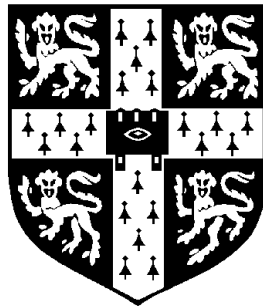


H. M. CHADWICK MEMORIAL LECTURES 20

JOSEPH FALAKY NAGY

Mercantile Myth in Medieval Celtic Traditions



DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE AND CELTIC

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Hector Munro Chadwick (1870–1947) was Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in the University of Cambridge from 1912 to 1941. Through the immense range of his scholarly publications, and through the vigorous enthusiasm which he brought to all aspects of Anglo-Saxon studies — philological and literary, historical and archaeological — he helped to define the field and to give it the interdisciplinary orientation which characterizes it still. The Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, which owes its existence and its own interdisciplinary outlook to H. M. Chadwick, has wished to commemorate his enduring contribution to Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic studies by establishing an annual series of lectures in his name.

Mercantile Myth in Medieval Celtic Traditions

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There is a poem preserved in the Middle Irish commentary on the Old Irish text *Amrae Choluim Chille* that is famous in its own right, but also as possibly our earliest surviving witness to the celebrated story of the elopement of Gráinne the wife of Finn with her chosen lover Diarmait Ua Duibne, the most beloved and valuable member of Finn's warring and hunting band, or *fian(na)*. Names do not figure in the brief poem (a mere quatrain) itself, but at least the author of the commentary thought the Diarmait and Gráinne story was a good and fitting place to anchor it, or so we infer from the caption he gave it: *ut dixit Gráinne ingen Chormaic fri Finn* 'As Gráinne daughter of Cormac said to Finn'. (It is already worth noting, in anticipation of what I will say later, that according to this framing, these poetic words are addressed by the errant wife to her *husband*, not to her lover.) Gerard Murphy, who included this poem in his *Early Irish Lyrics*, translated it as follows: 'There is one on whom I should gladly gaze, to whom I would give the bright world, all of it, all of it, though it be an unequal bargain'.¹

This eloquent early medieval Irish expression of (to mix metaphors) the 'hungry gaze'² that eagerly tracks every move of the fondly regarded object from which we are spatially separated, will figure in what is to come toward the end of this paper, but it also expresses my feelings about the institution in which I am very honoured to find myself. It gives me great pleasure to be hosted by the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic (ASNC) here in Cambridge.³

Of course, it a great Cambridge scholar and teacher of an earlier generation who brings us together today. Hector Munro Chadwick looms large indeed in the account of

¹ *Fil duine / frismad buide lemm díuderc, / día tibrinn in mbith mbuide, / huile, huile, cid díupert* (*Early Irish Lyrics*, corrected ed. (Oxford, 1962), pp. 160-1 (text, translation, and alternate manuscript readings), pp. 236-7 (note)). Murphy dates the poem to the ninth or tenth century. What attracts it into the *Amrae* commentary is the use of the word *diuderc* in both texts, an 'old word' the appearance of which (along with another 'old word', *diupert/diupart*) Murphy cites as a justification for his approximate dating. Anachronistically, if this is indeed Gráinne speaking, several of the manuscript sources have, instead of *huile, huile*, the poetic speaker calling upon the Son of Mary (*a meic Máire*): Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, p. 161.

² In its relatively few appearances the 'old' or 'poetic' word *diuderc* 'gazing, look' seems to have connotations of lurking sorrow or even danger: from the *diuderc ndér* 'diuderc of tears' of the *Amrae* (R. I. Best and O. Bergin, eds., *Lebor na Huidre* (Dublin, 1929), p. 18) to the *diuderc* for which the speaker of our poem would risk everything, and to the Ulster hero-king Fergus mac Léiti's traumatic *diuderc* 'gazing' upon the aquatic monster, an experience by which his mouth and royal visage are fatefully distorted (D.A. Binchy, 'The Saga of Fergus mac Léiti', *Ériu* 16 (1952), 33-48, (pp. 38, 42-3); Royal Irish Academy, *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, compact edition (Dublin, 1983), s.v. *diuderc*).

