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The Submission of Irish Kings in Fact and Fiction: Henry II, Bendigeidfran, and the Dating of *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*

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THIS paper is about two incidents involving Matholwch (or Mallolwch), king of Ireland, in the Middle Welsh tale of *Branwen*, the second of *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. These incidents first attracted attention in discussions of the date of *Branwen* by Saunders Lewis and T. M. Charles-Edwards, and more recently the second incident has figured in Marie Therese Flanagan's discussion of Henry II's reception by the Irish kings after his invasion in 1171.¹ Apart from their bearing on the dating of *The Four Branches*, these three scholars' discussions raise a number of difficult issues in Irish history, which deserve to be aired further.

In his edition of *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, Sir Ifor Williams suggested a date c. 1060 on linguistic and historical grounds. This was widely accepted, but several later students of the text have explicitly or tacitly rejected his arguments and have allowed that it may be rather later. For instance, D. Simon Evans favours the twelfth century in his *Grammar of Middle Welsh* (without discussion) and Saunders Lewis argued for the 1170s or 1180s, mainly on the basis of supposed historical parallels with the reign of Henry II. T. M. Charles-Edwards and Eric P. Hamp have rejected both Ifor Williams's and Saunders Lewis's arguments. Instead they propose a date considerably earlier than c. 1160, chiefly because there are far fewer French loan words in *The Four Branches* than in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, a text usually dated to the thirteenth century but regarded by Charles-Edwards and Hamp as a satire contemporary with the reign of Madog ap Maredudd (d. 1160), who is mentioned

¹*Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship: Interactions in Ireland in the Late Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1989), Chapter 6. While her discussion stimulated me to write the present paper for the Conference of Irish Medievalists in Maynooth in 1990, the main ideas below were originally included in a paper on 'Rhygyfarch, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, and Irish Literature', read to the Cylch Traford Rhyddiaith in Oxford in 1980. Translations of *Branwen* may be found in all editions of the so-called *Mabinogion*.

in it.² More recently, however, Edgar M. Slotkin has cast doubt on the contemporaneity of Madog and *The Dream of Rhonabwy*,³ implicitly weakening c. 1160 as a terminus ante quem for *The Four Branches*. As a result, only two dating arguments remain unassailed. These are Dr Charles-Edwards's arguments, from the two incidents in *Branwen* discussed below, that it is 'likely that the Four Branches belong to sometime between about 1050 and about 1120'.⁴

I. MATHOLWCH SAILING FROM THE SOUTH OF IRELAND

Charles-Edwards's terminus ante quem c. 1120 is based on the opening of *Branwen*. One afternoon Bendigeidfran, king of Britain, is sitting with his retinue on the rock of Harlech, above the ocean, and sees Matholwch, the king of Ireland, sailing towards him, seeking the hand of his sister Branwen in marriage:

Ac ual yd oedynt yn eisted yuelly, wynt a welynt teir llong ar dec, yn dyuot o deheu Iwerdon, ac yn kyrchu parth ac attunt, a cherdet rugyl ebrwyd ganthunt: y gwynt yn eu hol, ac yn nessau yn ebrwyd attunt. . . . Gwedy gueleit y llongeu o agos, diheu oed ganthunt na welsynt eiryoet llongeu gyweirach eu hansawd noc wy. Arwydon tec, guedus, arwreid o bali oed arnunt. Ac ar hynny, nachaf un o'r llongeu yn raculaenu rac y rei ereill, ac y guelynt dyrchauael taryan, yn uch no bwrdd y llong, a swch y taryan y uynydd yn arwyd tangneued. . . .⁵

And while they were sitting in this way, they could see thirteen ships coming from the south of Ireland, and making towards them, with an easy swift motion, the wind behind them, and approaching them swiftly. . . . Having seen the ships close up, they were sure that they had never seen ships better equipped in appearance than them. There were beautiful, seemly, heroic banners of brocaded silk on them. And thereupon, behold one of the ships outstripping the other ones, and they could see a shield being raised high above the ship's deck, and the point of the shield upwards as a sign of peace. . . .

²*Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, edited by Ifor Williams, second edition (Cardiff, 1951), p. xli (cf. *Pwyll Pendueic Dyuet*, edited by R. L. Thomson (Dublin, 1957), pp. xii-xvi); D. Simon Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin, 1964), p. xxx; Saunders Lewis, *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, edited by R. Geraint Gruffydd (Cardiff, 1973), pp. 1-33; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1970, pp. 263-98; Eric P. Hamp, 'On Dating and Archaism in the *Pedeir Keinc*', *ibid.*, 1972-73, pp. 95-103. For other views on dating see J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Beirdd y Tywysogion: Arolwg', *Llên Cymru*, 11 (1970-71), 1-94 (pp. 7-9). ³The *Fabula, Story, and Text of Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 18 (Winter 1989), 89-111. See also Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and others (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 183-208 (pp. 191-93). ⁴'Date', p. 298. This is the current consensus according to Sioned Davies, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (Caernarfon, 1989), p. 6. ⁵*Pedeir Keinc*, edited by Williams, pp. 29-30.

Both Saunders Lewis and Charles-Edwards stress the detail that Matholwch is seen sailing from the *south* of Ireland, but interpret it very differently. Lewis detected here a reminiscence of August 1166, when the ousted Leinster king Diarmait Mac Murchada sailed over from Wexford (says Lewis) to Bristol, whence he went to do homage to Henry II (in France) and then offered his daughter's hand and the succession to his kingdom to 'Strongbow', the lord of Strigoil.⁶ Charles-Edwards is properly sceptical about this parallel, emphasizing the difference in status and motivation between the historical ex-king of Leinster, seeking to recover his kingdom, and the fictional king of Ireland, who sought to bind Britain and Ireland by a marriage alliance.⁷ It may be added that even if *Branwen* did imply a fleet sailing from Wexford (which is not clear), that should not make us think of Diarmait's fleet in particular, partly because it is uncertain whether Diarmait did sail from his own kingdom,⁸ and partly because the port of Wexford was probably well known in Wales. For instance, one of the characters in *Culhwch and Olwen* is a certain 'Llenlleawc the Irishman from the headland of Gamon', probably a mistake for Garmon and referring to Llŵch Garmon, the Welsh name for Wexford (Irish *Loch Garman*).⁹

Charles-Edwards rejects altogether the idea that 'the south of Ireland' means Wexford, and this leads him to propose a quite different date for *Branwen*:

The author of *Branwen* knew about the traditional divisions of Ireland, for example the five provinces. Another of these divisions was one between the north of Ireland, *Leth Cuinn* (Conn's half); and the south of Ireland, *Leth Moga* (Mug's half). On the east coast the boundary seems

⁶Lewis, 'Branwen', in *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, pp. 9-10. (This essay first appeared in *Ysgrifau Beirniadol*, 5 (1970), 30-43.) ⁷'Date', p. 293. See also Morfydd E. Owen, 'Shame and Reparation: Woman's Place in the Kin', in *The Welsh Law of Women: Studies presented to Daniel A. Binchy*, edited by Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd E. Owen (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 40-68 (pp. 58-60); Andrew Welsh, 'Branwen, Beowulf, and the Tragic Peaceweaver Tale', *Viator*, 22 (1991), 1-13. ⁸In saying that he sailed from Wexford, Lewis and Charles-Edwards are apparently following Edmund Curtis (*A History of Mediaeval Ireland from 1110 to 1513* (London, 1923), p. 44), but this seems only to be a guess. The only primary source (*The Song of Dermot and the Earl*, lines 221-26) has him sail from *Corkeran*, which Orpen locates near Youghal, Co. Cork. See Goddard Henry Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1216*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1911-20), I, 77, and his correspondence in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 13 (1903), 418-19, and 14 (1904), 191-93. But *Corkeran* is listed among the uncertainly identifiable names by T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Notes on Middle Irish Pronunciation', *Hermathena*, 20 (1926-30), 152-95 (p. 157). ⁹Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Irish Geography of *Culhwch and Olwen*', in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in honour of James Carney*, edited by Donnchadh Ó Corráin and others (Maynooth, 1989), pp. 412-26 (pp. 417-18).

to have been the mouth of the Liffey. This means that Matholwch could have sailed from anywhere from Dublin southwards, and still have been sailing from the south of Ireland. . . . Mr. Saunders Lewis was right to call attention to the sentence in *Branwen* which describes Matholwch as sailing from the south of Ireland; but it constitutes important evidence against his thesis. The point is that the author of *Branwen* is supposing the king of Ireland to have sailed from the south of Ireland, from Leinster or Munster. This would have been a reasonable supposition in the eleventh century, but it would not have been a reasonable supposition in the twelfth century. In 1002 Brian Bórama of the Dál Cais (a people in what is now County Clare) achieved the position of high-king of Ireland when he 'took the hostages of Connachta at Áth Luain, and the hostages of Mael Sechnaill (King of Mide)' [*Annals of Inisfallen*, s.a.]. From then until 1116 when Diarmait Ua Briain unseated his brother Muirchertach Ua Briain, the descendant[s] of Brian Bórama were generally the most powerful kings in Ireland except perhaps for a period in the middle of the eleventh century when Diarmait mac Mael na mBó, king of Leinster, is said to have been king of Ireland 'with opposition'. After 1116 the kings of Connaught were dominant. This means that after 1116, or perhaps a few years later, it would no longer have been a natural thing for a Welshman so well informed about Irish affairs as the author of *Branwen* to assume that the king of Ireland would come from the south of Ireland, namely from Leinster or Munster.¹⁰

This line of argument deserves some probing, since it leads Charles-Edwards to the conclusion that '*Branwen* was probably not composed after 1120, because of the assumption that the king of Ireland comes from the south of Ireland'.¹¹

In the first place it may be doubted that the author of *Branwen* was well informed about contemporary Irish affairs. It is true that his story ends with an explanation of the origin of the five provinces of Ireland, but that division seems to have been well known in Wales.¹² Yet if we were to accept for the sake of argument that he also knew about the twofold division into *Leth Moga* and *Leth Cuinn*, that his *deheu* 'south' meant the same as *deheubarth* 'southern part', and that he meant us to suppose that the king of Ireland was based there, would this really imply composition before 1120? Surely not. Despite some anachronistic details (as in all medieval historical fiction), the author makes it clear that he is describing a remote period in the pre-Christian past of Britain and Ireland, earlier than the reign in Britain of Julius Caesar's opponent Caswallawn (Cassivellaunus) and earlier than the establishment of the five provinces in Ireland. At this legendary period, both Britain and Ireland were

¹⁰'Date', pp. 292–93. On the north–south division see most recently David Sproule, 'Origins of the Éoganachta', *Ériu*, 35 (1984), 31–37. ¹¹'Date', p. 298. ¹²See Sims-Williams, 'Irish Geography', pp. 420–21.

supposed to be ruled by monarchs, not by provincial kings competing for the high-kingship.¹³ In these circumstances the author of *Branwen* would have been under no obligation, if writing after 1116, to make Matholwch sail from the north rather than the south simply in order to be up to date. In fact it might be argued that if he really was well informed about post-1116 Irish affairs, he might deliberately have chosen a southerly location for the king of Ireland so as to lend a more archaic colour to his story.

