI:10.35360/njes.335>>.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 112.

⁸⁰ Ruth Leys, ‘Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, And The Question Of Memory’, *Critical Inquiry*, 20.4 (1994), 623–62 (p.624).

⁸¹ Seamus Heaney, *Sweeney Astray* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001) p. 8, v.11.

His brain convulsed, his mind slit open.
 Vertigo, hysteria, lurchings,
 And launchings came over him, he staggered and flapped desperately,
 He was revolted by the thought of known places
 And dreamed strange migrations.⁸²

The depiction of transgression, loss and grief in these texts conveys the complexity of human emotions through a combination of poetic imagery and literary form and structure. Suibhne's transgressions and subsequent suffering are depicted with humanity and pathos. O'Keeffe hints at an unusually 'modern' literary treatment of Suibhne's madness in the text, 'The theme is treated throughout in so unconventional and natural a way, that it may well owe nothing more to legend than the central idea' This humanistic approach characterises Geoffrey of Monmouth's treatment of the Myrddin legend in *Vita Merlini*.⁸³ This unconventional approach facilitates a humanistic and empathetic portrayal which is a-historic in its consideration of the plight of the warrior in medieval society. This is particularly poignant in *Yr Oianau*, in which the piglet, Myrddin's sole companion, is the silent recipient of Myrddin, the displaced warrior's sense of sorrow and sense of loss. In *Vita Merlini*, but particularly *Buile Suibhne*, the prose sections of the narrative are characterised by a strong sense of drama, fuelled by conflict and resolution between the key characters. Suibhne's story follows an arc of conflict with the Church (St Ronan), followed by resolution (receiving the sacrament from Moling). As a warrior, he also experiences conflict and resolution, terror on the battlefield, a sense of loss for his former life as a king of the Dal Araidhe, followed by acceptance and atonement at the end of his life. The Merlin of *Vita Merlini* experiences loss and grief but transgression is regularly portrayed as the act of another (Ganieda's adultery, Merlin's former lover and the poisoned apples, and Maeldin's transgressions and atonement through drinking the spring water administered by Merlin). Critical analysis has focussed on identifying the links between the Lailoken legend and the corresponding Wild Man tales of Suibhne and Myrddin/Merlin. This remains a topic for continuing debate but perhaps the

⁸² Cf. *Dulce et Decorum Est* by Wilfred Owen. 'In all my dreams before my helpless sight/He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning/If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace/Behind the wagons that we flung him in/and watch the white eyes writhing in his face'. See *Poems of the Great War, 1914-1918* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 30.

⁸³ O'Keeffe, (ed.), *Buile Suibhne*, p. viii.

most salient aspects of the extant texts is their eloquent, literary depiction of the most human of experiences, transgression, loss and grief.

Chapter Two – A feminine perspective: transgression, loss and grief in *Canu Heledd* and poetry attributed to Gormlaith

The ninth century *Canu Heledd englynion* cycle⁸⁴, and the tenth-century corpus of poetry attributed to the Irish queen, Gormlaith⁸⁵ demonstrate the re-imagining of historical female figures into literary personas. The uncommonness of two predominant female personas in heroic literature cannot be underestimated. In early Celtic medieval literature, the use of a narrator speaking in the first-person is a distinct and essential feature of the poetic structure of the Welsh saga *englynion* and Irish lyric poems; however, *Canu Heledd*, is exceptional as it provides the first manifestation of a major female character in Welsh literature to compare with the lyric poems. Similarly, Gormlaith's suffering may be compared with the lament of Créide, daughter of Gúaire of Aidne.⁸⁶ In turn, it is possible to apply the epithet of tragic heroine to both Heledd and Gormlaith. Both personas fit the literary paradigm of the doomed heroine of Welsh and Irish literature, as embodied by Deirdre of the Ulster Cycle whose kills herself by dashing her head against a rock and Iseult of Arthurian tradition, who dies beside her fatally wounded lover. In the Second Branch of the *Mabinogi*, despite being innocent of moral guilt, Branwen believes that her marriage to Matholwch is the catalyst for the warfare between her brother, Bendigeidfran and her husband. Her final words before a dramatic death, 'Oh son of God,' 'woe that I was ever born. Two good islands have been laid waste because of me!'⁸⁷ resonate with Heledd's expression of guilt in *Ffreuer*, 'Gwynn y byt freur mor yw diheint. heno gwedy colli kenueint. O anffawt vyn tauawt yt lesseint'.⁸⁸ Similarly, as Branwen gives 'a mighty sigh' before her heart breaks and she is buried in a four-sided grave, Gormlaith, consumed by grief, impales herself on her own bed post, 'so that it split my heart

⁸⁴ Originally transcribed in the Llyfr Coch Hergest, (The Red Book Of Hergest), c. 1382. This chapter refers to the cycle (original Welsh and English translation) as translated by Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study And Edition Of The Englynion* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer ; Boydell & Brewer [distributors], 1990).

⁸⁵ The largest body of extant literary texts is a cycle of Early Modern Irish poems dating to the twelfth or thirteenth century, according to Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry* (Dublin: The Dublin Institute Of Advanced Studies, 1970), p. 203. A further collection of poems, transcribed by Peadar Ó Gealacan (1839) includes six poems not found in the O'Gara manuscript used by Bergin. This chapter also refers to these poems, as translated and edited by Anne O'Sullivan, 'Triamhuin Ghormlaithe', *Eriu*, 16 Contributions In Memory Of Osborn Bergin (1952), 189-199.

⁸⁶ *Early Irish Lyrics: Eighth To Twelfth Century*, ed. by Gerard Murphy, 1st paperback edn. (Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1998), p.87. Créide, daughter of Gúaire laments the loss of Dínertach, son of Nechtan of the Ui Fidgente, killed in the battle of Aidne.

⁸⁷ *The Mabinogion*, ed. by Sioned Davies, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 33.

⁸⁸ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 436, line 57a,b,c, "Blessed is Ffreuer - how painful it is tonight after the loss of family. Because of the misfortune of my tongue they have been slain'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 488.)

in the middle'.⁸⁹ The portrayal of human loss, and, atypically for poetry of the early Middle Ages, human loss experienced by, and expressed by a woman is a central theme in both cycles of poetry. *Canu Heledd* depicts the hopeless defence of the Shropshire borderland against the English of Mercia by Cynddylan, a Prince of Powys, and brother (and lord) to Heledd. The englynion allude to Cynddylan's death in battle and the destruction of his *llys* at Pengwern.⁹⁰ Heledd is depicted as the last survivor of the apocalyptic destruction of Cynddylan's royal house of Powys. Alone, Heledd laments the death of Cynddylan, and the loss of everything of true value to her; her kin, her home, and her homeland. The imagery in the poems is characterised by bleakness, particularly in connection with the devastation of the land. Heledd's loss is absolute, her mood fluctuates between sorrow and bewilderment as she struggles to comprehend her predicament.

The daughter of a high king, Flann Sinna (876-916), Gormlaith (ob. 948) is one of a trio of royal Gormlaiths, who, as actual personages have 'engendered a corpus of fictional material' which parallels 'the host of male rulers whose deeds are celebrated in what have come to be known as king-tales'.⁹¹ The catalyst for Gormlaith's ⁹² grief is the loss of her third husband, Niall Glúndub, son of Áed Finnliath.⁹³ Attributed, anachronistically, to Gormlaith herself, the poems reflect the widespread literary practice in which many heroes of stories were also reputed to have been poets, notably, Tristan, Taliesin and some of the pre-Islamic Arab poets.⁹⁴ Gormlaith, the historical queen is re-imagined as female bard but also tragic heroine for whom lamentation over the death of her husband and king is a means of emotional catharsis. Gormlaith is, therefore, forged from poetry rather than history, her function is as an 'inspirational muse'.⁹⁵ The salient question, however, still remains why a female narrator? Examples of the use of a woman's voice to express grief and lamentation can be found in

⁸⁹ Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, verse XI, line 7d, p. 215, 'gur ro scoilt mo chroidhe a ccomhthrom,'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 315.)

⁹⁰ Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads Of The Island Of Britain*, Fourth Edition (University of Wales Press, 2017), p. 324.

⁹¹ Maire Ni Mhaonaigh, 'Tale Of Three Gormlaiths In Medieval Irish Literature', *Eriu*, 52 (2002), 1–24 (p. 1).

⁹² Here, and throughout this chapter, it is the third Gormlaith (ob. 948) who is being discussed.

⁹³ Ni Mhaonaigh, 'Tale Of Three Gormlaiths In Medieval Irish Literature', p. 7. Niall Glúndub, a Ui Néill king is also a grandson of the ninth-century Gormlaith d. 861.

⁹⁴ W. Ann Trindade, 'Irish Gormlaith As A Sovereignty Figure', *Etudes Celtiques*, 23 (1986), 143–56.

⁹⁵ Ni Mhaonaigh, 'Tale Of Three Gormlaiths In Medieval Irish Literature', p. 17.

Latin verse⁹⁶ and also in Old English verse, notably at Beowulf's funeral.⁹⁷ However, in *Canu Heledd*, Heledd's role as the 'last survivor', or last lamenter, need not necessarily be played by a woman. Jenny Rowland suggests that the choice of narrator, then, is dependent on envisaging a more complex story background in which Heledd's function is more apparent.⁹⁸ Heledd's position as sister, not wife to Cynddylan may have its origins in the seventh century elegy, *Marwnad Cynddylan* which refers to a fierce battle from which 'no brother returned to his sister'.⁹⁹ Similarly, Gormlaith's lamentation on the death of Niall Glúndub in battle may have formed part of a lost historical romance, *Serc Gormlaithe do Niall*.¹⁰⁰ Scholarly thought would indicate then that *Canu Heledd* and the Gormlaith poems may well have formed part of prose sagas, now lost, which may, partially, explain the choice of a female narrator in each case. Rowland observes how 'the narrative character of the saga *englynion* in Welsh literature allows the poets to explore themes closed to them in panegyric, such as the limits of the heroic code and the conflict of family and political ties, 'to which they provide no easy answers'.¹⁰¹ Transgression, loss and grief are examples of such taboo subjects, particularly when presented from a female perspective. This chapter therefore aims to investigate, how, and to what extent the depiction of transgression, loss and grief are explored from a woman's perspective in *Canu Heledd* and the Gormlaith poems, and secondly, how the choice of a female narrator enabled the poets of these works to question the bonds of kinship and the limits of the heroic code. The depiction of female suffering, as experienced by Heledd and Gormlaith has a powerful intensity which continues to resonate in later literature. Heledd's torment is the inspiration for the dark, psychological feminist narrative of Kate Roberts' novella, *Tywyll Heno* (1962) whilst in W.B. Yeats's 1902 play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, Cathleen's lamentations, and portrayal as *bean chaointe* (keening

⁹⁶ Homer and Martin Hammond, *The Iliad*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: New York, N.Y.: Penguin; Viking Penguin, 1987), p. 406, 24:725-745. 'White-armed, Andromache began their lamentation', 'My husband, you are gone from life young, and you leave me behind a widow.' 'this city of ours will be sacked from top to bottom: because you, her guardian, are dead.' Andromache's grief for Hector, and her predications of a bleak future without him parallel Gormlaith's grief for Niall and a now uncertain future for Tara.