³ I would like to thank my heroic host, Dr. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Head of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic at the University of Cambridge, for all her hospitality and patience with her visitor, and the faculty, students, and other guests of the Department for their gracious response to this lecture.

twentieth-century Comparative Literature. Scholars of the literature of early medieval northern Europe – really, all of us, not just in the fields the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic so virtuosically represents but in comparative literary studies generally – stand as grateful beneficiaries of his and Nora Kershaw Chadwick’s ambitious project of understanding ancient and medieval northern cultures in terms of typological parallels in social institutions and ideology, a project also mindful of historical connections and the resulting exchange of ideas. For me personally, as a budding Celticist who grew up under the influence of two Classicist big brothers, the characteristic ‘Chadwickian’ resort to classical literature and civilization as a source of enlightening *comparanda* for the early literatures of the Middle Ages was always especially invigorating. There was, moreover, a very pointed point to this heuristic strategy, as the Chadwicks made clear in the preface to perhaps their most famous and influential joint work, *The Growth of Literature, Volume I: The Ancient Literatures of Europe*:⁴ ‘The contents of this volume will, it is hoped, give some idea, incidentally, of the field which is to be explored in literature and of the attraction which it offers. To those who are interested in the study of antiquity it may perhaps help to expose the groundlessness of the prevalent notion that the Greeks and Romans were the only “ancients” whose history and literature are worth study, and to make clear that our own ancestors had literary traditions and intellectual activities of their own, less familiar to us but of equal interest. Aesthetic considerations are not our concern; but we think that if anyone will be at the pains to examine for himself the records in the northern literatures to which we refer, he will find that in general they will bear comparison with the Greek records’.⁵ And, elsewhere in the preface, they say, by way of a footnote: ‘Some readers may perhaps demur to our use of the word “ancient,” which is commonly applied only to the literatures and history of Rome, Greece, and the East. We use it also for the earliest literatures of the British Isles. It is true that the latter do not begin—as written literatures—until much later than those of Rome and Greece, though they come next among the literatures of Europe. But there is no other suitable word. The term “medieval” sometimes applied to them is misleading, since it is also, and more commonly, applied to the more or less “cosmopolitan” literature of the succeeding period, which was essentially different. The transition took place to a large extent during the times with which we have to deal; but the medieval element was of foreign origin, and had nothing in common with the native elements, which concern us. The latter had literary traditions of their own, which in our belief had had a long history—certainly reaching back to “ancient” times—before anything was written down’.⁶

This assessment may be too ‘nativist’ for some contemporary scholars’ taste, and, as I shall implicitly be arguing, it shuts the Celts of Britain and Ireland as well as the Anglo-Saxons out of the ambit of the ‘cosmopolitan’ that later gave rise to the Chrétien, Wolfram, and Geoffrey behind the ‘greatest hits’ of medieval literature. The main point the Chadwicks made, however, still has great appeal, namely that the literatures of classical

⁴ Cambridge, 1932. This massive and ambitious work, building on H.M. Chadwick’s earlier *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912), ultimately expanded to three volumes (Cambridge, 1936, 1940) and extended its coverage far beyond Europe and the Mediterranean.

⁵ *Growth of Literature*, vol. 1, p. xviii.

⁶ *Growth of Literature*, vol. 1, p. xi.

Greece and Rome, of Britain and Ireland, and of Scandinavia have much to say to each other when studied as an ensemble, representing traditions comparable yet distinctive. That this comparative way of approaching these traditions has borne fruit indicates not only their shared Indo-European heritage but also a common ideological model of a ‘heroic age’ underlying their cultures and generating both social structures and literary values. It is in depicting this model that the Chadwicks excelled.