In rejecting Saunders Lewis's alleged contemporary allusions, there is no obligation on us to find others. Probably we should read the opening of *Branwen* as literary critics rather than historians. The opening may be intended to enhance the profound pessimism of the rest of the story:¹⁴ despite initial good intentions on both sides, the attempt to forge an alliance between the two islands ends in catastrophe—in Ireland only five pregnant women in a cave survive to establish and repopulate the five provinces, while in Britain the throne is usurped by Caswallawn, indicating that Julius Caesar's conquest is imminent. This subsequent descent into catastrophe is skilfully pointed up by the optimism of the opening description. Like later medieval writers,¹⁵ the author's imagination was stirred and stimulated by the thought of a fleet of sailing ships. How better would a fleet appear to advantage than on a fine afternoon with the wind full astern ('y gwynt yn eu hol') and the sails billowing forward? And why should the court be sitting happily on the exposed rock of Harlech unless it was a fine day?¹⁶ A propitious, southerly breeze¹⁷ is an inevitable accompaniment of the fine weather, and so the ships must sail from the south. Moreover, ships from the north of Ireland

¹³On the author's chronological perspective, see P. P. Sims-Williams, 'Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales', in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, edited by Tore Nyberg and others (Odense, 1985), pp. 97–131. ¹⁴On which see, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 103–5; Françoise Le Saux, 'Justice et impunité dans les *Mabinogi*', in *La Justice au moyen âge (sanction ou impunité?)*, Sénéfiance, 16 (Aix-en-Provence, 1986), pp. 213–25; Welsh, 'Beowulf, *Branwen*', p. 1. The end of *Branwen* seems to echo the aftermath of the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19, 30–38). ¹⁵cf. J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, translated by F. Hopman (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 237; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Riddling Treatment of the "Watchman Device" in *Branwen* and *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*', *Studia Celtica*, 12/13 (1977–78), 83–117 (p. 114, n. 1). ¹⁶On the choice of Harlech, see Bedwyr Lewis Jones, 'Bedd Branwen—The Literary Evidence', *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club*, 1966, pp. 32–37 (p. 33); Glyn E. Jones, 'Y Wledd yn Harlech ac yng Ngwales ym *Mabinogi Branwen*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 25 (1972–74), 380–86 (p. 382); Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Cú Chulainn in Wales: Welsh Sources for Irish Onomastics', *Celtica*, 21 (1990), 620–33 (p. 631). ¹⁷Marged Haycock points out to me the *gwynt godeheu* 'southerly, propitious, blessed wind' in *The Book of Taliesin*, edited by J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Llanbedrog, 1910), p. 79; cf. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, edited by R. J. Thomas and Gareth A. Bevan (Cardiff, 1950–), s.v. *goddeau*.

would be invisible at Harlech until they rounded the Llŷn peninsula, so they must come from the south if their progress is to be watched to the best advantage. We may suspect, then, that the mention of the 'south of Ireland' testifies to the author's vivid imagination and his power of concise, effective description, rather than to his awareness of Irish high politics or history. In any case, it is flimsy evidence for a terminus ante quem of 1120 for *Branwen*. We may move on to the more complicated matter of the terminus post quem.

II. THE BUILDING OF THE GREAT HOUSE IN IRELAND FOR BENDIGEIDFRAN Charles-Edwards's terminus post quem of 1050 and Saunders Lewis's terminus post quem of 1171 are both based on a subsequent episode in *Branwen*. Matholwch and Branwen celebrate their marriage feast in tents rather than in a house, because Bendigeidfran (being a giant) has 'never been contained in a house'. Meanwhile, Branwen's half-brother, insulted that he has not been consulted, mutilates Matholwch's horses. Matholwch in turn takes offence, but Bendigeidfran makes peace by giving him, first, fresh horses and then a magic cauldron to take back to Ireland.¹⁸ In Ireland, the old insult rankles and vengeance is taken on Branwen herself. Bendigeidfran mounts an expedition, and his fleet lands on the bank of the *Llinon*, 'a river which was in Ireland'. Once the Britons have forded the *Llinon*, on hurdles placed on Bendigeidfran's back, Matholwch offers terms. First, he offers to give the kingship of Ireland to Branwen's son, Gwern, in the presence of Bendigeidfran.¹⁹ Secondly, when that seems not to satisfy Bendigeidfran, Matholwch's advisers suggest an improved offer (which parallels the dual compensation of horses plus cauldron paid to Matholwch in Britain):

¹⁸A curious parallel occurs in *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh: The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, edited and translated by James Henthorn Todd, Rolls Series (London, 1867), §§ 82–83. While staying as a guest in Brian Bórama's house at Kincora, the defeated king Máel Mórda is insulted by Brian's son: 'Maelmordha became angered, and retired to his bed-room [and next day left] without permission, without taking leave. This was told to Brian, and he sent a messenger after him to detain him until Brian should converse with him, and until he should carry away with him cattle and pay. The messenger overtook him. . . .' (*Ro fergaided Maelmordha, ocus da chuaid da thig lebtha [. . .] can cedacad can celebrad. Ro hinnised sen do Brian, ocus ro chuir gilla na diaid dia astad corro agaillead Brian, ocus corracad crod ocus tuarastul leis. Is and sin ruc in gilla fair. . .*). Compare *Branwen*: 'The news came to Bendigeidfran that Matholwch was leaving the court, without asking, without permission, and messengers went to ask him why that was. . . . Those men overtook him. . . .' (*E chwedyl a doeth at Uendigeituran, bot Matholwch yn adaw y llys, heb ouyn, heb ganhyat. A chenadeu a aeth y ouyn idaw, paham oed hynny. . . . Y guyr hynny a'y godiwawd. . . .* *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 32). This similarity, as with many of those discussed below, must be due to similar social customs in Ireland and Wales. ¹⁹*Pedeir Keinc*, edited by Williams, pp. 41 and 305: 'yn rodi brenhinaeth Iwerdon y Wern . . . ac yn y ystynnu [var. estynnu]'. Charles-Edwards, 'Date', pp. 294–95, disputes the view that this refers to feudal investiture. (Saunders Lewis refers to 'the language of twelfth-century politics')

'Arglwyd,' heb wy, 'nyt oes it gynghor namyn un. Ni enghis ef y mywn ty eiryoet,' heb wy. 'Gwna ty,' heb wy, 'o'y anryded ef, y ganho ef a gwyr Ynys y Kedyrn yn y neillparth [var. neill stlys] y'r ty, a thitheu a'th lu yn y parth arall. A doro dy urenhinaeth yn y ewyllus, a gwra idaw. Ac o enryded gwnethur y ty,' heb wy, 'peth ny chauas eiryoet ty y ganhei yndaw, ef a tangnoueda a thi.' . . . E tangneued a gyweirwyt, a'r ty a adeilwyt yn uawr ac yn braf.²⁰

'Lord', said they, 'there is only one counsel for you. He was never contained in a house', they said. 'Make a house', said they, 'in his honour, so that he and the men of the Isle of the Mighty may be contained in the one half [var. side] of the house, and you and your host in the other half. And give your kingship into his power and become his man. And because of the honour of the making of the house', they said, 'something he never had—a house in which he might be contained—he will make peace with you'. . . . The peace was drawn up, and the house was built large and strong.

Saunders Lewis argued that this improved offer was inspired by Henry II's reception in Dublin in 1171–72. According to the contemporary English account in the *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*:

Circa festum Sancti Martini venit rex usque Divelinam, et ibi construi fecit juxta ecclesiam Sancti Andreae apostoli extra civitatem Duvelinae, ad opus suum palatium regium, quod reges et ditiores terrae mirifice construxerunt ad opus ejus per praeceptum ipsius de virgis, ad morem patriae illius; in quo ipse regale festum in Natale Domini tenuit cum regibus et ditionibus Hyberniae.²¹

Around the feast of St Martin the king came to Dublin, and there he caused to be constructed for his own use, beside the church of St Andrew the Apostle outside the city of Dublin, a royal palace, which the kings and richer men of the land constructed wonderfully for his use according to his own command out of twigs, after the fashion of that country; in it he held a royal feast on Christmas Day with the kings and richer men of Ireland.

(*iaith gwleidyddiaeth y ddeuddegfed ganrif, Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, pp. 12–13); it is Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 197–98, who refers to feudal phraseology.) Instead, Charles-Edwards offers the improved translation: 'And Matholwch is giving the kingship of Ireland to Gwern son of Matholwch, your nephew, your sister's son, and is handing it over in your presence'. Eric P. Hamp, 'rhodd ac estyn', *BBCS*, 26 (1974–76), 32, accepts this but rejects Charles-Edwards's etymology for *ystyn*, preferring Latin *ostento* 'proffer' or *ostendo*. On *estyn* ~ *ystyn* cf. Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 665. ²⁰*Pedeir Keinc*, edited by Williams, pp. 41–42 and 306. ²¹*The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II. and Richard I. A.D. 1169–1192*, edited by William Stubbs, 2 vols, RS (London, 1867), I, 28–29. Lewis unfortunately relies on secondary sources, for example in stating that everything was ready before Henry arrived ('yr oedd popeth yn barod erbyn iddo gyrraedd', *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, p. 13).

As well as the obvious similarities, there is one which Lewis missed. Matholwch came to terms immediately after the British had crossed the river *Llinon* on hurdles, which suggests (without proving) that the great house was built near the river *Llinon*. Now, although Lewis followed Ifor Williams in identifying the *Llinon* with the Shannon (Irish *Sinann*), it is much more likely that the *Llinon* is the Liffey (Irish *Life*), as Rachel Bromwich has pointed out.²² This is confirmed by the detail that the *Llinon* is crossed on hurdles (*clwydeu*), which must be an onomastic story explaining the Irish name for Dublin, *Áth Cliath*, 'ford of the hurdles'.²³ We have, then, two wonderful halls built by Irish kings for victorious invading kings from Britain, both of them, perhaps, near Dublin. Is this a coincidence, or must *Branwen* have been written after 1171, as Lewis deduced?