⁹⁷ *Beowulf: A Verse Translation*, ed. by Michael Alexander, Penguin Classics, rev. ed (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 112, line 3150. 'A woman of the Geats in grief sang out the lament for his death Loudly she sang, her hair bound up, the burden of her fear that evil days were destined her'.

⁹⁸ See Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 141.

⁹⁹ *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. by John T. Koch (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 900. 'Of the bright champions who fell in their blood-field a brother did not escape from the battle despite his sister'.

¹⁰⁰ Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 203.

¹⁰¹ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 2.

woman)¹⁰² resonate with the visceral nature of Gormlaith's lamentation for Niall. This chapter, therefore, will also consider how the feminist interpretation of themes and poetic imagery can reveal a distinctly modern perspective in the Heledd and Gormlaith poetry which has maintained its appeal to the modern reader.

The theme of transgression, as portrayed in *Canu Heledd* and the Gormlaith poems may be more closely linked with the gender of the narrator than has been previously considered. In Ifor Williams' landmark study of *Canu Heledd* and *Canu Llywarch Hen*, Williams argues that both Llywarch and Heledd are guilty of boastfulness and ill-judged pride which has induced their fate: 'O dan y cyfan i gyd y cynsail yw cred mewn Tynged – neu, os mynnwch, dyna un o'r cynseiliau, a'r llall yw'r gred fod balchder trahaus yn arwain i gwymp'.¹⁰³ Rowland notes how 'the fragmentary explanations in the Llywarch and Heledd cycle that their misfortunes are due to something they said invite comparison and form the basis for Ifor Williams' delineation of the underlying philosophy of fate'.¹⁰⁴ Llywarch states that all his sons have been killed because of his tongue: '*drwy vyn tauawt llesseint*'.¹⁰⁵ He presents himself as an aged noble warrior, whose twenty-four sons have all been killed in battle, for which he now feels guilt. One reason for Llywarch's guilt is that he inculcated the heroic ideal in his sons, urging them to fight for honour and to protect the homeland. The story of the heroism and doom of Gwen, Pyll, and Maen is a reflection of Llywarch's desire for vicarious glory. If Llywarch is guilty of boastfulness and pride, the evidence against Heledd is more ambiguous. Heledd claims that her tongue is responsible not only for the loss of Cynddylan's hall and all her kin but also the loss of the land, its settlements and its people: *Eglwysseu bassa ynt ffaeth heno. Vyn tauawt ae gwnaeth. Rud ynt wy rwy vy hiraeth*'.¹⁰⁶ She also laments her suffering now that her family have been killed by 'the misfortune of her

¹⁰² Kathryn Conrad, 'Keening The Nation: The Bean Chaointe, The Sean Bhean Bhocht, And Women's Lament In Irish Nationalist Narrative', in Patricia Coughlan, Tina O'Toole (eds.), *Irish Literature: Feminist Perspectives*, International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures, IASIL Studies in Irish Writing (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2008), pp.39-55 (p. 45), 'she is also positioned as a keening woman through her intimate connection with the dead whom she mourns'.

¹⁰³ Ifor Williams, (ed.) *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1999). p. lxxvi, 'Underlying all the basic premise is a belief in Fate or if you prefer, that is one of the basic premises, and the other is the belief that presumptuous pride leads to a fall'. (English translation by Rowland, in *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 23).

¹⁰⁴ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 32 .

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁰⁶ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 435 lines 46a,b,c in '*Eglwysau Basa*', '*Baschurch is? crumbling tonight - my tongue caused it. It is reddened; too great is my sorrow*'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 487.) Possibly, the land is 'reddened' with the blood of the dead.

tongue' - 'mor yw diheint .heno/gwedy colli kenueint. o anffawt vyn tauawt yt lesseint'.¹⁰⁷

Rowland notes the philosophical paradox that exists at the heart of Williams' premise that pride and fate are interlinked in the Llywarch and Heledd englynion; if man is at the mercy of absolute Fate, how can he also be morally culpable for his own misfortunes?¹⁰⁸ The notion that Heledd's boastfulness could cause so much misfortune seems all the more remarkable given that women faced many challenges for survival in the Middle Ages, and were reliant on the protection afforded to them by kinship, marriage and motherhood.¹⁰⁹ As a sister, not wife, of a king, Heledd's influence over events may well have been limited, particularly in a society where motherhood and child-rearing were the primary means by which women were viewed as 'successful'.¹¹⁰ By contrast, transgression and the suggestion of ill-judged pride in the Gormlaith poems is connected to Gormlaith's past life. Gormlaith appears to associate events or thoughts from her past life with her current suffering, grief and loss. In *Triamhuin Ghormlaithe*, Gormlaith implies that during her first marriage to Cormac mac Cuillennain (d. 908), king-bishop of Cashel, she was accused of stealing, or having possession of gold and cloth which belonged to the country of Munster: 'Crich Mumhan is Chaisil cháidh do chreid said, 's dob eagair, -fóirne na slógh ttréadach ttrom - a nn óir 's a n-éadach agam'.¹¹¹ The allusion to a past event is unclear but the text suggests that Gormlaith was accused wrongly of transgression against her country. In the poems attributed to Gormlaith, she asserts that: 'As mé inghean Iáomhsgra Floinn, gearson glic nir chrainn um ní',¹¹² suggesting that her character may be in question. Similarly, there is an inference in verse X that Gormlaith may have been guilty of promiscuity: 'Ro charas tricha fo thri, ro charas a náoi fo naoi; ge no charfuinn fiche fear nocho n-easdh do mheallfadh mnáoi' ¹¹³ but that 'do thréigios iad sin ar Niall, dob é mo mhian bheith da réir'.¹¹⁴ Ní Mhaonaigh asserts that Gormlaith advocates the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 436 lines 57a,b,c in 'Ffreuer', 'How painful it is tonight after the loss of family. Because of the misfortune of my tongue they have been slain'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 488.)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 23.

¹⁰⁹ Lisa M. Bitel, *Women In Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). p. 16.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 158.

¹¹¹ O'Sullivan, 'Triamhuin Ghormlaithe', verse 4, p. 191, 'The country of Munster and of holy Cashel believed, and it was wrong - the troops of those strong and wealthy hosts – that I had their gold and their cloth'. (English translation by O'Sullivan, p. 192.)

¹¹² Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 206, verse III, lines 7a and b, 'I am the....daughter of Flann. Though I was prudent, I was not rigorous in anything'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 309.)

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 212, verse X, line 1a,b,c,d, 'I have loved three times thirty, I have loved nine times nine; though I should love twenty men, that is not what would beguile a woman'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 313.)

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 212, verse X, line 2a,b, 'I forsook them all for Niall; it was my desire to do his will. Why should I not forsake every man?...'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 313.) Bergin notes the rest of the line is corrupt.

monogamous ideal, 'the purpose of such claims is to highlight her affection for her one true love, Niall, for whom she forsook them all, and to this end exaggeration for dramatic effect can be assumed'.¹¹⁵

Ann W. Trindade observes the reference to a promiscuous past has been seen by some commentators as an example of the progressive denigration of female characters which suggests a mythological origin to Gormlaith's persona.¹¹⁶ Certainly, the contrast between Gormlaith and Heledd's high status lives and their current situation is marked. The indication that Gormlaith once led a protected and carefree existence in which she wore lovely 'coloured raiments', ('dob aluinn mh'earradh datha') and would 'quaff wine' 'out of horn goblets', ('as barr a mbuabhall mbeannach')¹¹⁷ is echoed in Heledd's intolerance of male weakness in *Heledd a'i Brawd Claf*. Whilst goading her sickly brother, she insists, 'Amser y bum vras vwyt ny dyrchafwn vy mordwyt yr gwr a gwynei claf gornwyt'.¹¹⁸ She and her sisters remained unconcerned by the battles around them: 'Mi a ffreuer a medlan kyt ytuo cat ym bop mann nyn tawr ny ladawr an rann'.¹¹⁹ Heledd is not married but benefits from the bonds of kinship. A male guardian, be it father, brother, uncle, or distant kinsman supported them both and provided protection. Women, in this period would be 'unimaginably friendless without their male protectors, at the mercy of anyone who wished to harm them'.¹²⁰ For Heledd, the loss of her brother and her lord equates to the loss of social status and legal rights. In the absence of a father, Welsh law required that a woman live under the protection of her nearest male relative, and as such, she was required to be dependent on him. Without Cynddylan, and the protection afforded by him, Heledd would, indeed, be desolate.¹²¹ Lamentation then becomes a distinctly feminine expression of grief and loss for the life that has gone. Dorothy Bray notes how 'eulogy and elegy were both the purview of the court poet, but mourning was especially the appropriate and acceptable role for women,

¹¹⁵ Ni Mhaonaigh, 'Tale Of Three Gormlaiths In Medieval Irish Literature', p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Trindade, 'Irish Gormlaith As A Sovereignty Figure', p. 149. Trindade discusses the notion that Gormlaith was a 'sovereignty archetype', however, further discussion of this is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

¹¹⁷ Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, verse V, lines 3c and 4c, p. 207. (English translation by Bergin, p. 310.)

¹¹⁸ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 443, lines 98a,b,c. 'When I was well-fed I would not raise my thigh for a man who complained, scabrous one'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 492.)

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 437, in 'Ffreuer', line 65a,b,c. 'Myself and Ffreuer and Meddlan - though there might be battle everywhere it does not worry us - our side will not be killed'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 488.)

¹²⁰ See Bitel, *Women In Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100*, p. 161.