Like an exclusive club, this ‘heroic age’ as reflected in the literatures of ‘ancient’ Greece, Rome, Britain, Ireland, and Scandinavia does not admit or acknowledge just anybody. In their survey of the ‘personnel . . . who figure in heroic poetry and saga’ of the ‘heroic milieu’, the Chadwicks, starting with Homeric epic, state: ‘Taking the evidence of these two poems as a whole, it may be said that the interest is concentrated exclusively upon persons of princely rank and their households. Even the servants come in for a share of notice. But the merchant, the farmer, and the artisan are practically ignored’.⁷ Then proceeding to work their way through the Northern European literary evidence, the Chadwicks conclude with Ireland, summarizing their findings as follows: ‘There are sagas and poems (non-heroic) relating to *filid* [high-prestige poets], which will be noticed later. But in the heroic stories themselves the Irish evidence presents little or nothing that is exceptional [that is, in regard to the personnel of the heroic-milieu narrative repertoire]. Da Choca’s hall [the guest house of a narrative character who might represent a more quotidian, subheroic stratum of the population] is the scene of a sanguinary fight; but he himself plays practically no part in the story, and the other owners of similar halls are hardly more prominent. In Ireland, as elsewhere, the interest of heroic stories is centred in members of princely families. Military followers and even slaves of the princes may come in for a share of attention. Priests and minstrels may be noticed. But the remainder of the population is virtually ignored’.⁸ In other words, merchants, farmers, and artisans, according to the Chadwicks, are missing from the society envisioned in literature reflecting or haunted by this ‘heroic age’.

When we start to see more of these occupations and their interests represented in literature, the Chadwicks would have said that the more ‘cosmopolitan’, genuinely medieval era is taking shape, as the range of social characters and interests acknowledged by authors expands, and the aristocratic agenda makes way for others. And perhaps this process of transition is what I will be tracking in the Celtic evidence in the rest of this contribution, so that in the end there may be no real disagreement between the Chadwicks’ view and what I am proposing.⁹ I suspect, however, there are more artisans and merchants

⁷ *Growth of Literature*, vol. 1, p. 65.

⁸ *Growth of Literature*, vol. 1, p. 67.

⁹ I emphasize, however, that I am not assuming a *cultural* or *ethical* shift in cultural and economic attitudes, away from an earlier world of ‘simple’ and well-intentioned barter, prestation, and reciprocity to a later world increasingly complicated by greed, commercial exploitation, and the corruption of value systems, but rather a constellation of motives, strategies, and tendencies that encompass all the above, and that, I would argue, already formed part of early Celtic social practice and ideology (that is, both ‘earlier’ and ‘later’), as reflected in traditional narrative – even in the hypothetical ‘heroic age’. A study focusing on a commercial dynamic similarly ingrained in a pre-modern narrative tradition is Laurie L. Patton, ‘Myth and Money: The Exchange of Words and Wealth in Vedic Commentary’, in *Myth and Method*, ed. Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger (Charlottesville, VA, 1996), pp. 208–44. For a study with a very different point to make, in which a medieval story is read as a barometer of economic attitudes ominously changing, see Bruce Lincoln,

to be found among the aristocratic heroes and heroines reflecting the heroic milieu than the Chadwicks suspected – or, at least, there is what I would call a *commercial sensibility* grounded in economic realities that lies closer to the core of these literatures than many have surmised, even *mercantile myths* alongside and not necessarily inconsistent with heroic myths and their bias toward aristocratic values.