Charles-Edwards argues that it is a coincidence and that 'both the incident in *Branwen* and that in Dublin in 1171 are examples of a common Irish political custom'.²⁴ His evidence for the custom in question comes from the Irish Annals:

Up to the eleventh century the normal way of saying that one king had made another submit was to say that he took the hostages of the country concerned, for example, 'tuc gíallu Muman', 'he took the hostages of the Munstermen'. If one wanted to put it the other way round, one said 'gíallais dó', 'he gave hostages to him'. In the middle of the eleventh century a new way of saying that a king submitted to another king became popular. A common form of it is 'táinic ina thech', 'he came into his house'. The first example of this phrase in the *Annals of Inisfallen* is under the year 1059, and in the *Chronicon Scotorum* under 1057 = 1059. After that date it is the phrase regularly used in the *Annals of Inisfallen*, and it is used alongside the old phrase in the *Chronicon Scotorum*. There must have been a change of political custom some time before 1059 by which a submitting king no longer simply handed over hostages but was obliged to go himself to the house of his over-king as a sign of his submission. . . . This Irish phrase shows what was involved when Henry II received several

²²Lewis, *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, p. 12; Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 195–96; Rachel Bromwich, review of Proinsias Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr* (Cardiff, 1958), in *Medium Ævum*, 28 (1959), 203–10 (pp. 208–9). The most likely development would be for the Irish name *Life* to be equated with the similar Welsh river-name *Llifon*, and for **Lliun* to be miscopied as *Llinon*, possibly under the influence of the word *llinon* 'spear' (for which word see *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, edited by Thomas Parry, second edition (Cardiff, 1963), p. 447). The correct form *Liphi* appears in *Vita Sancti Cadoci*, §43 (edited and translated by A. W. Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944), p. 112). On the other hand, Glyn E. Jones, 'Astudiaeth ar Rai Agweddau ar Fabinogi Branwen', unpublished M.A. dissertation (University of Wales, Cardiff, 1970), p. 71, suggests a connection with *Llŷnon* and *Coed Llŷnon* in Llanddeusant, Anglesey. ²³As pointed out by W. J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon* (Cardiff, 1953), p. 8. Cf. Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, p. 118. ²⁴'Date', p. 296.

Irish princes in his house in Dublin in 1171. It was all arranged because it was the standard method of submission to an over-king.²⁵

The annalistic innovation and its relevance to the story of Bendigeidfran are vital to Charles-Edwards's 1050 × 1120 date for *The Four Branches*:

Since the set phrase for submission begins to be used in 1059, c. 1050 seems a reasonable *terminus post quem* for *Branwen*.²⁶

So for Saunders Lewis, Bendigeidfran's house gives a *terminus post quem* of 1171, but for Charles-Edwards one of c. 1050.

House-Entry in the Irish Annals

If for the moment we take on trust the relevance of the custom to which the annalists refer, how significant is their change of usage in 1059? Historians agree that the custom itself probably goes back earlier than 1059. Thus Charles-Edwards suggests that 'the new policy' may be fifty years older and may have been inaugurated by Brian Bórama, whose 'novel' relations with his sub-kings Kathleen Hughes had compared with the Anglo-Saxon king Athelstan's policy of requiring his sub-kings to attend his court.²⁷ Similarly, Flanagan says that:

It is possible that the emphasis on entry by one king into the house of another as a means of expressing submission should be associated specifically with the Dál Cais dynasty. Two entries in the Annals of Inisfallen which pre-date the adoption of the new formula in 1059 recorded the attendance of individuals at the Dál Cais court at Kincora. . . . These accounts of guests in attendance at the Dál Cais royal residence at Kincora in 1011 and 1026 could be said to record implicitly the entry of these individuals into the house of Brian Bórama and his son Donnchad.²⁸

The two annals in question are as follows (and here, as often elsewhere in this paper, I quote the editor's translation, since the various renderings of technical terms are of interest):

²⁵*ibid.*, pp. 296–97. ²⁶*ibid.*, p. 297. Note, however, that 'between 1026 and 1059 there are only two entries in the Annals of Inisfallen bearing on submission' (Flanagan, p. 177). ²⁷'Date', p. 297 and n. 27; Kathleen Hughes, 'Introduction', in A. J. Otway-Ruthven, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, second edition (London, 1980), p. 32. Cf. R. R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence, and Change: Wales 1063–1415*, History of Wales, 2 (Oxford, 1987), p. 27: 'That [client] status could be expressed in a variety of forms and on an ascending scale of dependence: the giving of hostages, visits to the [English] king's court, witnessing his charters as underkings (L. *sub-reguli*), the payment of tribute, formal oaths of fealty and submission, and open-ended promises of service'. ²⁸*Irish Society, Angevin Kinship*, p. 177.

[1011] Sluaged mór la Brian co Cenél Conaill eter muir 7 tír co tanic Hua Maíl Doraid, rí Ceneúil Chonaill, laís co Cend Corad, 7 co ruc innarrad mór o Brian 7 co tuc a ogréir do Brian.

[1026] Sluaged mór la Donnchadh mac Briain . . . co tuc giallu Laigen 7 Osraige. Comarba Patraicc cona sruithib 7 Donnchad mc. Gillai Phátraicc, rí Osraigi, i tich Donnchada m. Briain fon Caisc oc Cind Chorad.

[1011] A great hosting by Brian to Cenél Conaill both by land and sea, and Ua Maíl Doraid, king of Cenél Conaill, came with Brian to Cenn Corad, accepted a large stipend from him, and made complete submission to him.

[1026] A great hosting by Donnchad, son of Brian . . . and he took the hostages of Laigin and Osraige. The coarb of Patrick, accompanied by his venerable clerics, and Donnchad son of Gilla Pátraic, king of Osraige, [were] in the house of Donnchad, son of Brian, at Cenn Corad at Eastertide.²⁹

It is noteworthy that Mac Airt's translation '[were] in the house' rather than '[went] into the house' in the 1026 annal depends on the correctness of the scribe's *tich* (dative) and omission of a verb of motion; contrast the accusative *tech* s.a. 1081 where Mac Airt translates *Rí Ulad do thíchtain i tech Tairdelbaig Hui Briain, i. co ruc innarrad huad* by 'The king of Ulaid submitted to Tairdelbach Ua Brian (*sic*), i.e. he received a stipend from him'.³⁰

Whereas Charles-Edwards and Flanagan only allow that house-entry was some years older than 1059, D. A. Binchy was inclined to ascribe a much more ancient origin to it, on comparative anthropological grounds:

The bond of fealty was created by a ritual which has all the marks of antiquity. One king submitted to another by 'going into his house' and accepting from him a 'grant' or 'gift' (*rath*) which, as in so many other ancient societies, obliged the donee to provide a counter-gift by undertaking corresponding duties.³¹

Now, according to Flanagan, the second custom mentioned by Binchy, the acceptance of a grant or gift, is not implied by the Annals until 1011 (in the annal quoted above), and is not stated explicitly until 1059 (and the technical term *tuarastal* 'stipend', literally 'attendance', which replaced *rath*, does not appear until 1080).³²

²⁹*The Annals of Inisfallen*, edited and translated by Seán Mac Airt (Dublin, 1951), pp. 180–81 and 192–93. ³⁰*ibid.*, pp. 236–37. ³¹*Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford, 1970), p. 31. ³²Flanagan, pp. 180–81. On the interpretation of the 1059 annal see below. In 1011 although *rath* is not used explicitly, *innarrad* 'stipend' (also used of mercenaries' wages) is clearly equivalent; see Katharine Simms, *From Kings*

In this case few historians would maintain that the giving of ceremonial gifts only began in the eleventh century. So, too, the practice of house-entry may be far older than 1011 or 1059, when it is, respectively, first implicit and explicit in the Annals.

The historians are of course aware of the problem of selective recording by annalists, but nevertheless wish to find a more than verbal significance in their changing usage. Thus Flanagan comments:

An argument *ex silentio* from the annals is dangerous. It is possible that earlier annalists merely chose not to record submissions by entry into the house of another or the bestowal of *tuarastal*. But such an omission would in itself surely be significant. The origin of both customs as social institutions may date back to long before the eleventh century. Annalistic usage, however, appears to reflect their increasing significance in the context of political overlordship from the eleventh century onwards.³³

Does this necessarily follow, or are there other possibilities? Maybe hostage-giving and house-entering had long been equally important in practice, and the annalists' phraseology is merely a matter of style. Maybe they start to mention house-entering precisely because submissions were taking place which omitted this element. Maybe house-entering was mentioned euphemistically because it was felt to be less demeaning than hostage-giving—Flanagan suggests that the giving of hostages may have been associated with base clientship or *giallnae* (cf. *giall* 'hostage') whereas the status of house-guest was associated with free clientship.³⁴ Maybe house-entering is specified because it was less ambiguous than hostage-giving, which, to quote Katharine Simms, 'did not in itself constitute the essence of submission'.³⁵ Or maybe house-entering first came to be noted in cases where the obligation to give hostages had been dropped for some reason; Simms remarks that 'this was particularly true in cases when acceptance of lordship was largely ceremonial, entailing few obligations on the new vassal'.³⁶ Whatever the case, the way in which annalists choose to describe submissions clearly depends to some extent on linguistic or literary fashion, as we can see by comparing the different versions of the 1059 annal (again I quote the editors' translations). The *Annals of Inisfallen* say:

to Warlords: *The Changing Political Structure of Gaelic Ireland in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 101 and 103. On the other hand, as the latter says (p. 103), *tuarastal* in the *Annals of Ulster* s.a. 1080 may well refer to military service. ³³p. 182. ³⁴Flanagan, pp. 182–89. Cf. Marilyn Gerriets, 'Kingship and Exchange in Pre-Viking Ireland', *CMCS*, 13 (Summer 1987), 39–72 (p. 47). ³⁵*From Kings to Warlords*, p. 100. ³⁶*ibid.*, citing *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, §75.

Mc. Briain do dul co tech Hui Chonchobuir Chonnacht co tuc a réir huad eter séotu 7 muíne 7 additin 7 coro astad and ó Init co Caisc.

Brian's son [Donnchad] submitted to [lit. 'went into the house of'] Ua Conchobuir Chonnacht, and he [Donnchad] obtained his demand from him, including valuables, treasures, and recognition, and was detained there from Shrovetide till Easter.³⁷

Chronicum Scotorum says:

Mac Bríain do dul i ttech Aodha .H. Concupair, Rí Connacht, go ttug a ríar dho.

The son of Brian went into the house of Aedh Ua Conchobhair, King of Connacht, and gave him his submission.³⁸

But the *Annals of Tigernach* have:

Dondchod mac Briain do dul a teach Ruaidrí Húi Choncobair rig Con[n]acht, co tucadh a ríar do braighdib dó.