¹²¹ See Christopher McAll, 'The Normal Paradigms Of A Woman's Life In The Irish And Welsh Texts', in *The Welsh Law Of Women*, ed. Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd E. Owen (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), pp. 7-22.

particularly a mourning for which there is no consolation nor compensation, in either the worldly or spiritual frame'.¹²² Heledd's wish that her she were dead reflects this form of existential crisis. As the last survivor, there can be nowhere for her to go: 'Gwedy vym brodyr o dymyr hafren y am dwylan drwyryw gwae vi duw vy mot yn vyw'.¹²³ As a result of events, Heledd and Gormlaith find themselves ostracised from society. Their isolation and suffering is a form of moral chastisement which finds parallels in the concept of the sinful feminine, concerning non-saintly women who have transgressed religious rules. In early Irish literature, it is possible to view 'feminine sinfulness' as distinct from generic human sinfulness, or the sinfulness of men.¹²⁴ Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* makes several allusions to notion of feminine sin. Adomnán cites the Book of Genesis, where Eve is condemned to painful childbirth as a result of her sin. In an earlier narrative, a woman convinces her husband that a gift from Columba is dangerous, and therefore condemns her family to poverty. Adomnán states that 'the devil's hatred reached this pitiable man, as it did Adam, through his wife'.¹²⁵ As in the biblical story, woman is the channel through which man falls into poverty and sin. The notion that woman caused man's fall is 'a concept in line with the biblical and patristic perception of women sinners'.¹²⁶ The concept of feminine sin also resonates with the question of moral culpability versus fate, as observed by Ifor Williams. How does then the presence of a female narrator in *Canu Heledd* and the Gormlaith poems facilitate the questioning of feminine sin, as a concept inherited by all women from Eve? Does the portrayal of transgression in these texts imply that for the medieval woman, the notion of ill fate could be dismissed in favour of moral chastisement, whether the woman was guilty of committing the transgression herself, or not? If the concept of feminine sin is manifested through the theme of transgression in *Canu Heledd* and the Gormlaith poems, the physical and psychological suffering experienced by both women also accords with the rituals of female religious chastisement. Lynda Coon observes how 'Women's hagiography teaches that the daughters of Eve must make their bodies impenetrable through militant

¹²² Dorothy Ann Bray, 'A Woman's Loss And Lamentation: Heledd's Song And The Wife's Lament', *Neophilologus*, 79 (1995), 147–54 (p. 152).

¹²³ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 438 in 'Newid Byd', lines 71a,b,c. 'After my brothers from the region of the Severn and on the banks of the two Rhiws, alas, God, that I am alive'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 489.)

¹²⁴ Helen Oxenham, *Perceptions Of Femininity In Early Irish Society*, Studies in Celtic History, XXXVI (Woodbridge; Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2016), p. 155.

¹²⁵ Adomnán, *Life Of St. Columba*, trans. by Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 185 ll. 37 <<https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=F4F864B5-8E92-4B23-81B9-23F997A9C183>> [accessed 29 April 2020].

¹²⁶ Oxenham, *Perceptions Of Femininity In Early Irish Society*, p. 160.

chastity, self-entombment, spiritual exile, or institutionalised clausturation'.¹²⁷ As the 'last survivor', Heledd is portrayed as alone in a world in which no others appear. In turn, Gormlaith observes that 'Teirce sa cách mo charuid', and 'Marbh mh'athair, marbh mo mhathair, 'sas marbh mo dhias dearb[h]rathair'.¹²⁸ Their shared predicament, isolated from the physical and emotional comforts of kinship and community, and stripped of their previous high status, resonates with the concept of spiritual exile, as expressed in women's hagiography. Gormlaith declares that 'Bean me Laidhghneach Mhidheach, gidh eadh ní hiad as andsa, annso go ró mór Ulaidh, and that 'an t-ionadh nach ionmhuin neach, as ann as usa a éagheach'.¹²⁹ Without Niall, she is isolated from her Ulster kinsmen but is also alienated from her own countrymen. She suggests that whether her walk was 'crooked or straight', the Leinstermen would say that it was not right: 'adeardis fós nã badh ceart, madh cáim madh díreach mh'imtheacht'.¹³⁰ In her destitute state, Gormlaith observes that her personal value seems to amount to little, as symbolised by her meagre personal possessions of a white smock and dark cloak: 'Gan agam o nimh go lár acht léine bhán is brat ciar'.¹³¹ As Niall's queen, Gormlaith had previously shown great generosity to the wife of an abbot, giving her 'a ball with a gold ring', and 'a blue Norse hood, and a horn case'; the snub she now receives from the wife leaves a bitterness: 'Tug sisi damhsa anocht – noch a maith cumann nach ceart – dá deachmhadh do chóirce chrúaidh, dã uigh chirce ar mbúain dã beart!'.¹³² The purgatorial state experienced by Heledd and Gormlaith, condemned to wander the landscape alone, is therefore both a consequence of events but also a form of spiritual and emotional clausturation actively inflicted upon and passively enacted by them.

Lamentation, spiritual and emotional clausturation also describes the liminal existence of the *bean chaointe*, the 'wailing woman' of Irish tradition. Similar to the *geilt*, or wild man, the

¹²⁷ Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions Holy Women And Hagiography In Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. xvii.

¹²⁸ Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, verse IX, 2a, p. 210, 'My friends grow fewer and fewer'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 312.) and also verse IX, line 3a,b. 'Dead is my father, dead is my mother, dead are my two brothers'.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 208, verse V, line 6a,b,c. 'I am a woman of Leinster, of Meath, yet they are not the dearest; dearer, far dearer is Ulster'. Also, verse VII, lines 1c and d. 'Where one is not loved, there one is most easily insulted'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 311.)

¹³⁰ Ibid. p. 209, verse VII, line 2c and d, 'be my walk crooked or straight, they would say that it was not right'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 311.)

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 213, verse X, line 5a and b. 'I have nothing between heaven and earth but a white smock and a dark cloak'. (English translation by Bergin, p. 313.)

¹³² Ibid. p. 213, verse X, line 11a,b,c,d. 'She gave me to-night - an unfitting kindness is not good - two tenths of hard oats, two hen eggs taken from her clutch!' (English translation by Bergin, p. 314.)

bean chaointe is in transition and, as such, finds herself temporarily outside the normal structure of society.¹³³ 'It is possible to show that the *bean chaointe*, the 'wailing woman', as she appears in the texts of *caoineadh* and in various references in literature, is an archetypal literary figure, in very much the same way as the *geilt*.¹³⁴ W.B. Yeats' one-act play, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, a nationalistic retelling of the 1798 Irish rebellion against British rule in Ireland offers a revealing paradigm for the presentation of the *bean chaointe* as a literary persona. The heroine of the play, Cathleen, in her role as a symbol of Ireland follows the keening tradition in becoming a 'perpetual lamenter'. 'Cathleen is identifiable as a keening woman in a number of ways. One is the suggestion that her grief is immediate and has led to a state of madness'.¹³⁵ Some of Cathleen's songs also resemble the keen in their immediacy, as when she sings to herself:

I will go with the woman,
For yellow-haired Donough is dead,
With a hempen rope for a neckcloth,
And a white cloth on his head.¹³⁶

Many similarities between Gormlaith, Heledd and the literary depiction of the keening woman can be detected. The *bean chaointe* exists in a 'special liminal state between the world of the living and the world of the dead', expressed through a 'withdrawal from society, which of course, like all transition rites also serves an important psychological function'.¹³⁷ The concept of the *bean chaointe* existing in a liminal state, somewhere between the living and the dead is echoed in the intense psychological turmoil experienced by Heledd and Gormlaith. Gormlaith's dramatic, self-inflicted death is foreshadowed by a spectral visit from Niall Glúndub. He instructs her to cease her mourning as it offends God; she declares 'Mithid sgur do chaoineadh Neill, mac Aodha na n-each n-ōigréidh; truagh, a Dhé, an cás ionar chuir

¹³³ See Angela Partridge, 'Wild Men And Wailing Women', *Eigse: Journal Of Irish Studies*, 18.1, 25–37, p. 37.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p. 27. Partridge defines the *caoineadh* as a long extempore poem of eulogy and lament which was sung at wakes and funerals, usually by women, and usually in honour of men.

¹³⁵ Conrad, 'Keening The Nation: The Bean Chaointe' in Patricia Coughlan, Tina O'Toole (eds.), *Irish Literature: Feminist Perspectives*, p. 47.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 47.

¹³⁷ Partridge, 'Wild Men And Wailing Women', p. 36.

me idir bhás is beathuidh'.¹³⁸ In turn, the depiction of the ruins of Cynddylan's *llys* in *Stafell Gynddylan* also represents the ruins of Heledd's mind. The hall of Cynddylan is dark tonight, without fire, without candle, 'namyn duw pey am dyry pwyll'.¹³⁹ The dark and desolate imagery in the verse emphasises Heledd's liminal existence between life (as she knew it) and the presence of death. Trauma, rumination and the descent into depression are contemporary social issues which accord with Heledd's suffering. The repeated motif in *Stafell Gynddylan*, 'Stauell gyndylan ys tywyll heno,'¹⁴⁰ (Cynddylan's hall is dark tonight) is alluded to many times in Kate Roberts' 1962 novella, *Tywyll Heno*. Bet Jones, a minister's wife, relays in retrospect the trajectory of events which brought her to a mental breakdown. She describes the process as a 'loss of faith' in which she is unable to see any meaning or purpose in life. *Tywyll Heno* renders Bet's illness as something that takes over her body from within: 'fe aeth y digalondid...yn fwgwd am fy mhen; yn glwt o dduwch; yn rhew; yn niwl; yn bwysau wrth fy nghalon a'r pwysau ar fin torri a disgyn'.¹⁴¹ The concept of trauma from within is echoed in *Stafell Gynddylan*, 'Stauell gyndylan nyt esmwyth heno. ar benn carreg hytwyth. heb ner. heb niuer. heb amwyth'.¹⁴² Heledd's soul is the ruined hall on top of the crag, alone and a spiritual exile. As Bet suffers an existential crisis that comes from within, so Heledd's sense of guilt, the implication of feminine sin, overwhelms her. She is 'without defence' physically, but also without defence against her own sense of culpability.

The presence of the female voice in elegiac verse also serves to question the meaning of kinship and the limits of the heroic code within medieval warrior society. The Old English poem, *The Wife's Lament* (folio 115 of the Exeter Book, c.960-80) provides an analogue for the treatment of women's situations 'in the context of similar heroic cultures, and the expression of women's lamentation in those societies which valorised heroic ideals'.¹⁴³ This

¹³⁸ Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 214 verse XI, line 1a,b,c,d. 'Tis time to cease lamenting Niall, son of Aed of the smooth steeds. Sad, O God, is the plight to which it has brought me between death and life'. (English translation by Bergin, p.314.)

¹³⁹ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 431, in 'Stafell Gynddylan', line 19c. 'Except for God, who will give me sanity?'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 484.)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 431, verse 18a, 'The hall of Cynddylan is dark tonight'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 484.)