Before we go any further, let me define what I mean by ‘merchant’. I use the term to refer to a person who sells or exchanges goods for the purpose of accumulating wealth, either as a livelihood, or when the opportunity arises. In the pre-modern world as even today, the merchant in search of customers, suppliers, and profit circulated among various peoples and social strata, and travelled over land and sea, potentially functioning as a mediator for even non-economic transactions among the purchasers of what he had to offer. (Hence one of the main words in both classical and medieval Latin for merchant, *negotiator*, comes to mean what it means today.) While the producer of merchandise and the merchant can be one and the same person, mercantile activity complicates the relationships among producer, product, and consumer, and the merchant views these economic objects, players, and relations in his own self-interested, commercial way. To paraphrase Aristotle, a shoe, from an everyday perspective, is something to wear to protect the foot; but for a shoemaker or merchant, it is something to trade and a means to a mercantile end.¹⁰ Finally, since the merchant makes what Aristotle and we might consider improper use of objects, so the merchant and his activity evoke mistrust and suspicion. (I cannot resist pointing out here that English *trader* and *traitor* both derive from the same Latin verb, meaning ‘to hand over’.) Merchants stereotypically cheat, playing their customers false. In narrative they can also be false in the sense of not really being merchants at all. Here I am thinking, for example, of the distinction between what Manawydan and Pryderi do in the Third Branch of the Mabinogi, where they commence making and selling first shields, then saddles, and finally shoes because they are trying to make a living, and what Gwydion and Lleu do in the Fourth Branch, where they become shoemakers and shoe-salesmen not to make a profit but to trap Lleu’s mother Aranrhod into giving him his name.¹¹

We should note that in these instances of commercial activity in the Four Branches, each of the characters *assumes* the role of craftsman and/or merchant when it suits his immediate purpose. None of them are or become mercantile adventurers permanently. Just as in the ancient Mediterranean world self-aggrandizing aristocrats could opportunistically invest or even themselves engage in commercial activity while subscribing to a value system that denied any connection between the upper classes and such a ‘lowly’ occupation or its practitioners,¹² so too in literary traditions of ‘heroic age’ societies, merchants and

‘*Gautreks Saga* and the Gift Fox’, in his *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, IL, 1999), pp. 171-82.

¹⁰ In Book One of the *Politics* as cited in M.M. Austin and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece: An Introduction*, trans. and rev. Austin (Berkeley, CA, 1977), p. 163.

¹¹ Ifor Williams, ed., *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi allan o Lyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff, 1951), pp. 54-5, 58, 79-80.

¹² See S.C. Humphreys, ‘Homo Politicus and Homo Economicus’, in her *Anthropology and the Greeks* (London, 1978), pp. 159-74; C.M. Reed, *Maritime Traders in the Ancient Greek World* (Cambridge, 2003); J.H. D’Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 1981).

mercantile activities rarely appear overtly. When they do, they are circumscribed with ambivalence if not outright contempt. As pointed out by the classicists Michael Austin and Pierre Vidal-Naquet in regard to the *Odyssey* and the people in the story who host Odysseus before his return to Ithaca: ‘Although a maritime people they [the Phaeacians] rejected commerce, and it was precisely in Phaeacia that Odysseus suffered the supreme insult of being accused of being a trader, mindful of his wares and his profit, an insult which he could only wipe off by demonstrating in the most convincing fashion his physical prowess [by impressively throwing a discus], and thereby his status as a hero’.¹³ The insistent hero of the Welsh *Culhwch ac Olwen* when in Arthur’s court, after being put off according to the rules of the court but then extended an offer of hospitality and privilege an everyday visitor most likely would not refuse, declares that he did not come to bargain for or wheedle food and drink (*frawdunyaw bwyt a llynn*) from his host.¹⁴ In a much more tense situation, the calumniated Rhiannon of the First Branch declines to engage in further wrangling or haggling (*ymdaeru*) with the women falsely accusing her of having destroyed her own child, and stoically accepts the humiliating but not fatal punishment meted out to her, really the result of plea-bargaining.¹⁵ Earlier in the same Branch, Rhiannon’s husband-to-be Pwyll in an act both devoid of clear-eyed self-interest and redolent of over-the-top magnanimity agrees to give a stranger anything he requests – naturally, he asks for Rhiannon.¹⁶ These heroes/heroines and their decisions are far removed from the conspicuous opportunism of, for instance, the Irish hospitaller Mac Dathó, who, instead of deciding on one or the other of the two kings asking for his prize dog, offers it to both, per the advice of his wife;¹⁷ the smith Culann in the *Macgnímrada Con Culainn* section of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, who after the slaying of his dog disingenuously angles for the Ulstermen to compensate him lavishly for his loss;¹⁸ or the craven king Matholwch in the Second Branch, who is happy to receive as much compensation as the generous Bendigeidfran is willing to give him for the mutilation of his horses, but who allows his wife, Bendigeidfran’s sister, to be punished by his kinsmen and subjects for the same crime, for which she was not at all responsible.¹⁹