Donnchad, son of Brian, submitted to (literally, went into the house of) Ruadri Húa Conchobair, king of Connaught, to whom were given all the *hostages* that he desired.³⁹

It is evident from this example alone that the giving (or receiving) of hostages was taken for granted by some annalists or copyists but not by others. Conversely, they may often have taken house-entering and other ceremonies for granted when they record only the giving of hostages. To quote Katharine Simms's remarks, in a different context:

So much emphasis is placed in annalistic accounts on the mere giving or withholding of hostages that one is in danger of forgetting what the

³⁷Edited and translated by Mac Airt, pp. 218–19. Mac Airt understands that it is Donnchad who obtains his *riar*, as he indicates in square brackets above; but for *riar* pertaining to patron rather than client see Simms, pp. 103–4. ³⁸Edited and translated by William M. Hennessy, RS (London, 1866), pp. 284–85. ³⁹The *Annals of Tigernach*, edited and translated by Whitley Stokes, *Revue celtique*, 17 (1896), 400. The recipient of the hostages may be Ruaidrí, but the wording is close to that of the *Annals of Inisfallen*, where the recipient of gifts is Donnchad according to Mac Airt; hence the *Annals of Tigernach* may refer to an *exchange* of hostages (for which cf. Simms, p. 99). Flanagan, pp. 175 and 181, thinks that the first annal quoted refers to Donnchad receiving gifts, whereas the last two both refer to Ruaidrí receiving hostages. On p. 178, n. 31, she says that 'Charles-Edwards was misled by the inaccurate footnote in *Ann. Inisf.* to interpret *Ann. Tig.* 1059 in the opposite sense to its real meaning'; but I do not see that he discusses the latter annal. Mac Airt understood it as meaning that Donnchad obtained hostages. Political bias may account for some of the discrepancies.

compilers *take for granted*, that hostages are handed over to guarantee a contract; their transfer is primarily a sign that a formal treaty between leaders has been agreed upon, other such indications being a hand-clasp between the contracting parties, oaths taken on relics, the ceremonial bestowal of gifts, even on occasion the rite of blood-brotherhood. For the twelfth century we have an outside observer, Giraldus Cambrensis, to give a fuller account of Irish submissions, in which the transfer of hostages is only one component part. . . .⁴⁰

Charles-Edwards's terminus post quem c. 1050 for *Branwen* depends on a quite different approach to the lack of early annalistic references to house-entering:

It seems unlikely that this custom would have been something to be taken for granted by a storyteller any earlier than it became something to be taken for granted by an annalist.⁴¹

The point, however, is surely that annalists tend *not* to record customs that are 'taken for granted'. An Irish annalist needed only to indicate that one king submitted to another, leaving his readers to fill in the ceremonial details from their own knowledge of Irish custom. On the other hand, a storyteller would be expected to flesh out his story in some detail. Therefore c. 1050 cannot be accepted as a terminus post quem either for the extant *Branwen* (although that is unlikely to be so old in any case) or for any prior recension of the story of Bendigeidfran's house.⁴²

To return to Saunders Lewis's terminus post quem: if Henry II's and Bendigeidfran's houses were both built so that the house-entry ceremony could be carried out, as proposed by Charles-Edwards and, more tentatively, by Flanagan,⁴³ that would still be a significant point of resemblance since there seem to be no other examples of under-kings building houses in order to enter them. Judging by the *Annals*, the submitting king either repaired to the over-king's kingdom and royal hall, or, if the over-king happened to be itinerant, the submitting king might be said to 'join the assembly' of the over-king (*táinic ina airecht*).⁴⁴ Without doubt, Irish clients, including kings, were expected to build houses for their lords, as elsewhere in Europe,⁴⁵ but we do *not* hear of under-kings building halls for the

⁴⁰Simms, p. 99 (my italics). ⁴¹'Date', p. 297. ⁴²An early version of the story may be alluded to in one of the Book of Taliesin poems, although this does not mention the house; see Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, pp. 145–49. ⁴³Flanagan, pp. 204–5 and 207. ⁴⁴*ibid.*, p. 180; Mac Airt, *Annals of Inisfallen*, p. 244, n. ⁴⁵For example, for Ireland see below, p. 50; for Wales see Dafydd Jenkins, *The Law of Hywel Dda* (Llandysul, 1986), pp. 41 and 125; for England see Nicholas Brooks, 'The Development of Military Obligations in Eighth- and Ninth-Century England', in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, edited by Peter Clemoes and Kathleen Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 69–84 (pp. 71 and 83).

specific purpose of submitting by entering them.⁴⁶

There is, however, a basic objection to associating the houses of Henry II and Bendigeidfran with the annalists' house-entering. This is that neither house is specifically stated to be part of a submission ceremony.

The Function of Henry II's House

The *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* says that Henry himself ordered the building of the house by the kings for his own purposes (*ad opus suum*), apparently so that he could spend Christmas and the winter months in his accustomed royal fashion, lording it over his new subjects. There is no suggestion that it was intended to be the setting in which Henry received the submission of the Irish kings. One imagines that peace had already been concluded by the time the great Dublin palace was completed. In fact the *Gesta* compresses events so as to associate the submission of all the Irish kings (except the king of Connacht, who never submitted) not with Dublin, but with Waterford in the previous October: on his arrival at Waterford, Henry met his own servants,

et ab eis et ab Hybernensibus qui cum eis fuerant, honorifice est susceptus: et tam diu ibidem remansit, donec ad eum venissent reges et potentiores terrae illius. Venerunt itaque ad eum rex Corcensis, et rex de Limeric, et rex de Oseria, et rex de Mida, et Raghenaaldus de Waterfordia, et omnes alii de Hybernia, praeter regem de Cognacte, et seipsos ei et ejus dominio dederunt, et homines ejus devenerunt de omnibus tenementis suis, et fidelitates ei juraverunt.⁴⁷

and was received with honour by them and by the Irish who had been with them; and as long as he remained there, the kings and more powerful men of that land came to him. Thus the king of Cork [Diarmait Mac Carthaig, king of Desmond] came to him, and the king of Limerick [Domnall Mór Ó Briain, king of Thomond], and the king of Osraige [Domnall Mac Gilla Pátraic], and the king of Mide [Tigernán Ó Ruairc, king of Bréifne], and Ragnall of Waterford, and all the others of Ireland, except for the king of Connacht, and they put themselves under him and his dominion, and became his men for all their tenures, and swore fealty to him.⁴⁸

⁴⁶For a possible case of an *over-king* building such a house, in *Orgain Denna Ríg*, see below, p. 54. ⁴⁷Edited by Stubbs, I, 25. Lewis, *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, p. 12, notes Giraldus' statement that the high-king Ruaidrí (king of Connacht) submitted at the Shannon (*Sinnenus*), and associates this with the reference to the *Llinon* in *Brannwen* (see above, n. 22). But Giraldus was probably wrong; see Charles-Edwards, 'Date', pp. 293–94; Flanagan, p. 311. ⁴⁸For discussion of this oath and the identity of the kings see *ibid.*, pp. 221–22 and 308–11.

The same emphasis on submissions at Waterford is found in the contemporary (or nearly contemporary) *Annals of Inisfallen* (which have a particular interest in southerly, Munster events):

Mc. na Perisi do thidach i nHerind goro gab ac Purt Lárgi go nnechaid mc. Cormaic 7 mc. Tairdelbaig ina theg and sin, 7 as sein do go hAth Cliath go rabi fri re in gemrid ann sin.

The son of the Empress [Henry, son of Matilda] came to Ireland and landed at Port Láirge [Waterford]. The son of Cormac [Diarmait Mac Carthaig, king of Desmond] and the son of Tairdealbach [Domnall Mór Ó Briain, king of Thomond] submitted to him [lit. 'went into his house'] there, and he proceeded thence to Áth Cliath [Dublin] and remained there during the winter.⁴⁹

It is important to note that the phrase 'went into his house' here refers to Waterford, and not, as Charles-Edwards states, to the gathering at Dublin.⁵⁰ If the phrase is more than a dead metaphor, it need not mean that a special house was built for Henry at Waterford; his followers may simply have been assigned (or have commandeered) an existing house for him. The normal custom when important guests arrived may be seen in *Bricriu's Feast*: 'they were given a choice, whether each of them should be given a separate house, or whether they should have a house for all three of them' (*Ro lād roga dóib iar sudiú dús in bad tech for leth dobertha do cach fir díb. t in tech dóib a triur*).⁵¹

The other annalists are more balanced in that they mention submissions away from Waterford.⁵² According to the *Annals of Ulster*:

Tainic hi tir oc Purt-largi 7 rogabh giallu Muman. Tanic iar sein co hAth-cliaith 7 rogabh giallu Laighen 7 Fer Midhe 7 hUa-m-Briuin 7 Airgiall 7 Uladh.⁵³

He [Henry] came to land at Waterford and took the hostages of Munster. He came after that to Dublin and took the hostages of the Leinstermen and of the men of Mide and of the Uí Briúin [i.e. Bréifne] and of the Airgialla and of the Ulstermen.

⁴⁹Edited and translated by Mac Airt, pp. 304–5. ⁵⁰'Date', p. 297. ⁵¹*Lebor na Huidre*, edited by R. I. Best and Osborn Bergin (Dublin, 1929), lines 8721–22. On guest-houses see below, p. 50. ⁵²Giraldus gives a detailed account of successive submissions between Waterford and Dublin: *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis*, edited and translated by A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin, 1978), pp. 90–95. Cf. Flanagan, pp. 199–201 and 308–11. ⁵³*Annals of Ulster*, II, edited and translated by B. Mac Carthy (Dublin, 1893), p. 170; similarly *The Annals of Loch Cé*, edited and translated by William M. Hennessy, 2 vols, RS (London, 1871), I, 144–45.

The *Annals of Tigernach* have basically the same account:

An t-iarla do dul a Saxanaib inaighidh Enric rí Saxan, co toracht sidhi a n-Erinn sechtmuin ría samuin co Port Lairge, co tanic Diarmuit Mac Carrthaigh, rí Des-muman, ina theach. Luidh assen co hAth cliath, cor' gab rige Laigen 7 fear Midhe 7 Brefne 7 Oirghiall Ulad.⁵⁴

The Earl went into England to meet Henry, king of England, and Henry arrived in Ireland at Waterford a week before *samain* [1 November], and Diarmait Mac Carthaigh, king of Desmond, came into his house. Thence he went to Dublin, and took the kingship of the Leinstermen and of the men of Mide and of Bréifne [i.e. of the Uí Briúin] and of the Airgialla [and] of the Ulstermen.

The formulae vary, but neither annal refers to house-entering at Dublin. The one set of annals that does is the fifteenth-century 'Mac Carthaigh's Book':

Ni fada do bi ri Saxan a Portt Lairgi an uair tainig Diarmaid Mor cuigi ana teach, 7 tug braigdi 7 umla do. Et gu gar 'na diaigh sin docuaid Domnall Mor O Briain 7 Donnchadh mac Cein h. Matgamhna ana coinne ar boird tSiure, 7 tugadar umla dó. Docuaidh ri Saxan a[s] sin go hAth Cliath, 7 d'umlaigidar Laignig do 7 Domnall Caemanach dó. Tigearnan h. Ruai[r]c 7 Murcadh mac Donnchadh[a] h. Cearbuill 7 Donn Sleibi, ri Uladh, do teacht gu teach an righ gu Baile Atha Cliath 7 umhaloid do tabhairt dó.