¹⁴¹ Katie Gramich, *Kate Roberts, Writers of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 259, 'the unhappiness became...a mask over my face; a black cloth; ice; fog; a weight on my heart about to break and fall to pieces'. (English translation by Gramich, p. 259.)

¹⁴² Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 432, line 24a,b,c. 'The hall of Cynddylan is without comfort tonight on the top of a mighty crag, without a lord, without a host, without? defence'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 485.)

¹⁴³ Bray, 'A Woman's Loss And Lamentation: Heledd's Song And The Wife's Lament', p. 1.

emotive poem has often been cited for its seemingly ‘Welsh’ qualities, particularly the absence of narrative, the conspicuous choice of a female first person narrator, gnomic statements and allusions to wild nature, personal lamentation and tragic mood.¹⁴⁴

Bray suggests that ‘the feminine focus of *The Wife’s Lament* indicates that ‘both Heledd and the wife may have become poetic personae for an elegiac expression in which the court poets used the traditional female role of mourning to voice both a lament for, and a critique of, heroic society’.¹⁴⁵ *The Wife’s Lament* is a love poem of dramatic and emotional speeches which presents ‘with great force the image of a mind circling over past events, unable to find any position of rest’.¹⁴⁶ Restlessness, rumination, and an inability to find spiritual peace is also a marked characteristic of Heledd and Gormlaith. The narrative of the poem, with its themes of female exile and suffering at the hands of a husband’s countrymen is strongly reminiscent of Branwen’s tale in Welsh tradition. The speaker [the Wife] is in exile, banished by a husband who has been misled by false report: ‘then his kinsmen ganged, began to think thoughts they did not speak, of splitting the wedlock; so – estranged, alienated – we lived each alone, a long way apart; how I longed for him!’¹⁴⁷ She has been utterly abandoned and lives alone in a tomb-like den beneath an oak tree, far from the man she loves. She has few friends living and curses a second kinsman who betrayed her by plotting the estrangement, ‘May grief and bitterness blast the mind of that young man!...He would change his tune if he lived alone in a land of exile far from his folk’.¹⁴⁸ She imagines her husband on a distant and hostile shore, ‘Where my friend is stranded frost crusts the cracked cliff-face, grey waves grind the shingle, the mind cannot bear in such a bleak place very much grief’.¹⁴⁹ The location of the wife’s dwelling place in what seems to be a barrow or tumulus, combined with the images of briars and water adds to the feeling of desolation and isolation; ‘I was banished to this knoll knotted by woods to live in a den dug beneath an oak,’ and ‘I see thorns thrive up there in thick coverts on the banks that baulk these black hollows’.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, the central themes of exile and suffering, set against the backdrop of an unforgiving, wintry landscape are mirrored in *Canu Heledd* and the Gormlaith poems, in

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 150.

¹⁴⁶ T. A. Shippey, *Old English Verse* (London: Hutchinson, 1972), p. 72.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Alexander, *The Wanderer: Elegies, Epics, Riddles* (Penguin Books, 1966), p. 85.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 86.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 86.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 85.

which the harshness of the natural world becomes a trope for the alienation experienced by these women. In *Triumhuin Ghormlaithe*, Gormlaith, echoing Suibhne Geilt's experience of the natural world, observes how 'Mise is uiséog an tsléibhe cosmhail le céile ar nós; ní hail léi's choill 'na far[r]adh gan codlach ar lá[r] mónadh'.¹⁵¹ The wild brambles tear her worn clothes, she declares that the thorn is no friend to her and the briar is her enemy: 'ní cara damh na droidhne, 'sas biodhbha damh an drisóg Iomdha.'¹⁵² In *Canu Heledd*, the imagery of the natural world emphasises the exile of Heledd. The land, once a source of food and comfort, is now saturated in the blood of the dead. In *Eryr Eli* and *Eryr Pengwern*, the motif of the screeching eagle, greedy for the flesh which Heledd loved creates a powerful image of destruction and in *Y Drefwen*, Heledd's grief for the decimation of the land and its people is expressed in apocalyptic terms, 'Y drefwenn rwng trenn a thraual. oed gnodach y gwaet ar wyneb y gwellt noc eredic brynar'.¹⁵³ The notion of feminine sin is also explored in the suffering of the Wife. Bereft of the comfort and protection afforded to her by kinship, estranged from her husband, she, like Heledd and Gormlaith, is a spiritual exile. She is imprisoned, both literally and figuratively, living in a state of clausturation and self-entombment which also afflicts Heledd and Gormlaith. In the gnomic passage towards the end of the poem, the wife envisages the surroundings of her lover and questions whether he has once again become the 'master of his own fate': 'sy oet him sylfum gelong/ eal his worulde wyn', 'whether his happiness in this world is dependent on himself', or whether he is still enduring the miserable life of an exile'.¹⁵⁴ Whilst arguably, the ideal of being 'master of his own fate' would be difficult for the warrior, it would be impossible for the woman, constrained by her role in society. Bray argues that if the ambiguous final section of the poem is read within the context of heroic poetry, the Wife's frustration becomes apparent, as she cannot live according to these heroic ideals, 'she has been denied the status of wife and good retainer, and her bitterness at being forced into such a situation comes through in the end'.¹⁵⁵ From this perspective, it is possible to see how Heledd's comment in *Stafell Gynddylan*,

¹⁵¹ O'Sullivan, 'Triumhuin Ghormlaithe', p. 198, 'I and the lark of the mountain our habits alike. She with the wood beside her will sleep in the middle of the bog'. (English translation by O'Sullivan.)

¹⁵² Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 208, verse V, line 7b and c. (English translation by Bergin, p. 310.)

¹⁵³ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 436, line 56a,b, and c, 'The fair town between Tren and Trafal – more usual was its blood on the surface of its grass than ploughing fallow land'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 487.)

¹⁵⁴ Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'The Situation Of The Narrator's Lord In "The Wife's Lament"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71.No. 4 (1970), 604–10, p. 604, lines 45b-46a.

¹⁵⁵ Bray, 'A Woman's Loss And Lamentation: Heledd's Song And The Wife's Lament', p. 150.

‘gwae ny wna da ae dyuyd’¹⁵⁶ mirrors the notion expressed by the Wife that whilst men may have some control over their destiny, women have none. Women, in heroic societies, therefore were as ‘liable to suffer as men, but being also naturally unable to act, to decide, to escape from suffering by violence’.¹⁵⁷ Unlike the men for whom they grieve, there is little hope of escape from suffering for Heledd, Gormlaith and the Wife, as their gender limits their ability to act. Death provides the only bleak escape, as suggested by Gormlaith’s own self-inflicted and violent death.

Canu Heledd and the Gormlaith poems demonstrate how two female literary personas have been re-imagined from a miscellany of historical references, fragments of poetry and saga prose texts. The transition from historical figure to literary persona, therefore, occurs through a process of literary invention, a process which transcends time to imbue these female figures with an enduring modern appeal. The presence of a female narrator, as also evidenced in the poetry of Anglo-Saxon warrior society, facilitates the exploration of the human psyche and the nature of human suffering, grief and loss; a pursuit which would be taboo within the medieval mode of heroic poetry. Gender, and the themes of transgression, loss, and grief are closely linked in these texts. These states are presented from a distinctly female perspective in which, unlike their male counterparts, there is no suggestion of hope or redemption granted by God for the women protagonists. Of all the Exeter Book elegies, ‘*The Wife’s Lament* is most devoid of consolatory hope: there is no Christian God whose ultimate mercy can be relied on, nor any pleasure in the remembrance of things past. Only a stoic fortitude, frozen in the time present, can cope with the intense personal anguish’.¹⁵⁸ There is little consolatory hope in God for either Heledd or Gormlaith. The notion of feminine sin and their perceived guilt leads them to view their suffering as punishment meted out by God. Gormlaith’s lamentations resonate most strongly with the torment of the *bean chaointe* when she struggles with God’s displeasure at her actions; ‘Is ann do rãidheas re Niall, tré feirg mar nár rãidhis riamh, Cred fá mbeith fearg Rí nimhe riúm is me ag aithrighe?’¹⁵⁹ Heledd indicates that her fate is decided according to her gender. God has ‘taken’ her brothers from her as punishment

¹⁵⁶ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 433, line 21 c, ‘Woe to him who does not do the good which comes to him’. (English translation by Rowland. p. 485.)

¹⁵⁷ Shippey, *Old English Verse*, p. 72 .

¹⁵⁸ Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G Calder, *A New Critical History Of Old English Literature* (New York: NYU Press, 1996), p. 294.

¹⁵⁹ Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 215, verse XI, line 4a,b,c. ‘Then I said to Niall, angrily as I had never said before: ‘Why should the anger of the King of heaven be against me while I am penitent?’. (English translation by Bergin, p. 315.)

for her perceived transgression of boastfulness: 'Brodyr am bwyat a duc duw ragof'.¹⁶⁰ Bray argues how 'The Welsh and Anglo-Saxon poets who upheld heroic values used the conventions of poetry and speech-making to offer a critique of the martial heroic ideals' and in doing so, 'have left us with voices of heroic women who suffered when those ideals failed them'.¹⁶¹ Certainly, as Rowland observes, the world of the *englynion* saga is a heroic one in which women have little place, 'the remaining references to women in the early sagas appear because they play a role in the story, in some way influencing events whether passively or actively'.¹⁶² The contradiction between active and passive roles also provides a paradigm for a specifically female experience in which a woman could play an active role in medieval society as a wife and mother and yet remain a passive figure, deeply dependent on her kin for protection and security. Bray pinpoints how this vulnerability is expressed through lamentation in these texts, 'in many of the laments recorded in literature, the woman mourns not just the dead hero, but the outcome of her own situation on account of that death. The forces which have led the hero to meet his destiny, as a hero, have also caused untold suffering for those dependent on him'.¹⁶³ As the Wife in *The Wife's Lament*, Heledd and Gormlaith are forced to become frozen, static figures. Their fate is to remain perpetually without redemption.

¹⁶⁰ See *Heledd's Brothers*, in Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 441, line 86a, 'I had brothers whom God took away from me'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 491.)

¹⁶¹ Bray, 'A Woman's Loss And Lamentation: Heledd's Song And The Wife's Lament', p. 153.

¹⁶² Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 142.

¹⁶³ Bray, 'A Woman's Loss And Lamentation: Heledd's Song And The Wife's Lament', p. 150.