On the other hand, as if he had heard and learned from the story of Pwyll’s incautiously

¹³ Austin and Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History*, p. 44, in reference to Book 8, lines 158-98. The taunt is translated by Edward McCrorie as follows: ‘No, stranger you don’t strike me as skillful, / a man for the many matches engaged in by good men. / More like a ship-bound man with plenty of oarsmen, / a roving captain maybe whose crewmen are traders: / you mind your freight and brood over your cargo / for greed and gain. You don’t look like an athlete’ (*The Odyssey* (Baltimore, 2004), p. 105). In his commentary, Richard P. Martin observes: ‘Eurualos’s insult – calling Odysseus a cargo trader – sounds like the denigration of merchants voiced by some aristocratic factions in the Greek archaic age’ (McCrorie, *Odyssey*, p. 377).

¹⁴ Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans, eds., *Culhwch and Olwen: An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale* (Cardiff, 1992), p. 6. This verb is listed by the editors among the ‘words not attested anywhere else in M[iddle] W[elsh], but which are to be found in some later sources’ (p. xviii). *Frawd*, the first element of the verb (+ *uno* ‘wish’), ranges in meaning from ‘violence, harm’ to ‘hurry, zest’ and is expressive of restless activity and desire (*Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Cardiff, 1950-2005), s.v. *ffrawduniaf, ffrawd*).

¹⁵ Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 21.

¹⁶ Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Rudolf Thurneysen, ed., *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series, 6 (Dublin, 1935), pp. 3-5.

¹⁸ Cecile O’Rahilly, ed. and trans., *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I* (Dublin, 1976), p. 19.

¹⁹ Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 32-4, 37.

generous offer, the Arthur of *Culhwch* shrewdly engages in negotiation with his own favour-seeking stranger, ruling various possessions off-limits (including his wife), instead of giving him a blanket ‘take anything you want’ response.²⁰ Furthermore, even though Pwyll and Rhiannon appear too dignified to bargain in life-and-death situations, their offspring Pryderi engages in haggling (*ymoprau*) with the grooms, so that he may gain access to the horses, perhaps in particular to the special one won by and given to him by his foster father.²¹ Pryderi may after all be a chip off the old block. Earlier in Pwyll’s story, even before meeting his wife and counsellor to-be, the otherworldly-wise Rhiannon, he takes a sensible tack with Arawn, the supernatural hunter and fellow king whom Pwyll has impulsively offended. He does not respond with violence to the aggrieved party’s threat but instead negotiates an exchange whereby he can purchase (*prynu*) Arawn’s friendship.²² The deal turns out to be profitable for both, and Arawn’s queen concludes that indeed her husband had struck a ‘firm bargain’ (one of the text’s recent translators’ rendering of *gafael gadarn*).²³ In the wake of this first sequence of events in the First Branch, we are left wondering whether in fact Pwyll has been the victim of a trap, and whether the otherworldly Arawn has proven to be an even more manipulative deal-maker than his human counterpart.