The King of England was not long in Waterford when Diarmaid Mór [Mac Carthaigh] came into his house and gave hostages and made submission to him. Shortly after that, Domhnall Mór Ó Briain and Donnchadh son of Cian Ó Mathgamhna went to meet him on the banks of the Suir, and made submission to him. The King of England went from thence to Dublin, and the Leinstermen and Domhnall Caomhánach submitted to him. Tighearnán Ó Ruairc, Murchadh son of Donnchadh Ó Cearbhaill, and Donn Sléibhe [Mac Duinn Shléibhe], king of Ulaidh, came into the house of the King at Dublin and made submission to him.⁵⁵

At first sight this appears to be independent of the other Annals quoted above, but, before postulating a lost early source, the compilation of 'Mac Carthaigh's Book' should be considered. This has been little studied, but its editor makes two relevant observations: it is closely related to the *Annals of Inisfallen* (or something similar), but tends to describe people more particularly, including their patronymics; and it uses foreign sources (called the 'books of the Galls',

⁵⁴The *Annals of Tigernach*, edited by Whitley Stokes, RC, 18 (1897), 283. ⁵⁵*Miscellaneous Irish Annals (A.D. 1114-1437)*, edited and translated by Séamus Ó hInnse (Dublin, 1947), pp. 56-57 (his square brackets).

s.aa. 1165 and 1167), among them Giraldus' *Expugnatio Hibernica*.⁵⁶ In the present passage, the entry into Henry's house at Waterford may derive from the *Annals of Inisfallen* (or something like it) or from the *Annals of Tigernach*, but its submission on the river Suir by Domnall Mór Ó Briain of Thomond (in contradiction of the *Annals of Inisfallen*) may be taken from the *Expugnatio Hibernica*, the only other source to record its location there.⁵⁷ The compiler's interest in personalities is well illustrated by a long passage, immediately preceding the one quoted above, in which he lists the names of the Pope, the Emperor, the king of France, and the various Irish kings at the time of Henry II's invasion. This list includes:

Donn Sléibhe . . . over the Ulaidh. . . . Domhnall Caomhánach . . . over Leinster. Murchadh son of Donnchadh . . . Ó Cearbhaill over Oirghialla and the men of Fearnmhagh. . . . Tighearnán Ó Ruairc over Gairbhthrian Connacht, and he was called King of Midhe.⁵⁸

Given that the compiler had this information correlating kings and kingdoms, we may suspect that in his list of the submissions at Dublin he has substituted the names of these kings for the names of the kingdoms, as given in chronicles such as the *Annals of Ulster* and *Annals of Tigernach*, where the order of submissions is also: Leinster; Mide and Uí Briúin Bréifne; Airgialla; Ulster. This suspicion is increased by the wording of the phrase 'and the Leinstermen and Domhnall Caomhánach submitted to him' (7 d'umlaigidar Laignig do 7 Domnall Caemanach dó); it seems that the compiler began to copy the names of kingdoms before he decided to 'personalize' the entry by substituting the names of the kings. If so, his source(s) would not have described the submission of the men of Mide and the rest with the house-entry formula (which was only used of individuals); this would be part of the compiler's 'personalization' of the entry, perhaps suggested by the use of the formula in connection with the Waterford submission just above. If this is right, there are no contemporary or early Annals associating the house-entry formula with Henry II in Dublin.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, p. x. See also Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *The Medieval Irish Annals* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 26-29. ⁵⁷*Expugnatio Hibernica*, pp. 92-93. See Flanagan, pp. 200 and 308. But the submission of Donnchad Ó Mathgamna of Uí Echach must come from a lost source, unless it is merely a deduction from the general reference to the submission of Munster in a source similar to the *Annals of Ulster*. ⁵⁸Translated by Ó hInnse, p. 57. *Gairbhthrian Connacht*, 'the rough third of Connacht', was Bréifne; see *A New History of Ireland*, II, edited by Art Cosgrove (Oxford, 1987), p. 20. Tigernán Ó Ruairc, king of Bréifne, is also called king of Mide ('Ororicus Medensis') by Giraldus in his list of the kings who submitted at Dublin, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, p. 94; see Flanagan, pp. 310-11. Giraldus' list includes Ó Cerbaill of the Airgialla, but is basically unlike the list in 'Mac Carthaigh's Book'.

In the *Gesta*, Henry II's Dublin house is said to have been built of twigs 'after the fashion of that country' (*ad morem patriae illius*).⁵⁹ Flanagan takes this to refer to 'the political significance of the act of construction rather than the building techniques employed',⁶⁰ but this interpretation is hardly tenable. In the first place, the syntax of the whole sentence clearly connects the phrase with the use of wattle (*virgae*). In the second place, Roger of Howden, abbreviating the *Gesta* in his own *Chronica* a few years later, omits the role of the Irish kings, making it clear that he understood the phrase about the 'way of that country' to refer to the use of wattle:

Fecit sibi construi juxta ecclesiam Sancti Andreae apostoli, extra civitatem Divilinia, palatium regium, miro artificio de virgis levigatis ad modum patriae illius constructum.⁶¹

He caused to be constructed for himself, beside the church of St Andrew the Apostle outside the city of Dublin, a royal palace, constructed with wonderful skill out of smooth twigs, according to the way of that country.

The use of wattle is often mentioned in early Irish written sources, and is well attested by excavations in Dublin.⁶² Its use for a large palace might excite admiration among non-Irish observers, who were used to more solid structures and tended to comment on the Irish use of wood. Already in the eighth century Bede had remarked that Bishop Fínán built the church of Lindisfarne 'in the Irish manner (*more Scottorum*), not of stone but entirely out of hewn oak, and covered it with reeds'.⁶³ In the early twelfth century, Conchubranus (apparently addressing a non-Irish audience here) says that one of St Monenna's successors built a church out of hewn planks 'according to the custom of the Irish peoples (*iuxta morem Scotticarum gentium*), because the Irish are not accustomed to make walls'.⁶⁴ Again, some decades later, St Bernard of Clairvaux records that St Malachy

⁵⁹See above, p. 37. ⁶⁰Flanagan, p. 203. The fact that *mos patriae illius* is used elsewhere to refer to an apparently political marriage (*ibid.*, p. 203, n. 108) is inconclusive. ⁶¹*Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, edited by William Stubbs, 4 vols, RS (London, 1868–71), II, 32. On its relationship to the *Gesta* see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), pp. 226 and 230. ⁶²See respectively two studies by Hilary Murray: 'Documentary Evidence for Domestic Buildings in Ireland c. 400–1200 in the Light of Archaeology', *Medieval Archaeology*, 23 (1979), 81–97 (pp. 83–85); and *Viking and Early Medieval Buildings in Dublin*, British Archaeological Reports, British series, 119 (Oxford, 1983), pp. 19–27 and 58. For striking archaeological evidence from Northern Ireland see *Pieces of the Past*, edited by Ann Hamlin and Chris Lynn (Belfast, 1988), pp. 31–35, 42, and 44–46. ⁶³*Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.25 (later, Bede tells us, the Anglo-Saxon bishop Eadberht was to remove the reeds and cover both roof and walls with sheets of lead); see *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, edited by C. Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896), I, 181, and notes at II, 101–2. ⁶⁴Conchubranus Vita Sanctae Monennae', edited by Mario Esposito, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 28, Section

and ten brethren built an *oratorium* at Bangor 'out of smooth timbers indeed, but closely and firmly bound together, a quite beautiful piece of Irish work' (*de lignis quidem laevigatis, sed apte firmiterque contextum, opus Scoticum, pulchrum satis*).⁶⁵ The locus classicus for English admiration of wattlework is Chaucer's House of Fame, which F. N. Robinson thought was partly of Irish inspiration:

And al thys hous of which y rede
Was mad of twigges, falwe, rede,
And grene eke, and somme weren white,
Swiche as men to these cages thwite,
Or maken of these panyers,
Or elles hottes or dossers. . . .⁶⁶

There can be no doubt, then, that the author of the *Gesta* was commenting on the Irish workmanship of Henry II's house, not on its Irish political significance.

On the other hand, Flanagan is surely correct in comparing Henry's palace with the temporary structures called 'Easter houses', in which contemporary Irish kings celebrated Easter with their dependants.⁶⁷ That these could be flimsy is shown by the annal for 1124 in the *Annals of Ulster*:

C, no. 12 (1910), 202–51 (p. 237, §12); on the date see Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives* (Oxford, 1991), p. 26. ⁶⁵Vita Sancti Malachiae, §14, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, edited by J. Leclercq and others (Rome, 1957–), III, 323. ⁶⁶*The House of Fame*, lines 1935–40, in *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, edited by F. N. Robinson, second edition (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 300 and 787. Robinson's interpretation must remain uncertain. J. A. W. Bennett, *Chaucer's 'Book of Fame': An Exposition of 'The House of Fame'* (Oxford, 1968), p. 169, objects that 'Whatever the commentators say, Chaucer would not need to wander in Wales or Ireland to find such dwellings. They were part of any rural scene'. The point, however, is that the wattle is used for a large building in *The House of Fame*. Moreover, Chaucer's House revolves, like Cú Roí's fort in *Bricriu's Feast* (*Lebor na Huidre*, lines 9054–55), which latter is probably the earliest medieval instance of this motif; cf. Sergio Cigada, 'Il tema arturiano del "Château Tournant": Chaucer e Christine de Pisan', *Studi medievali*, third series, 2 (1961), 576–606. Incidentally, despite Bennett, *Bricriu's Feast* is Irish, not Welsh; but for possible Welsh examples of such a revolving fortress see Marged Haycock, '“Preiddeu Annwn” and the Figure of Taliesin', *SC*, 18/19 (1983–84), 52–78 (p. 69), and Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', in *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture: A Festschrift for Eric P. Hamp*, edited by A. T. E. Matonis and Daniel F. Melia (Van Nuys, California, 1990), pp. 57–81 (p. 73). ⁶⁷Flanagan, pp. 194 and 203–4. For a *tech Cásca* only five years earlier (1165 *recte* 1166) see 'Mac Carthaigh's Book' in *Miscellaneous Irish Annals*, edited and translated by Ó hInnse, pp. 44–45. For other references to 'feast-houses' see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Foreign Connections and Domestic Politics: Killaloe and the Uí Briain in Twelfth-Century Hagiography', in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe: Studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes*, edited by Dorothy Whitelock and others (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 213–31 (p. 218, n. 18).

Bidh gadh mor do righ Temhrach dia Domnaigh Casc .i. a thech Casca do thuitim fair 7 for a teghlach.