Chapter Three – Transgression, loss, and grief through an eighteenth century lens - the ‘re-imagining’ of *Canu Llywarch Hen*

In William Owen Pughe’s¹⁶⁴ 1792 edition of medieval Welsh poetry, *The Heroic Elegies And Other Pieces Of Llywarch Hen, Prince Of The Cumbrian Britons*,¹⁶⁵ the historical medieval persona of Llywarch Hen is reimagined as the archetypal noble warrior of bardic tradition. Whilst Pughe indicates that his intention was to make a literal translation of the original texts, the poems have been treated more as a palimpsest.¹⁶⁶ Subject to considerable literary re-invention and creative interpretation, they have gained multiple layers of meaning which reflect contemporary social and political anxieties. In Pughe’s edition of *Canu Llywarch Hen*, the loss and grief Llywarch endures, and his many flaws, notably his transgressions of pride, boastfulness, and lack of wisdom are reframed in a depiction which reflects his new identity, as a noble warrior, and latterly, a Bard, venerated for his wisdom and great age. Bardism, the primary construct of Welsh cultural revival and literary antiquarianism in the eighteenth-century acquired a radical tone under the influence of Pughe’s friend, the antiquary and poet, Iolo Morganwg.¹⁶⁷ Iolo’s ‘Short Sketch of the Institution of the Bards in Britain’, a ‘fantastical treatise on the descent of the bardic tradition in Wales from the ancient Druids onwards’ was anonymously published by William Owen Pughe in his edition of *The Heroic Elegies*, and presented alongside Pughe’s translations.¹⁶⁸ This chapter aims to investigate how the themes of transgression, loss, and grief, such pivotal motifs in the original *englynion*, are reframed by William Owen Pughe and Iolo Morganwg to reflect a radical, contemporary reading of the poetry in which the antiquity and richness of Welsh poetic tradition becomes synonymous with the bardic concept of ‘truth’.

¹⁶⁴ William Owen (later Pughe); (1759-1835) was a lexicographer and an active member of the societies of the London-Welsh. See *The New Companion To The Literature Of Wales*, ed. by Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 560.

¹⁶⁵ William Owen Pughe, ‘The Heroic Elegies And Other Pieces Of Llywarch Hen, Prince Of The Cumbrian Britons’, *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru*, 2021 <<https://www.library.wales>> [accessed 3 May 2021]. Pughe’s translation of medieval *englynion* was published in 1792.

¹⁶⁶ Pughe states he copied the text with ‘artless simplicity’. See Pughe, ‘The Heroic Elegies’, p. xix.

¹⁶⁷ Iolo Morganwg was the adopted name of Edward Williams (1747-1826). Williams felt that ‘Iolo Morganwg’ expressed his bardic persona. He used the name ‘among fellow poets in Glamorgan and the literary-minded and radically engaged Gwyneddigion Society’. See Cathryn Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles: National, Regional And Personal Identity In The Bardic Vision Of Iolo Morganwg*, Iolo Morganwg And The Romantic Tradition In Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ Geraint H. Jenkins, *Bard Of Liberty: The Political Radicalism Of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 205.

The preface to the *Heroic Elegies* is a ‘thinly veiled political text’,¹⁶⁹ pseudo-historical in tone, which sets out a radical vision of bardism, as envisaged by Iolo. The relationship between William Owen Pughe and Iolo was one of mutual interests, characterised by spirited conversation and intellectual debate about the Bards and the Druids; however, arguably, Pughe’s translation of the edition acts primarily as a vehicle for the presentation of Iolo’s vision of bardism to the world, possibly to avert the possible repercussions that publishing such a political text may have caused. By attributing all the poems in the edition to the figure of Llywarch Hen, the text validates the literary image of a heroic, ‘golden’ age of medieval poetry in which Llywarch, the ‘noble progenitor’ of the ancient past becomes synonymous with the eighteenth century notion of the Celtic bard; a ‘poetic-druidic figure’ who acts as ‘an intermediary with a heroic past’.¹⁷⁰ Iolo saw London, with its political and literary vibrancy, as the centre of the old Brythonic world, a belief strengthened by his activities with the intellectual literary societies of the London-Welsh diaspora. Pughe and Iolo’s decision to present the text in bilingual form, disseminating the poetry to a larger, potentially international readership, placed Llywarch on the world stage, ‘legitimising’ the perception of ‘Welshness’ and the notion of a discrete Welsh identity. Llywarch is reimagined as a template for the bardic persona amongst the poets of the Welsh diaspora and in Wales. Whilst simultaneously exhibiting cultural confidence, ‘poets could draw on a bardic persona to articulate a specifically Welsh poetic identity which was markedly different from that of their English counterparts’.¹⁷¹ The ideological matrix for bardism was ‘the response of patriotic antiquarianism to the ambivalent attitudes towards the Celts’, a response which characterised the Celtic revival of the Romantic period and contested notions of Britishness.¹⁷² Bardism enabled Iolo to construct an innovative Welsh national identity based on the Primitivist principles of Rousseau, at the heart of which was the concept of ‘the natural man’, for whom truth and moral purity are defining characteristics.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ See Cathryn Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles: National, Regional And Personal Identity In The Bardic Vision Of Iolo Morganwg*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 24.

¹⁷⁰ *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. by John T. Koch (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 173.

¹⁷¹ Sarah Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing From Wales: Bards And Britons; Writing Wales In English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 153.

¹⁷² Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles*, p. 2.

¹⁷³ See *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. by Isaac Kramnick, 1st edn. (New York, United States Of America: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1995), p. 365.

A close reading of the ninth-century *englynion* cycle, *Canu Llywarch Hen* ('The Song of Llywarch the Old'),¹⁷⁴ as presented in the edition, reveals further evidence of Iolo's radical views but also his inventive and highly creative approach to the cultural revival of medieval poetic texts.¹⁷⁵ The re-emergence of bardism as a literary construct of the eighteenth century occurred following the revival of interest in the history and mythology of the Celtic nations and, as such, it constituted a reaction to the 'cultural appropriation' of the Romantic image of the medieval Bard.¹⁷⁶ 'Antiquarian interest during the early eighteenth century created an image of 'the Celtic bard', typified by the Pindaric ode by Thomas Gray, 'The Bard' (1757), an image which is now recognised in modern scholarship as foreign to the Welsh tradition'.¹⁷⁷ Iolo played a crucial role in the reinvigoration of the image of Wales by manipulating the 'very myths and motifs that had become popular in the Romantic imagination', to reclaim the Bard and 'Ancient British' status for Wales and the Welsh.¹⁷⁸ This manipulation of Romantic myths and motifs also speaks to the anxieties of the age, specifically notions of identity and nationhood, as demonstrated in Iolo's interpretation of the figure of Llywarch Hen. Iolo's bardic vision of medieval poetry magnifies, and then reframes the recurring emotive motifs of human transgression, loss, and grief in *Canu Llywarch Hen* to make them acts of patriotism, selflessness and self-sacrifice; actions which resonate with the political and social climate of the late eighteenth century world. Llywarch's transgressions, the loss of his youth and vigour, and grief over the death of his sons are no longer the fateful consequences of his actions but are the inevitable cost in the quest for truth, integrity and the re-birth of Welsh national identity. In the original ninth-century *englynion* cycle, Llywarch's desire for vicarious glory drives him to inculcate the heroic ideal in his twenty-four sons, urging them to fight for honour and to protect the homeland, an act which costs the lives of

¹⁷⁴ The main manuscripts for the corpus are Llyfr Coch Hergest (The Red Book of Hergest), c.1382 and Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin (The Black Book of Carmarthen), c.1250 (NLW Peniarth III, NLW 49731 and 4973B). However, scholarly thought suggests that the texts were composed during the Old Welsh period (AD c.800-1100). Llywarch Hen, the historical persona, is attested in the genealogical tracts dealing with the men of North Britain. See Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study And Edition Of The Englynion* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Boydell & Brewer [distributors], 1990), p. 7.

¹⁷⁵ Although ostensibly the work of William Owen Pughe, Iolo Morganwg's influence is apparent throughout the entire edition. Cathryn Charnell-White observes that by the time Iolo had arrived in London (in 1791), he had already perfected bardism, 'and judging by the content of *The Heroic Elegies of Llywarch Hen*, he had grasped the opportunity of insinuating his own bardic ideas into the publishing programme of the Gwyneddigion Society'. See Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ See Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Meic Stephens, (ed.), *The New Companion To The Literature Of Wales* (Cardiff: University Of Wales Press, 1998), p. 34.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 3.

all his sons. Llywarch's transgressions of pride and lack of wisdom, for which he expresses great remorse, are made evident in the text. In *Marwnad Gwên*, Llywarch laments that 'pedwarmeib ar hugeint a *ueithyeint* vyg knawt/*drwy vyn tauawt* lle <de> sseint',¹⁷⁹ a sentiment echoed in *Enwau Meibion Llywarch Hen*: 'meu gerit. mi ae goruc'.¹⁸⁰ Again, Llywarch's transgression of boastfulness is exhibited in *Gwên And Llywarch*: 'Tra vum .i. yn oet y gwas draw/a wisc o eur y *ottoew/bydei re ruthrwn* y waew'.¹⁸¹ The persona of Llywarch Hen is characterised by an emotional and psychological depth through which the moral complexities of truth and denial are exposed. Llywarch's transgressions, and the grief and loss he experiences as a consequence of his actions are the manifestations of the inner conflict he suffers between truth and denial, two opposing facets of the human psyche. Unlike his sons, all proven in battle, Llywarch's reputation as an unflinching champion depends solely on his own testimony as throughout the cycle he is consistently shown as 'past his prime'.¹⁸² Llywarch is at once a ridiculous figure, cantankerous, peevish, and stubborn, a 'typical old warrior: he is always old',¹⁸³ and a tragic figure whose loss and grief lead him to question the heroic code, the belief system which has defined his adult life. Gwên, Pyll, and Maen are the sons whose heroism and demise form the focus of Llywarch's sorrow, the sense of loss and grief he experiences following their deaths is depicted with visceral honesty: 'Gwn gwydwn dy eissillut [...]betwn dedwyd dianghut'.¹⁸⁴ The moral conflict between truth and denial, as depicted in Llywarch's character flaws, his transgressions of boastfulness, pride, and lack of wisdom also accord with the notion of human fallibility. As Llywarch's self-deception about his heroic past demonstrates his fallibility; his unwillingness to see the truth of his situation until it is too late is the cause of his tragedy in the saga.