A great shock to the king of Temair on Easter Sunday, i.e. his Easter house collapsed on him and his household.⁶⁸

As far as I know, no source says by whom these Easter houses were erected, but it seems reasonable to assume that the task fell to a king's clients; Flanagan rightly refers to legal texts according to which base clients were required to build the fortress of their king and to contribute a carpenter's services to build his house.⁶⁹ In such cases, the building of houses was an obligation on subordinate parties, but not part of the ceremony by which they had originally submitted to their overlord. In the same way, the 'kings and richer men' of Ireland may have built Henry II's 'Christmas house' because he had already become their overlord, but not, as Charles-Edwards and Flanagan suggest, so that they could submit to him by entering it.

Even this interpretation may be pressing the evidence too far, since it could be argued that the building of the house was simply a mark of hospitality which did not *in itself* signify the Irish kings' recognition of Henry's overlordship. Judging by Irish historical, literary, and legal sources, a high value was placed on quasi-altruistic hospitality outside the system of clientship.⁷⁰ Such hospitality could usually be offered in guest-houses, for which great antiquity was claimed: the first was erected in the time of Parthalón, who took Ireland after the Flood!⁷¹ But the entertainment of a large party of visitors, known to more reluctant hosts as a *tromdám* ('heavy, or burdensome, company'), could involve the building of temporary accommodation. The most famous literary example is Guaire, who builds a great hall (*bruigen*) for his importunate bardic guests.⁷² The

⁶⁸*The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, I, edited and translated by Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin, 1983), pp. 568–69. ⁶⁹Flanagan, pp. 205–6 and n. 116, citing *Críth Gablach* (cf. edition by D. A. Binchy (Dublin, 1941), p. 38, n. 570) and the ninth-century tract on the Dál Caladbuig (cf. Gerriets, 'Kingship and Exchange' (n. 34 above), pp. 51–52). See also *The Tribes and Customs of Hy-Many*, edited and translated by John O'Donovan (Dublin, 1843), pp. 90–91. Flanagan is mistaken in stating that in *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* the king of Uí Echach is 'obliged to erect a house to entertain' the king of Munster. ⁷⁰Katharine Simms, 'Guesting and Feasting in Gaelic Ireland', *JRSIA*, 108 (1978), 67–100; Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 36–37 and 139–40. On 'visitations' within clientship compare Nerys Thomas Patterson, *Cattle-Lords and Clansmen: Kinship and Rank in Early Ireland* (New York, 1991), p. 134: 'How they were accommodated, however, is a mystery not to be dispelled here'. ⁷¹*Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, II, edited and translated by R. A. Stewart Macalister, Irish Texts Society, 35 (London, 1939), pp. 272–73. ⁷²*Tromdám Guaire*, edited by Maud Joynt (Dublin, 1941), lines 266–78; *Imtheacht na Tromdháimhe, or, The Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution*, edited and translated by Owen Connellan, Transactions of the Ossianic Society, 5 (Dublin, 1860), p. 37. Cf. 'Betha Columb Chille: The Life of Colum Cille', edited and translated by Andrew Kelleher, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 9 (1913), 242–43.

extant version of *Tromdám Guaire* has been dated to the thirteenth century, but there are traces of Guaire's role as a house-builder in other and earlier texts.⁷³ In particular, in *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* the chief poet Senchán requires Guaire:

óentech do dénam imme, imon filid 7 imon sligid ó Echtge co Derlus, .i. fer dó 7 .i. ban 7 .i. con 7 .i. gilla, 7 b[u]ith fó muiriur ó Samain co Belltaine.⁷⁴

to make a single house around him, around the poets, and around the road from Echtge to Derlus; and he had fifty men, fifty women, fifty hounds, fifty servants, and for them to be maintained from Hallowe'en to Mayday.

In the light of these and similar instances of house-building for guests in Irish literature,⁷⁵ the action of the Irish kings and nobles in building the house for Henry II should not necessarily be construed as more than a (possibly reluctant) gesture of hospitality.

The Function of Bendigeidfran's House

Returning to *Branwen*, we again find no evidence that entering the great house constituted submission. It is made clear that the peace was drawn up *before* the house was built ('E tangneued a gyweirwyt, a'r ty a adeilwyt') and that the peace was concluded ('daruot y tangneued') *after* both hosts had entered the house;⁷⁶ there is no hint that the entry of the Irish into the house was itself significant. Rather, both sides are there on mutual terms for what Taliesin calls *ymgyfaruot am gerenhyd*, a meeting about a solemn truce or compact of peace.⁷⁷ Their equality is emphasized by the words describing the symmetrical seating plan in the house:

Ac ar hynny y dothyw y niueroed y'r ty. Ac y doeth gwyr Ynys Iwerdon y'r ty o'r neill parth, a gwyr Ynys y Kedryn o'r parth arall. Ac yn gynebrwydet ac yd eisteddyssant, y bu duundeb y rydunt, ac yd ystynnwyd y urenhinaeth y'r mab.⁷⁸

And thereupon the hosts came into the house. And the men of the Island

⁷³Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, edited by James Carney (London, 1966), p. 129; D. A. Binchy, *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (Dublin, 1963), pp. xv and 30; Seán Ó Coileáin, 'The Making of *Tromdám Guaire*', *Ériu*, 28 (1977), 32–67 (p. 40, n. 28). ⁷⁴Edited by Binchy, lines 277–79. ⁷⁵See below, p. 54. ⁷⁶*Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 42–43. ⁷⁷*The Poems of Taliesin*, edited by Ifor Williams and J. E. C. Williams (Dublin, 1968), no. VI.14. Cf. T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Native Political Organization in Roman Britain and the Origin of MW *brenhin*', in *Antiquitates Indogermanicae: Gedenkschrift für Hermann Güntert*, edited by Manfred Mayrhofer and others (Innsbruck, 1974), pp. 35–45 (p. 36); and 'Date', pp. 278–79. ⁷⁸*Pedeir Keinc*, p. 43. See also the passage quoted above, p. 37.

of Ireland came into the house on one side, and the men of the Island of the Mighty on the other side. And as soon as they were seated, there was concord between them, and the kingship was handed over to the boy.

Unlike the ceremony of house-entering, where the submitting party presumably had to allow his superior precedence in seating and other protocol (as well as putting himself at some personal risk), here everything is arranged so as to emphasize the initial equality of the two parties. If one is to seek an Irish prototype—and probably one should not, since obsession with seating plans was common to Welsh and Irish society⁷⁹—one might compare *The Story of Mac Dathó's Pig*, where the men of Connacht and the men of Ulster meet in the great hall of the Leinster hospitaller Mac Dathó, neither granting precedence to the other:

Lotar iarom uili isin mbruidin, leth in tige dano la Connachta ocus in leth aile la Ulto.⁸⁰

They all went into the hall, the men of Connacht having one side of the house and the men of Ulster having the other side.

So familiar was this motif that the author of the Middle Irish story about the birth of Aí son of Ollam could in six words describe the seating of two royal brothers with exactly equal hosts: 'Leth in tige oc cechtar de' ('Each had half the house').⁸¹

The ostensible reason why Matholwch offers and Bendigeidfran accepts the building of the great house is that Bendigeidfran has never been contained in one. Charles-Edwards and Flanagan find this stated motivation weak. The former's house-entry theory

would explain why, in *Branwen* Matholwch's second offer is such a definite improvement on his first one. . . . the Irish custom of submission explains why it should be so important in the eyes of the Irish king and his advisers to have a house at all.

Very similarly, Flanagan argues that Bendigeidfran's previous lack of a house

hardly seems a sufficient explanation of why Matholwch and his advisers considered the building of a house would be a substantial improvement

⁷⁹cf. Fergus Kelly, 'An Old-Irish Text on Court Procedure', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), 74–106 (pp. 77–83); William Sayers, 'A Cut Above: Ration and Station in an Irish King's Hall', *Food and Foodways*, 4 (1990), 89–110. ⁸⁰*Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*, edited by Rudolf Thurneysen (Dublin, 1935), §5. Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, p. 74, calls this 'a close parallel to the wide separation of the warriors in *Branwen*'. ⁸¹Text and translation in Joan N. Radner, '“Men Will Die”: Poets, Harpers, and Women in Early Irish Literature', in *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture*, edited by Matonis and Melia, pp. 172–86 (pp. 172–73).

on their first offer. . . . It could be that the Welsh author of this tale borrowed Irish material, which he only partially understood, and that behind his account lies a description of a ceremony of submission associated with the entry of one king into the house of another in pre-Norman Ireland.⁸²

As we are no longer familiar with the psychology of giants it is indeed difficult to assess the full persuasiveness of the offer of a house. Yet three other aspects of the story as it stands make it convincing on its own terms. First, although Matholwch's advisers emphasize the house, he is also advised to 'give your kingship into his power and do homage to him' (*doro dy urenhinaeth yn y ewyllus, a gwra idaw*).⁸³ Secondly, the prominence of the wonderfully large house in Matholwch's improved offer to Bendigeidfran parallels the wonderful magical 'cauldron of rebirth' which constituted Bendigeidfran's improved offer to Matholwch earlier in the story, before their roles as giver and receiver were reversed;⁸⁴ each king is won over, or publicly 'saves face', by receiving a conspicuous personal gift, evidently something as important in the eyes of the onlookers as any political concession.⁸⁵ Thirdly, and most importantly, the house is emphasized because of the role which it is to play in the story as a sort of 'Trojan Horse': the treacherous Irishmen hang flour-bags on each of the hundred pillars in the house and conceal warriors in them. This ancient and international motif of the concealed warriors⁸⁶ sufficiently explains why Matholwch's advisers, who may have been in on the plot, are so keen to offer Bendigeidfran a house. They wish to destroy him inside it (just as they had earlier attempted to destroy Llasar in an Iron House),⁸⁷ not to submit to him by entering it.

⁸²Charles-Edwards, 'Date', p. 297; Flanagan, pp. 204–5. ⁸³*Pedeir Keinc*, p. 42, quoted above. ⁸⁴See above, p. 36. At the Maynooth conference (n. 1 above), Mr Nicolas Jacobs suggested that the house may also have a magical aspect if we are to suppose that Bendigeidfran's lack of a house in Britain was due to a *cynneddf*, a taboo which was inoperative in Ireland. ⁸⁵The public aspect of giving is brought out when Branwen arrives in Ireland: every visitor receives a gift from her 'which would be exceptional to see going away' (*a uei arbennic y welet yn mynet e ymdeith*, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 37 and 185–86). On honour in *The Four Branches* see T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status in Some Irish and Welsh Prose Tales', *Ériu*, 29 (1978), 123–41. ⁸⁶Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff, 1961), pp. 101–2; Welsh, 'Branwen, Beowulf', p. 2. For the earliest known example see *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, edited by William Kelly Simpson, new edition (New Haven, 1973), pp. 81–84. The Celtic bags (rather than Egyptian baskets, etc.) may be explained by the custom of keeping things in bags hung from hall posts, mentioned by Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.10. For a different approach, see Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, pp. 64–71. ⁸⁷*Pedeir Keinc*, p. 36. I hope to discuss this episode elsewhere. Cf. Welsh, 'Beowulf, Branwen', p. 12, n. 32: 'the two feasting-halls built by the Irish are both constructed as traps'.