In *The Heroic Elegies*, the conflict between truth and denial, as experienced by Llywarch, and the overarching theme of human fallibility are reframed to reflect a central tenet of Iolo's bardic paradigm, the cause of truth. However, in Iolo's interpretation, understanding the moral complexity of truth connotes a public rather than private experience, strongly

¹⁷⁹ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, in *Marwnad Gwên*, p. 408, lines 28a and b, 'Twenty-four sons of the nurture of my body-through my tongue they have been killed'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 470.).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 414, line 9c, 'Mine is the blame; I caused it'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 473.).

¹⁸¹ In 'Gwên and Llywarch', p. 406, lines 12a,b,c. 'When I was the age of the youth over there/who wears his spurs of gold/it would be swiftly that I rushed to the spear'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 469.)

¹⁸² Ibid. p. 19.

¹⁸³ See Ifor Williams (ed.), *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1999), p. 142.

¹⁸⁴ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 407, 'Marwnad Gwên', lines 19a and c. 'Gwên, I knew your nature [...] If I were wise you would have escaped'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 469.)

associated with the ‘noble’ qualities of transparency, openness and moral integrity. These qualities are also the cornerstone of Iolo’s understanding of medieval bardic tradition, and form the basis of his quasi-religious, antiquarian vision for the Gorsedd meetings: ‘The publicity of their actions was also a leading consideration amongst the bards; for all their meetings of *Gorseddau*, were held in the open air, on a conspicuous place’, ‘as they were to perform everything in *the eye of the light, and in the face of the sun*’.¹⁸⁵ The moral ambiguity inherent in the notion of human fallibility, and the continuing conflict between truth and denial, both dominant motifs in the original *englynion* are notably absent in Pughe’s edition. Llywarch is presented as a romanticised ideal, the noble and honourable warrior who is exculpated from the conflict between truth and denial. He embodies only truth and openness in the face of adversity and the threat to the stability of his homeland. Llywarch’s transgressions are presented openly, his suffering he accepts willingly as just punishment for his transgressions, the power of the cause vindicating his actions: ‘four and twenty sons, the offspring of my body; by the means of my tongue they were slain: justly come is the budget of my misfortune!’¹⁸⁶ Llywarch’s lament in the ninth-century *englynion*, *Marwnad Gwên*, in which loss, rather than justice is the prevailing theme offers a revealing comparison: ‘Pedwar-meib ar hugaint a *ueithyeint* vyg knawt/*drwy vyn tauawt lle<de>sseint/da dyuot [bychot] colledaint*’.¹⁸⁷ In Pughe and Iolo’s English translation, ‘justly come is the budget of my misfortune’, the prevailing mood is one of moral exactitude. In contrast, Llywarch’s original observation, ‘*da dyout [bychot] colledaint*’, which Jenny Rowland [after Williams] translates as (‘the coming of too little is good – they have been lost’) is ambiguous and imbued with an enigmatic, gnomic quality. This line mirrors Llywarch’s lament in the previous verse: ‘*[cwl] eu dyuot clot trameint*’, (‘the coming of too great fame is a fault’).¹⁸⁸ Rowland notes how the connection between foolish behaviour and fate may help to explain the parallels in Llywarch’s two statements. Mirroring ‘*drwy vyn tauawt lle<de>sseint*’, these are ‘statements which acknowledge guilt – he unwisely sought too much and obtained it unfairly. They are appropriate to the heroic code the poet has presented and appropriate

¹⁸⁵ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. xxvii.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 135. ‘Pedwar-meib arugaint o verthiaint vy nghnawd/*Drwy vy nhavawd lleddyfaint: Da dyvod vy nghodcolledaint.*’ (Welsh verse edited by Pughe, p. 134.)

¹⁸⁷ Rowland, ‘Early Welsh Saga Poetry’, p. 408, lines 28a,b,c. ‘Twenty-four sons of the nurture of my body – through my tongue they have been killed. The coming of a little is good – they have been lost’. (English translation by Rowland, p. 470.)

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 408, line 27c. (English translation by Rowland, p. 470.)

psychologically as the reaction of a grieving father'.¹⁸⁹ *Canu Llywarch* exemplifies, as does *Canu Heledd*,¹⁹⁰ how in medieval saga *englynion* style 'the poems where characters lament their own fate have almost no point in common with bardic eulogy and elegy'.¹⁹¹ It is interesting to note, therefore, that while the notion of the heroic code has been retained in the Pughe and Iolo Morganwg edition, bardic notions are privileged over the psychological and emotional intensity of the original poetry. These aspects of transgression, loss, and grief are, again, notably absent from *The Heroic Elegies*. In *Gwên and Llywarch*, Llywarch's goading of Gwen, heightened through its presentation as a private dialogue of escalating tension between father and son is reframed in the form of a declamatory soliloquy given by Llywarch. In the original *englynion*, Llywarch's goading of Gwên is marked by emotional extremes. Llywarch states that he knows Gwên is his son and made of the same mettle: 'Neut atwen ar vy awen/yn hanuot. o un achen' but then taunts him immediately by insisting: 'trigwyd oric elwic a wen'.¹⁹² Llywarch continues to exhort Gwên to undertake greater acts of valour in a dangerous cycle of praise, followed by challenges and misgivings. Llywarch's declaration to Gwên: 'O diegyd ath weliff/oth ry ledir ath. na choll wyneb [gwr] ar gnif'¹⁹³ is characterised by a chilling undertone, a veiled threat, 'If you escape, I will see you', followed swiftly by a neutral, almost cold statement of intent: 'I will lament you'. It is feasible that a 'correct and unemotional *marwnad*'¹⁹⁴ giving Llywarch a chance to boast of his son's deeds may be intended here; however, the line is immediately countered by a challenge to Gwên's courage: 'do not lose the honour of a warrior despite battle hardship'. In contrast, the romantic image of the warrior conducting himself 'honourably' in battle, in accordance with the principles of the medieval heroic code is clearly manifested in the equivalent lines in Pughe and Iolo's edition: 'If thou shouldest run away I shall be to weep for thee, if thou shouldest be slain I shall mourn thee: lose not the countenance of the men of conflict'.¹⁹⁵ The

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 36.

¹⁹⁰ For a detailed discussion of 'Canu Heledd' see chapter 3.

¹⁹¹ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 10.

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 404, lines 2a,b,c. 'I know I my heart/that we spring from one stock' and 'You are tarrying a precious while, Gwen'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 468.)

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 404, lines 4,a,b,c. 'If you escape, I will see you. If you are killed, I will lament you. Do not lose the honour of a warrior despite battle hardship'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 468.)

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 13. Cf. 'Pyll'. Llywarch's personal grief for his son is hidden behind his praise for Pyll's heroic strengths as a defender of Wales, lines 39 a,b,c. 'Kyt delei gymry ac elyflu [lloegr]/a/llawer o bell tu. dangossei byll bwyll udu'. 'Though both the host of England and/many from afar might have come to Wales/Pyll would have taught them sense'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 471.)

¹⁹⁵ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. 126 'O diengyd a'th wylwyv, O'th ryleddir a'th gwynwyv: Na coll wyneb gwyd argnwyv.' (English translation above by Pughe, p. 127.)

power of the collective and commitment to the cause in resisting the onslaught of a hostile force is the pervading sense communicated in these lines.

The recurring image of Llywarch and his contemporaries defending the lands of the 'Old North' against the 'invading Anglo-Saxons' is prevalent in Pughe and Iolo's edition, an image which may equally be read as objection to the pervasive hegemony of Anglo-Saxon culture over the countries of the 'Celtic fringes' in the eighteenth century. The preface details how Llywarch played an honourable role in 'repelling the incroachments of the *Saxons*', 'those persevering invaders having already obtained possession of the countries to the eastward'.¹⁹⁶ Iolo's narrative arc of Llywarch's life emphasises his warrior status, his loyalty to the Welsh nation, and the loss he endures comes as a consequence of his commitment to the cause of Welsh nationhood. Iolo exhorts the reader to feel empathy towards Llywarch and his commitment, at great personal cost, to his country: 'Cold must be that breast that can be unmoved in perusing his artless complaint, that death lingered, after he had been bereft of twenty-four sons, wearing the golden chain, the high-prized badge of honour of a *British* warrior'.¹⁹⁷ Llywarch's lamentations, a private expression of suffering, have become a public expression of moral fortitude and resolve in the face of an unyielding foreign force. This depiction of Llywarch's loss, as the ultimate sacrifice for honour, the image of his warrior sons wearing the golden chain, the '*badge of honour*', stands in stark contrast with the distinctly elegiac portrayal of loss in the ninth-century *englynion*. In *Enwau meibon llywarch hen*, Llywarch laments: 'Tec yd gan ir adaren/ar perwit pren. vch. pen gwen. kin y olo dan tywarch/briwei calch [mab llywarch] hen'¹⁹⁸ and most poignantly: 'Handid haus im achuisson/oe adav ar lan awon. y gid a llv ewur. lluydon.'¹⁹⁹ The image of a wild flower grave as an army for his warrior son is emotive and chimes with Llywarch's reiteration of guilt and sorrow in goading his sons, as expressed at the end of cycle in *Cân yr Henwr*: 'Nym dygret nah un na hoen/gwedy lleas llawr a gwen. wyf annwar abar wyf hen.'²⁰⁰ Llywarch

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p. ix. 'Eastwards' denotes Deira and Bernicia, the old Cumbric terms for the areas surrounding York and Northumberland.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. xvi.

¹⁹⁸ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 413, lines 1a,b,c,d. 'Beautifully sings the bird on the pear tree above Gwên. Before he was buried under the sod/the son of Llywarch Hen used to break shield'. (English translation by Rowland, p. 473.) Rowland notes that his *beddau* stanza is a later interpolation, an indication of the 'long popularity of the Llywarch cycle and lateness of some of the additional compositions in it'. (See note 1, p. 535.)

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 413, lines 4,a,b,c. 'Complaints are easier for me/ because of his being left by the bank of the river/ with a host of withered cow-parsley.' (English translation by Rowland, p. 473.)

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 418, lines 20a,b,c. 'Neither sleep nor happiness comes to me/since the killing of Llawr and Gwen/I am a cantankerous carcass - I am old.' (English translation by Rowland, p. 476.)

feels he is condemned to a slow decline into infirmity. He suffers from the absence of happiness and one of the basic comforts of life, namely sleep, has also been taken from him. There is little to suggest willing self-sacrifice in Llywarch's final lament.

In contrast, Pughe and Iolo's reimagining of *Canu Llywarch Hen* privileges the perception of Llywarch as a public persona, an emblem in the struggle to re-establish Welsh identity within a European, if not global context. Llywarch's private suffering, his self-deception, and moral conflict between truth and denial are submerged beneath Iolo's bardic paradigm of truth as a 'noble' quality which encapsulates moral integrity. Llywarch's significance in the literary landscape of Wales and the Welsh diaspora in the late eighteenth century therefore, directly reflects the heightened interest in the notion of Welsh nationhood and identity. It is within this cultural milieu that Llywarch is reinvigorated as a bard, the personification of integrity. His longevity, wisdom and heroic resistance to Anglo-Saxon incursions into the ancestral lands of the Britons embodies the notion of Welsh nationhood and Welsh identity in response to growing Anglo-British influence. In the period following the Act of Union in 1707, Wales was not 'a dutifully acquiescent participant' in the Anglo-British hegemony of the Union. The promotion of an 'Anglocentric British identity' in the late eighteenth century meant that demarcation between the terms 'Briton' and 'British' remained unstable, an instability fuelled by growing anxieties over the French Revolution, the rise of radicalism, and the speed of French military expansion.²⁰¹ The construction of new literary identities that articulated Welsh nationhood therefore became a political, as well as a cultural necessity.²⁰² The antiquarianism of Welsh cultural revival combined with the literary activities of the intellectual London-Welsh societies embodied 'the performance of the self in diaspora'.²⁰³ This self-conscious act of fashioning and refashioning literary identities is also reflected in Pughe's underlying objectives in his translation of the *englynion* in *The Heroic Elegies*. Ifor Williams observes that by identifying (erroneously) all the *englynion* included in the edition as the authentic work of Llywarch Hen, Pughe created a narrative for the life of Llywarch which 'legitimised' his role as the embodiment of Welsh cultural heritage and Welsh

²⁰¹ See Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing From Wales: Bards And Britons*, p. 1.

²⁰² Jennifer Mori, *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution, 1785 - 1820* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. VII, 'the French revolution was loved and hated in Britain, the nation that mounted the most determined intellectual and military resistance to its effects in Europe'. Such political turmoil prompted a desire to reimagine and reassert the identity and cultural heritage of the Welsh nation.

²⁰³ *The Edinburgh Companion To Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock, Edinburgh Companions To Scottish Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 5.

nationhood: 'wrth dderbyn yr englynion oll fel gwaith dilys Llywarch...cafwyd digon o ddefnydd i lunio'r fuchedd ddiddorol uchod i'r bard, a llwyr gyfiawnhau yr Hen ar ôl ei enw'.²⁰⁴ The presence of a narrative arc which presents the course of Llywarch's life according to the requirements of Iolo's bardic notions is further evidenced in the text: 'Having outlived all his sons, friends and protectors, and being reduced to extreme misery', Llywarch 'retired to a solitary hut at Abercuawg'²⁰⁵ and 'it may be inferred that Llywarch [after one further move to a different parish] composed most of the pieces now extant, after his retreat into Wales, to sooth his mind, borne down with calamities, and the infirmities of uncommon old age'.²⁰⁶ Pughe and Iolo's construction of Llywarch's narrative further demonstrates how Iolo's literary invention and creative reimagining of medieval poetic texts facilitated the manipulation of historical and literary personas to create new literary identities; identities through which contemporary concerns and anxieties in the Age of Revolution could be expressed.

The presentation of Llywarch as a 'legitimate' representation of ancient Welsh culture in contemporary literary guise mirrors the process of rediscovering and redefining origins in the late eighteenth century in which the vexed question of identity, nation and state arose from 'a renewed cultural awareness and new understandings of history and ethnicity'.²⁰⁷ This new awareness was demonstrated in Iolo's radical reconstruction of medieval bardism, shaped by his eclectic, received notions of 'druidism, Jacobinism, Unitarian theology, orientalism, and Arthuriana'.²⁰⁸ However, it is, perhaps, the principles of revolutionary Jacobinism, 'liberty, equality and fraternity' which chime the most with Iolo's view of bardism, defined in the preface to *The Heroic Elegies* as: 'Bardism – a system embracing all the leading principles which tend to spread liberty, peace and happiness amongst mankind'.²⁰⁹ Whilst the egalitarian ideals of the French Revolution had fired the imagination of some members of the London-Welsh societies, a key aspect of Iolo's radical vision of bardism was

²⁰⁴ Williams (ed.), p.x, *Canu Llywarch Hen*, 'By accepting all the *englynion* as the work of Llywarch and linking the texts to contemporary events, Pughe gathered sufficient material to construct an interesting life for the poet, and to fully justify the Old after his name'. (English translation is my own.)

²⁰⁵ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. xv.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p. xvi.

²⁰⁷ Adam Coward, 'Exiled Trojans Or The Sons Of Gomer', in *The Roots Of Nationalism: National Identity Formation In Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, ed. by Lotte Jensen, Heritage And Memory Studies, 1 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 167-181 (p.167).

²⁰⁸ Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles*, p. 3.

²⁰⁹ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. xxiv.

democratisation; a belief reflected in his vision for the *Gorseddau* as a means of promoting 'the historical consciousness and ancient democratic traditions of the Welsh people'.²¹⁰ The foundations of Iolo's democratising vision, openness, truth and transparency, were central to his structuring of bardic meetings; held in the open air, the motto of the Bards of the Island of Britain became 'Y Gwir yn erbyn y Byd' ('The Truth against the World').²¹¹ In Llywarch, Iolo saw the ideal literary template for his reinvigoration of the bard, and the notion of bardic identity; his reimagining of Llywarch presenting him as a venerable figure, morally prudent and wise. Pughe and Iolo observe how 'His [Llywarch's] subjects are mostly martial: heroic odes, heroic elegies, but numerous interspersed thro' all his pieces we find some of the finest moral and prudential sentiments, clearly indicating that his taste and manner was formed on the principles of the Bards of the Island of Britain'.²¹² As a historical persona, Llywarch also offered a direct link to the poetic traditions of the past and the 'golden age' of medieval Welsh bardism. His dual roles as noble warrior and bard, as presented in Pughe and Iolo's narrative, were contrary positions meaning that: 'his whole life militated against the leading maxims of that system [bardism]: the ground-work of which was universal peace, and perfect equality', an aspect mitigated by Pughe and Iolo who indicate that Llywarch was an exception, and not a member of the regular order of bards.²¹³ The martial themes identified by Pughe and Iolo in Llywarch's poetry resonate with the notion of the 'noble progenitor', a salient feature of the eighteenth century concept of 'Welshness' with its noble and ancient past.²¹⁴

By drawing on Llywarch's longevity, wisdom and bardic prowess to create an idealised bardic image of the medieval noble warrior, Iolo mythologises the figure of Llywarch. His great age and wisdom are aggrandised beyond human possibility. Llywarch becomes a figure of legend in which he is portrayed as a contemporary of Arthur at the Battle of Camlan: 'Arthur fell in the battle of Camlan, in the year 542, at which period *Llywarch* must have been nearly forty years old',²¹⁵ and he is the archetypal noble warrior bravely battling with his sons to repel the invading Saxons: 'For the terrour of death from the base men of *Lloegyr*, I will

²¹⁰ Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles*, p.122.

²¹¹ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. xxvi.

²¹² Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles*, p. 212, Charnell-White quotes from Iolo Morganwg's essays on bardism, 'Schools of Welsh Poetry' (NLW 131208B).

²¹³ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. xviii.

²¹⁴ Coward, 'Exiled Trojans Or The Sons Of Gomer', p. 168.

²¹⁵ Pughe, *The Heroic Elegies*, p. ix.

not defile my honour'.²¹⁶ The presentation of Llywarch, as a mythologised persona accords with the ideological myth of 'renovation' in which the aim is not to 're-establish order, and the lineage of the ruling strata, such as allegedly existed in the past but to create a new kind of society based upon a highly idealised image of the simple mores and noble qualities of the *ethnie*'s 'heroic age'. 'Such an era is usually discerned in the remote and archaic past of the community and its heroes are equally archetypal – an Achilles, Arminius, Lemminkainen or Cuchulain'.²¹⁷ Iolo's mythologised, idealised version of Llywarch, characterised by his 'noble qualities' and 'simple mores' is the manifestation of the myth of renovation.²¹⁸ In collective 'renovation', the setting of this archaic 'heroic age' is mysterious but generally arcadian, in the manner of Rousseau's principle of Primitivism with its central premise of the 'natural man', free, and at peace with himself and nature. Rousseau's Primitivism emphasised the inherent good in 'primitive' man. Man, in the past, uncontaminated by corruption was able to 'dive' into the thoughts of man. This ability exempted him 'from many vices'. In reimagining Llywarch as the model image of the 'natural man' of the golden age of bardism, free from the modern vices of corruption, power and deceit, Iolo constructed the figure of Llywarch as a template for a new social order, a new age of Welsh nationhood rooted in his vision of bardism. The treatment of *Canu Llywarch Hen* as a palimpsest accommodated Iolo's varied ideological influences, as multiple, synchronous meanings within the texts. As fellow radical William Blake drew on 'disparate discourses' in the 1790s in a form of literary 'bricolage', Iolo introduced seemingly disparate discourses within a single text to express a contemporary socio-political desire for freedom, peace and democracy.²¹⁹ The transgressions of Llywarch in the ninth-century *englynion*, his pride, his self-deception, and the goading of his sons are couched in moralistic terms to become acts of truth, honesty, courage and sacrifice. Llywarch can be understood as a reimagined literary identity, an eighteenth century ideal of Welsh identity and nationhood. Iolo and Pughe's reimagining of Llywarch, the historical persona, aimed to position the history, literature and culture of the Welsh nation

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 129, 'Er ergryd angau rhag angwyr Lloegyr, Ni lygrav vy mawredd,'. Cf. the ninth-century *englynion* in which these *englyn* form a dialogue between Llywarch and his son, Gwên. See Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 405.

²¹⁷ See Anthony Smith, 'Ethnic Myths And Ethnic Revivals', *European Journal Of Sociology*, Tending The Roots: Nationalism and Populism, Vol. 25.No. 2 (1984), 283–305 (p. 294).

²¹⁸ *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. by Isaac Kramnick, Library Of Congress Cataloging In Publication Data, 1st edn. (New York, United States Of America: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1995), p. 365.

²¹⁹ See Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake And The Culture Of Radicalism In The 1790's* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 5.

alongside that of other nations, and therefore, most significantly, within the wider narratives of European history and civilisation.