There are especially close parallels to the treacherous house-building in two early Irish tales. *Bricriu's Feast* begins with an account of the great house which Bricriu builds for his guests, following the model of the legendary Red Branch palace at Emain Macha and the Banqueting Hall at Tara:

Boí fled mór la Bricrind Nemthenga do Chonchobur mac Nessa 7 do Ultaib huile. Bliadain lan dó oc tinól na flede. Dorónad iarom tegdas chumtacht lais fri frithailem tomalta na flede.

Bricriu of the Bitter Tongue had a great feast ready for Conchobar mac Nessa and all the Ulidians. He was a whole year preparing the feast. He had made an elaborate house to prepare for the serving of the feast.⁸⁸

Having assembled his guests, Bricriu sits back (like Mac Dathó in *his* hall) to watch the dissension develop. As in *Branwen* the ostensible motive is hospitality and the hidden motive is mischief-making. A still closer parallel to *Branwen* is *The Destruction of Dinn Ríg*. Here Labraid has seized power in Leinster from the usurper Cobthach:

Ro gab-som didiu ríge Lagen iar sin 7 bātar hi córe 7 Cobthach, ocus is and ro boí a šossad-som, i nDind Ríg. Rechtus immorro ro gab-som 7 lánríge la Cobthach. Ro'chuirestar iarum Cobthach do dēnam a menman 7 do airiuc thuile dó. Do' rónad teg les-seom dana ara chind Chobthaigh.⁸⁹

Then he [Labraid] took the kingdom of Leinster and he and Cobthach were in agreement, and the place where his residence was was in Dinn Ríg. He got authority and full kingship from Cobthach. Then he invited Cobthach so that he might do his [Cobthach's] will and gratify his desire.⁹⁰ A house was made by him to welcome Cobthach.

The story goes on to tell how the house is made of iron so that Cobthach, despite his suspicions, can be roasted alive in it. Here, then, we have a close analogue to *Branwen*: a house erected to entertain a rival is really intended to trap him. We know that the gist of an Iron House story of this type was known in Wales, since

⁸⁸*Lebor na Huidre*, lines 8041–44; translated in Knott and Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 120. ⁸⁹*Orgain Denna Ríg*, edited by David Greene, *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories* (Dublin, 1955), lines 412–17. ⁹⁰cf. J. Vendryes, 'La Destruction de Dind Ríg', *Études celtiques*, 8 (1958–59), 7–40 (p. 17, n. 3): 'Il faut comprendre, semble-t-il, qu'en échange des pleins pouvoirs (*rechtus 7 lanríge*) reconnus par Cobthach à Labraid, celui-ci était tout prêt à satisfaire aux désirs de Cobthach. Parmi ces désirs, il y avait d'abord la construction d'une maison'. That it is Cobthach's (not Labraid's) desire that is to be gratified is proved by line 432; so Cobthach is *not* doing Labraid's desire in the idiomatic sense of submitting to him (cf. Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, pp. 103–4, on *dēnam a riar* 'submission to him').

it is summarized in the Llasar episode of *Branwen* itself.⁹¹ Quite possibly, then, it influenced the story of Bendigeidfran's house. Certainly, they are the same type of story.

In the story of Cobthach the theme of submission may also be present, to judge by the penultimate sentence quoted above, which perhaps implies that Cobthach submitted by receiving gifts.⁹² If so, possibly Cobthach's entry into Labraid's house is ritually significant, as in the Annals from 1059 onwards. If so, however, it must be noted that it is the over-king Labraid, not the submissive Cobthach, who builds the house, the reverse of the position alleged for Bendigeidfran and Henry II.

The existence of these early Irish stories about great houses built as traps forces us to conclude that the story of Bendigeidfran's house, even if of Irish inspiration, could have originated long before c. 1050—unless, that is, it was directly inspired by Henry II's house.

Was Bendigeidfran's House Inspired by Henry II's?

We have seen that the resemblance between the stories of Henry II and Bendigeidfran cannot be explained away in terms of a shared background in the Irish house-entering ceremony, as Charles-Edwards argued. But need one house have inspired the other, as Saunders Lewis thought? The main similarities are that Henry II and Bendigeidfran were both conquerors from Britain and that their houses may both have been built near Dublin. These similarities are not enough to prove Lewis's case.⁹³ In history, it is true, Henry II was unique as a British conqueror of Ireland, but in fiction he had been preceded by Arthur (in *Culhwch and Olwen* as well as in Geoffrey of Monmouth), and the *idea* of conquering Ireland must have occurred to many a general who looked across the Irish Sea from Britain—among them Agricola (Tacitus, *Agricola*, §24) and William Rufus (Giraldus, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, II.1). Again, the possible coincidence of the two houses being by the Liffey (*Llinon*) may not be very significant, since, to the Welsh, the Dublin area was probably one of the best-known parts of Ireland.⁹⁴

Apart from their size, the two houses are described rather differently. The sources stress the light wattle construction of Henry II's house, whereas Bendigeidfran's was built 'big and strong' (*yn uawr ac yn braf*),⁹⁵ as indeed it would need to be to support two hundred

⁹¹See above, n. 87. ⁹²Against this is line 432, where *oc airiuc thuili dóib* refers also to the thirty Irish kings who came with Cobthach—unless they, too, are submitting to Labraid. ⁹³I agree with Charles-Edwards's assessment of Saunders Lewis's other parallels with Henry II's reign. ⁹⁴Sims-Williams, 'Irish Geography', p. 417; K. L. Maund, *Ireland, Wales, and England in the Eleventh Century* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 156–82. ⁹⁵*Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 42 and 306 (*en braf*). But the editor (p. 199) suggests that *praff* has the earlier meaning 'large, extensive'.

warriors hidden in bags hanging from either side of each of its hundred pillars!

Was Bendigeidfran's House of Irish Inspiration?

On the whole, it seems most likely that the two houses are independent reflections of the custom of erecting temporary houses for important personages, whether over-kings or simply honoured guests, as seen in literary texts like *Bricriu's Feast*, *The Destruction of Dinn Ríg*, and *Tromdám Guaire*. It is difficult to decide whether the author of the story of Bendigeidfran drew his knowledge of this custom from Ireland. Apparently one Irish literary instance was known in Wales, in some version of the Iron House story. On the other hand, the motif of the concealed warriors was an ancient and international one, which may have been known in Wales independently.

The custom of accommodating visitors in temporary houses may also have obtained in Britain, although (as often) the relative scarcity and conciseness of Welsh literary texts deprive us of clear examples, and leave us with unanswered questions. For instance, was the *mordei* ('palace', literally 'great houses'), mentioned in the *Gododdin*, thought of as having been specially built to house the three hundred warriors who congregated in Edinburgh for a year before the battle of Catraeth?⁹⁶ Should we perhaps think of something like the largest hall at Yeavinger, which could accommodate more than three hundred?⁹⁷ And how were the visitors accommodated who came at Christmas to the celebrations and international *eisteddfod* recorded respectively under the years 1109 and 1176 in *Brut y Tywysogion*?⁹⁸ Were they placed in great halls, or in temporary wattle huts of the sort described by Giraldus Cambrensis, perhaps the movable houses apparently mentioned in *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*?⁹⁹ Perhaps we should imagine something like the Irish Christmas feast described by Gofraid Finn Ó Dálaig:

⁹⁶*Canu Aneirin*, edited by Ifor Williams (Cardiff, 1938), pp. 73–74; cf. Heinrich Wagner, 'Der königliche Palast in keltischer Tradition', *ZCP*, 33 (1974), 6–14.

⁹⁷J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 74–75. Cf. Leslie Alcock, 'Gwŷr y Gogledd: An Archaeological Appraisal', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 132 (1983), 1–18 (pp. 6–10). ⁹⁸cf. Flanagan, p. 194. ⁹⁹*Descriptio Kambriae*, i.17, discussed by Iorwerth C. Peate, *The Welsh House*, second edition (Liverpool, 1944), pp. 39–40; *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*, edited by D. Simon Evans (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 23, 29, 92, and 99. Although the editor's interpretation differs, *anhed(d)eu* and *kyfanned* were understood in this sense by Timothy Lewis, 'The Evolution of the Welsh Home', *Aberystwyth Studies*, 4 (1922), 97–103 (p. 97). For the dimensions of one Welsh hall see Sims-Williams, 'Cú Chulainn in Wales', p. 627.

A noircill a ttig don tigh
do cumadh—cóir a mhaoidhimh—
fa rún tighearna an toighe
dún inEamhna abhlaighe.

Atád loingthighe leabtha
fa chomhair na cuideachta
ar dromchladh nglan tealach tte
ar na gcar d'fheadhach fhíthe.

Is urrlamh d'fhios Í Cheallaigh
aos dána an fhóid Éireannaigh,
atáid buidhean trom dá thoigh,
sráid bhruighean ccorr fá a ccomhoir. . . .

In preparation for those who come to the house there has been built—it is just to boast of it—according to the desire of the master of the place, a castle fit for apple-treed Emain.

There are sleeping booths for the company, wrought of woven branches, on the bright surface of the pleasant hills.

The poets of the Irish land are prepared to seek O'Kelly. A mighty company is approaching his house, an avenue of peaked hostels is in readiness for them. . . . [The poet then describes the various streets of houses made for each profession.]¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately the one passage in early Welsh vernacular literature that describes how a large party of visitors was received is the reception of Matholwch's host in *Branwen* itself, and here the normal practice may be obscured by the exigencies of the enormous Bendigeidfran:

Nyt ymwyn ty yd oydynt, namyn ymywn palieu. Ny angassei Uendigeit-uran eiryoet ymywn ty. . . . A chyweiraw y pebylleu a'r palieu a wnaethant udunt *ar ureint* kyweirdeb yneud.¹⁰¹

They were not in a house, but rather in tents. Bendigeidfran had never been contained in a house. . . . And they prepared the tents and the pavilions for them *in the fashion* of preparing a hall.

These passages may imply that a house might otherwise have been erected. The note on *ar ureint* by Ellis and Lloyd is pertinent here:

¹⁰⁰Text and translation from E. Knott, 'Filidh Éireann go haoiteach: William Ó Ceallaigh's Christmas Feast to the Poets of Ireland, A.D. 1351', *Ériu*, 5 (1911), 50–69 (pp. 56–59). Cf. Simms, 'Guesting and Feasting', p. 91. ¹⁰¹*Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 31 and 34.

'Braint' has also the special signification of 'status', 'privilege', 'dignity'. The passage implies that the feast in the tents had exactly the same dignity as a feast in 'hall'.¹⁰²

An unnoticed but remarkable parallel to *Branwen* in the *Vita* of St Gwynllyw, written in the 1130s, could be taken to mean that tents rather than houses were regularly used to quarter the followers of princes:

Numerositas familię non posset ad finitum numerum certificari, in aulis et in domibus nequibant collocari, sed tentoria per campestria consueta erant ad collocandum affigi.

The largeness of his household could not be certified at a fixed number, they could not be quartered in royal courts and houses, but tents were wont to be set up on the open grounds to quarter them.¹⁰³

On the other hand, bearing in mind that the writer of the *Vita* knew a vernacular poem in praise of Gwynllyw (see §11), he may be echoing a topos of praise poetry, that a prince could not be contained in a normal house; in the *Gododdin*, Aneirin asks about one hero, 'Where can the lord be contained, the heaven of the island of Britain?' (*gwletic gwd gy[n]gein / nef enys brydein*).¹⁰⁴

Finally among these tantalizing references, there is hint that the Welsh saint Beuno suffered a *tromdām* which could have involved him in building-works. The early-twelfth-century *Vita* of St Gwenfrewy says that Beuno was 'deprived of his dwelling by the importunity of the sons of Selyf' (*superfluitate filiorum Selym mansione sua priuatus*). Neither this *Life* nor later sources tell the story in full, but it is tempting to link this *tromdām* with a fifteenth-century poet's reference to Beuno as a great builder who fed an oppressive company (*gormes*) of three hundred.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²*The Mabinogion*, translated by T. P. Ellis and John Lloyd, 2 vols (Oxford, 1929), I, 52, n. 25. Cf. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v. *braint*: *ar fraint* 'as, after the fashion of . . . , in the status or position of . . .'. ¹⁰³*Vita S. Gundleii*, §1, edited and translated by Wade-Evans, *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, pp. 172–73. For the date see Christopher N. L. Brooke, *The Church and the Welsh Border in the Central Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1986), p. 39, n. 93; and Jeremy K. Knight, 'St. Tatheus of Caerwent: An Analysis of the Vespasian Life', *Monmouthshire Antiquary*, 3 (1970–78), 29–36 (p. 35). ¹⁰⁴*Canu Aneirin*, lines 152–53 (MS *gyfgein*) and p. 119. ¹⁰⁵*Buchedd Beuno*, §10, and *Vita Sanctae Wenefredae*, §4, in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*, edited by Wade-Evans, pp. 17–18 and 288–89. (For *superfluitas* = *importunitas* see *Acta Sanctorum, Novembris*, I (Paris, 1887), p. 704.) Sir John Leiaf's poem is quoted and discussed by Elissa R. Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 83, and Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 64. Unfortunately *ben adeilwr* may merely refer to Beuno's church-building.

In short, it is quite possible that the account of Bendigeidfran's reception in the great house in Ireland was inspired by the author's knowledge of Welsh, rather than Irish, life or literature, although the shortage of parallel material in Welsh makes it difficult to decide.

A different view is taken by Ifor Williams and Proinsias Mac Cana. The former thought that Bendigeidfran's house was an echo of the Banqueting Hall of Tara, the *Tech Midchuarta*,¹⁰⁶ while the latter maintained that the writer was familiar with the traditional conception of the great halls (*bruidne*) of Irish literary tradition.¹⁰⁷ Yet, as Mac Cana notes, there is nothing particularly Irish about the hall in *Branwen*, which appears to be imagined like other wooden halls in Britain and Ireland.¹⁰⁸ The few details given are quite compatible with the vague allusions in native Welsh poetry to the halls of Urien and Cynddylan,¹⁰⁹ and with the references to the king's hall in the Welsh Laws (though these speak of *six* columns rather than the *hundred* columns of *Branwen*).¹¹⁰ No case for Irish origin can be based on the sheer size of Bendigeidfran's hall, since large halls have been the dream of rulers and storytellers everywhere. (While Murphy compared Bricriu's hall with Priam's in the *Iliad*, Heinrich Wagner sought parallels in ancient Egypt.)¹¹¹ Moreover, there are two internal reasons why Bendigeidfran's hall is so large. One is that he is a giant. Obviously, then, his hall (like those of other early Welsh giants, such as Wrnach in *Culhwch and Olwen*) must have

¹⁰⁶*Pedeir Keinc*, p. 200. It is not clear whether he meant the Irish descriptions of it or the hypothetical structure on the site, whose existence has still to be confirmed or disproved by excavation. Cf. Seán P. Ó Riordáin, *Tara: The Monuments on the Hill* (Dundalk, 1971), p. 23; Bernard Wailes, 'The Irish "Royal Sites" in History and Archaeology', *CMCS*, 3 (Summer 1982), 1–29 (pp. 10–12 and 26). Although Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (London, 1973), p. 56, says that the Banqueting Hall was a 'temporary structure', there seems to be no evidence for this (cf. Donncha Ó Corráin, *Ireland Before the Normans* (Dublin, 1972), p. 62), nor for the reference by Flanagan, p. 206, to a temporary banqueting hall in *Críth Gablach*. ¹⁰⁷*Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, pp. 71–78 and 130. See also n. 80 above. ¹⁰⁸*ibid.*, p. 74. Cf. Nicholas Reynolds, 'Dark Age Timber Halls and the Background to Excavations at Balbridie', *Scottish Archaeological Forum*, 10 (1980), 41–60; R. S. Kelly, 'The Excavation of a Medieval Farmstead at Cefn Graeanog, Clynog, Gwynedd', *BBCS*, 29 (1980–82), 859–908 (pp. 882–85); P. V. Addyman, 'The Anglo-Saxon House: A New Review', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1 (1972), 273–307; Philip Rahtz, 'Buildings and Rural Settlement', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by David M. Wilson (London, 1976), pp. 49–98 and 405–52; and references in n. 97 above. The fact that bags are hung on *either side* of the columns (cf. n. 86 above) does not necessarily imply aisle columns rather than side posts. ¹⁰⁹See Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, pp. 426–28, 431–33, 481–82, and 484–85. Some large timber halls near Wales seem to have been revealed by air-photography at Atcham; see my *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 101–2 and 363. ¹¹⁰Peate, *Welsh House*, pp. 114–19; Jenkins, *Law of Hywel Dda*, pp. 7, 190, and 223–24; Kelly, 'Cefn Graeanog', p. 883. ¹¹¹Knott and Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 120; Wagner, 'Der königliche Palast' (n. 96 above).

been vast. In fact, his father Llŷr, who was also a giant,¹¹² was also ascribed a vast house: in the fifteenth century, Lewys Glyn Cothi praises his patron's house at Cefn-llys as 'lydan ual ty Lyr lledieith' ('broad like the house of Llŷr half-speech').¹¹³ Secondly, a large hall is required by the story of the two hundred concealed warriors, who have to be sufficient in number to defeat the British army. Hence we have a house with a hundred columns. This exaggeration should not remind us of Irish literature in particular. Calvert Watkins has compared Bendigeidfran's with houses with a *thousand* house-posts in Vedic and Avestan;¹¹⁴ the imagination of our Welsh author is quite homely by comparison! One might rather compare Charlemagne's palace with a hundred columns at Ingelheim, as described by Ermoldus Nigellus,¹¹⁵ or the West Saxon royal Long Hall excavated at Cheddar (pre c. 930), with over a hundred postholes round its perimeter.¹¹⁶ Some hundred supporting posts may also be implied by the allusion in *Culhwch and Olwen* to 'fifty [var. forty-eight] cross-beams (*trawst*) which were in Arthur's hall'.¹¹⁷

We cannot be sure, then, that the great house in *Branwen* was inspired by Irish life or literature. It may be only the Irish *setting* which has encouraged scholars to look in that direction; and here it must be remembered that the Irish localization may be secondary if the opinion of many scholars is correct, that the expeditions to Ireland in *Culhwch* and *Branwen* are euhemerized versions of a raid on an island Otherworld.¹¹⁸

¹¹²cf. *The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest*, edited by J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Llanbedrog, 1911), col. 1345.21: 'gwrhyt kei nyt llei no llyr' ('Cai's fathom, not less than Llŷr's'); for Cai's fathom see *Culhwch ac Olwen*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff, 1988), lines 387–88, and my note in 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, edited by Bromwich and others (n. 4 above), pp. 33–71 (p. 51). On Welsh giants see John Christian Grooms, 'Giants in Welsh Folklore and Tradition', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1988). ¹¹³*Gwaith Lewis Glyn Cothi*, 1, edited by E. D. Jones (Aberystwyth and Cardiff, 1953), no. 74.21 (variant: *tai*). Glyn E. Jones, 'Astudiaeth' (n. 22 above), pp. 72 and 228–29, suggests that there may have been a tradition assigning the great house to Llŷr rather than his son. ¹¹⁴OIr. *clí* and *cleth* 'house post', *Ériu*, 29 (1978), 155–60 (p. 158). ¹¹⁵*In Honorem Hludowici Carmen*, line 2064, edited and translated by Edmond Faral, *Ermold le Noir* (Paris, 1932), pp. 156–57. ¹¹⁶Rahitz, 'Buildings', pp. 65–69, 92, and 415. ¹¹⁷*Culhwch ac Olwen*, edited by Bromwich and Evans, lines 328–29. ¹¹⁸For references and discussion see my 'Arthurian Poems', pp. 54–57; 'Irish Geography', pp. 418 and 421; and 'The Significance of the Irish Personal Names in *Culhwch ac Olwen*', *BBCS*, 29 (1980–82), 600–20 (p. 604). Cf. Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, pp. 191–93. That Ireland is a secondary location would also follow from the quite different approach of John T. Koch, 'Brân, Brennos: An Instance of Early Gallo-Brittonic History and Mythology', *CMCS*, 20 (Winter 1990), 1–20.

III. CONCLUSION

In summary, we may conclude that the Irish custom of submission by entering the overlord's house was probably much earlier than the annal of 1059, which cannot give c. 1050 as the terminus post quem for the invention of the story of Bendigeidfran's house. Besides, it is doubtful whether the Welsh story has anything to do with the annalistic formula and the custom that lay behind it. Nor are the similarities between Bendigeidfran's house and the one erected for Henry II at Dublin sufficiently striking for the latter to provide a terminus post quem of 1171 for the former. Instead, both houses probably reflect the custom of building temporary accommodation for important visitors. This custom may not have been exclusively Irish, and the lack of explicit references to it in Welsh literature may be accidental. Finally, the fact that the king of Ireland sails from the south is not politically significant and cannot date *Branwen* before c. 1120. Hence it remains the case that 'the date of the Four Branches is still very much an open question'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff, 1977), p. 24. I am indebted to Dr David Dumville for acting as referee for this article and making a number of corrections.