Conclusion

A unifying factor in the depiction of transgression, loss and grief in these texts is the nature of human fallibility, and the literary manifestation of this phenomenon. The literary personas, as presented in these bodies of poetry and prose all exhibit fallibility and human flaws. The texts indicate that both Heledd and Llywarch Hen lament their loss of kin, their homelands, and their future lives on account of ‘something they have said’. Myrddin lives as a fugitive in the forest of Celyddon suffering the contortions of guilt over the death of his sister Gwenddydd’s son and Suibhne is condemned to an existence of ‘otherness’, alienated from society on account of his transgressions against St Ronan and the Church. Transgression and guilt, the ‘crossing of a moral boundary’, are closely interlinked in the depiction of suffering, lamentation and loss. ‘The presence of guilt is a characteristic of the early Welsh saga, as in the story of Heledd, Llywarch Hen and Ysgolan. Personal guilt is very often compounded with general loss’.²²⁰ The existential nature of the persona’s predicament in Welsh saga *englynion* is expressed in oblique terms. Time shifts between past and present, and the absence of chronology of events evokes the persona’s psychological suffering, blurring the distinctions between the outside world and inner mental torment. Edward Anwyl observes how, in contrast to the requirements of bardic eulogy, the *englynion* are constructed to give an emotional impression at a specific time. He states that the poems have ‘a certain lack of consecutiveness, shewing that the mind of the writer aimed rather at recording impressions than at expressing thought.’ Truthful and visceral poetic expression is privileged over formality: ‘there is no suppression of irrelevant thoughts, of the marshalling of those which are relevant into an orderly and artistic whole.’²²¹ The ‘impressionistic’ nature of the *englynion* is also evident in the fragmentary narrative clues in the Myrddin poems which leave the reader guessing as to the nature of his transgressions, loss, and grief. Only *Vita Merlini* is the exception to Anwyl’s observation, as transgression becomes the action of those around Merlin, notably his sister Queen Ganiada. The ‘impressionistic’ nature of the Welsh texts may also be observed in the texts from Irish literature. Unlike the large mass of early Irish literary remains, *Buile Suibhne* seems to owe little to traditional lore. Like the body of poetry attributed to Gormlaith, the tale of Suibhne Geilt is ‘a sustained literary tour de force,

²²⁰ Meirion Pennar, J. Gwenogvryn Evans, and James Negus, *The Black Book Of Carmarthen* (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1989), p. 26.

²²¹ ‘Young Wales’, (1897) *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru* <<https://journals.library.wales/view>> [accessed 2 July 2021]. See p. 27.

and, as such, furnishes an interesting example of the medieval attitude of mind towards literary creation'.²²² Although these texts adhere to medieval modes of literary composition they are far from relics from history. Personal tragedy, the universality of transgression, loss, and grief, and the flaws inherent in humanity are themes which transcend time to remain powerful, thought-provoking and relevant to life in our modern age.

²²² *Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy Of Suibhne) Being The Adventures Of Suibhne Geilt, A Middle Irish Romance*, ed. by J.G. O'Keeffe (London, England: David Nutt, New Oxford Street, 1913), p.xxxvii.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Adomnan, *Life Of St. Columba*, trans. by Richard Sharpe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York: Penguin Books, 1991)
<<https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=F4F864B5-8E92-4B23-81B9-23F997A9C183>>
[accessed 29 April 2020]
- Alexander, Michael (ed.), *Beowulf: A Verse Translation*, Penguin Classics, rev. ed (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003)
- Bergin, Osborn, *Irish Bardic Poetry* (Dublin: The Dublin Institute Of Advanced Studies, 1970)
- Davies, Sioned (ed.), *The Mabinogion*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Gildas, *The Ruin Of Britain And Other Works*, trans. by Michael Winterbottom, Arthurian Period Sources, 7 (London: Phillimore, 1978)
- Jarman, A.O.H. (ed.), *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1982)
- Monmouth, Geoffrey Of, and Basil Fulford Lowther Clarke, *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlini* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press [for] The Language And Literature Committee Of The Board Of Celtic Studies, 1973)
- O'Keeffe, J.G. (ed.), *Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy Of Suibhne) Being The Adventures Of Suibhne Geilt, A Middle Irish Romance* (London, England: David Nutt, New Oxford Street, 1913)
- O'Sullivan, Anne, 'Triamhuin Ghormlaithe', *Eriu*, 16 Contributions In Memory Of Osborn Bergin (1952) (1952), 189–99
- Pennar, Meirion, J. Gwenogvryn Evans, and James Negus, (eds.) *The Black Book Of Carmarthen* (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1989)
- Pughe, William Owen, 'The Heroic Elegies And Other Pieces Of Llywarch Hen, Prince Of The Cumbrian Britons', trans. by Llywarch Pughe, *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru*, 2021
<<https://www.library.wales>> [accessed 3 May 2021]
- Rowland, Jenny, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: A Study And Edition Of The Englynion* (Cambridge, England: D.S. Brewer; Boydell & Brewer [distributors], 1990)
- The Epic Of Gilgamesh*, trans. by Andrew George (Great Britain: Penguin Random House UK, 2016)

The Wanderer: Elegies, Epics, Riddles, trans. by Michael Alexander (Penguin Books, 1966)
<<https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=388E9843-34E3-4744-807E-B73BFA40D96F>>
[accessed 8 January 2021]

Secondary Sources

Bitel, Lisa M., *Women In Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks
(Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Bray, Dorothy Ann, 'A Woman's Loss And Lamentation: Heledd's Song And The Wife's
Lament', *Neophilologus*, 79 (1995), 147–54

Bromwich, Rachel, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads Of The Island Of Britain*, 4th. edition
(University of Wales Press, 2017)

Bromwich, Rachel, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts, eds., *The Arthur Of The Welsh:
The Arthurian Legend In Medieval Welsh Literature*, 2nd edn. (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales
Press, 2008)

Chadwick, Nora K., *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church: Delivered at King's
College in the University of Durham on 22, 23, and 24 March 1960*, The Riddell
Memorial Lectures, 32, rev. ed., reprint (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1997)

Charnell-White, Cathryn, *Bardic Circles: National, Regional And Personal Identity In The
Bardic Vision Of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007)

Coon, Lynda L., *Sacred Fictions Holy Women And Hagiography In Late Antiquity*
(Philadelphia; Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997)

Coughlan, Patricia, and Tina O'Toole, eds., *Irish Literature: Feminist Perspectives*, IASIL
Studies in Irish Writing (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2008)

Gramich, Katie, *Kate Roberts*, Writers of Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011)

Greenfield, Stanley B., and Daniel G Calder, *A New Critical History Of Old English Literature*
(New York: NYU Press, 1996)
<<https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=865475>>
[accessed 28 January 2021]

Heaney, Seamus, *Sweeney Astray* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001)

Homer, and Martin Hammond, *The Iliad*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, Middlesex,
England: New York, N.Y: Penguin ; Viking Penguin, 1987)

Jarman, A.O.H., *The Legend Of Merlin*, 3rd edn. (Cardiff: University Of Wales Press, 1960)

- Jenkins, Dafydd, *The Welsh Law Of Women*, ed. by Morfydd E. Owen, 2nd edn. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017)
- Jenkins, Geraint H., *Bard Of Liberty: The Political Radicalism Of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012)
- Jensen, Lotte, (ed.) *The Roots Of Nationalism: National Identity Formation In Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, Heritage And Memory Studies, 1 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016)
- Koch, John T. (ed.) *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2006)
- Kramnick, Isaac, (ed.) *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, 1st. edn. (New York, United States Of America: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1995)
- Larson, Laurence Marcellus, *The King's Mirror (Speculum Regale - Konungs Skuggsjá)*, The Library Of Scandanavian Literature (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1917), vol.xv
- Leys, Ruth, 'Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, And The Question Of Memory', *Critical Inquiry*, 20.4 (1994), 623–62
- Ifor Williams, (ed.) *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1999)
- Mee, Jon, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake And The Culture Of Radicalism In The 1790's*, New paperback ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)
- Mori, Jennifer, *Britain in the Age of the French Revolution, 1785 - 1820* (Harlow: Longman, 2000)
- Murphy, Gerard, (ed.) *Early Irish Lyrics: Eighth To Twelfth Century*, 1st paperback. ed (Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 1998)
- Ni Mhaonaigh, Maire, 'Tale Of Three Gormlaiths In Medieval Irish Literature', *Eriu*, 52 (2002), 1–24
- Oxenham, Helen, *Perceptions Of Femininity In Early Irish Society*, Studies in Celtic History, XXXVI (Woodbridge ; Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2016)
- Partridge, Angela, 'Wild Men And Wailing Women', *Eigse: Journal Of Irish Studies*, 18.1 (1980), 25–37
- Pittock, Murray, (ed.) *The Edinburgh Companion To Scottish Romanticism*, Edinburgh Companions To Scottish Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011)
- Pividori, Cristina, 'Resisting the Hero's Tale: The Trope Of The Cowardly Soldier In The Literature Of The Great War', *Nordic Journal Of English Studies*, 13(4) (2014), 111–31 <<https://doi.org/DOI: 10.35360/njes.335>>
- Poems of the Great War, 1914-1918* (London: Penguin, 1998)

- Prescott, Sarah, *Eighteenth-Century Writing From Wales: Bards And Britons; Writing Wales In English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008)
- Roberts, Kate, *Tywyll Heno*, (Gwasg Gee, Dinbych, Clwyd, 1962)
- Salem Web Network, Educational, *Biblestudytools*
<<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/daniel-4-33.html>> [accessed 25 March 2021]
- Schumm, Darla Y., and Michael Stoltzfus, eds., *Disability And Religious Diversity: Cross-Cultural And Interreligious Perspectives*, 1st edn. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)
- Shippey, T. A., *Old English Verse* (London: Hutchinson, 1972)
- Smith, Anthony, 'Ethnic Myths And Ethnic Revivals', *European Journal Of Sociology*, Tending The Roots: Nationalism and Populism, Vol. 25.No. 2 (1984), 283–305
- Stephens, Meic, (ed.) *The New Companion To The Literature Of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998)
- Thomas, Neil, 'The Celtic Wild Man Tradition And Geoffrey Of Monmouth's 'Vita Merlini': Madness Or 'Contemptus Mundi?', *Arthuriana*, 10.1 (2000), 27–42
- Thompson, Stith, *Motif-Index Of Folk-Literature, Vol. 6.2, Index: (L-Z)* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995)
- Trindade, W. Ann, 'Irish Gormlaith As A Sovereignty Figure', *Etudes Celtiques*, 23 (1986), 143–56
- Wentersdorf, Karl P., 'The Situation Of The Narrator's Lord In "The Wife's Lament"', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71.No. 4 (1970), 604–10
- Ifor Williams, (ed.) *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1999)
- 'Young Wales', *Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru*, 1897 <<https://journals.library.wales/view>> [accessed 2 July 2021]