As for the offended Odysseus who, responding to the condescending assumption that he is a merchant, offers his credentials not only by demonstrating his heroic strength but also by showing off his narrative ‘wares’ (the adventures for which he is still famous), here is classicist Irene Winter’s analysis of what merchants (mostly Phoenicians in the Homeric milieu) signify in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*: ‘On the one hand, they represent the “different and the foreign” of the traditional enemy, and we must read them in terms of alterity; on the other hand, they represent a projection of the social and economic present, the becoming “self,” and we must read them with all the ambivalence and discomfort, denial even, that contemporary Greeks must have felt about the changes their society was presently undergoing’.²⁴ Further: ‘Less a mirror of their times than a deflector, the Homeric texts elevate an ideal of the warrior-hero at the very moment that Greeks were embarking upon mercantile ventures not unlike those of the very Phoenicians whom the texts disparage. If we see the heroic ideal – of Odysseus no less than of Achilles – as a displacement, a detour around current social realities, and see the Phoenicians in terms of grudging respect for quality and manufacture, contempt with regard to social values, powerful ambivalence in commercial practice, and suspicion regarding the consequences of dispersal and mobility, then virtually all aspects of the way in which the Phoenicians are represented in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* can be accounted for. “Homer’s Phoenicians,” then, do not represent the world of the Phoenicians; rather, they present a masterful literary construct, at once produced by and working to produce the broader social, political, economic, and symbolic fabric of the early

²⁰ Bromwich and Evans, *Culhwch*, p. 6.

²¹ Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 23. The *Geiriadur* (s.v. *ymoprau*) finds only this single citation of the word and derives it from *gobr* ‘reward, payment’. Almost as rare is *ymobryn* (s.v.), attested in the Fourth Branch, where it describes the hiring by Gwydion of a woman to nurse the infant Lleu (Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 78).

²² Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 2. The verb is cognate with Irish *cren-*, on which see below, p. 15.

²³ Sioned Davies, trans., *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007), p. 7 (*gafael* is literally a ‘hold(ing)’).

²⁴ ‘Homer’s Phoenicians: History, Ethnography, or Literary Trope?’, in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, ed. J.B. Carter and S.P. Morris (Austin, TX, 1995), pp. 247-71 (p. 261).

state in archaic Greece'.²⁵ So while the Chadwicks observe correctly that merchants do not figure prominently in the plots of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, that relative absence combined with pointed presence speaks eloquently in the context of the eastern Mediterranean world that formed the backdrop to both Greek epic and rising Hellenic commercialism.

This Homeric resistance to the notion of any mercantile motives being imputable to the heroes of the Trojan war and its aftermath, and the tendency to project commercial and artisanal enterprise onto Phoenicians or some other 'Other' may resonate with some avoidance strategies at work in the purportedly comparable world we find in early Irish and Welsh literature. I would argue, however, that the traditions represented in these latter texts do not sweep the reality of mercantile activity under the rug quite as insistently as do the Homeric epics, to which the Chadwicks regularly turn for a cultural and ideological template, and to which in this case they perhaps gave too much weight in determining the range of characters, behaviour, and mentality constituting the heroic milieu.

True, trade may not have always been as important an activity for Celtic Britain and Ireland as it was for Homeric and post-Homeric Greeks and their Roman successors as masters of the Mediterranean, but we need not go so far as some scholars have, and claim that merchants were an import that came to Britain with the Romans, and to Ireland with the Vikings, and that before their arrival, the possession of goods was purely a function of 'do-it-yourself' local production or a web of individual acts of prestation.²⁶

In his magisterial survey of Indo-European institutions and worldview as reflected in cognate vocabularies, the philologist Emile Benveniste added some support to the Chadwicks' view of merchants as outsiders to the cast of characters and to the ethos of heroic story. He characterized commerce as 'un métier sans nom' among Indo-European languages, a family in which precious few if any terms relating to commercial transactions are traceable to the Proto-Indo-European lexicon.²⁷ Benveniste did add the important observation that Latin and some modern languages, when developing a specific term for the activity of merchants, have employed the same strategy, namely, characterizing commercial activity as the opposite of *doing nothing*: Latin *negotium* 'non-leisure' (originally a calque on Greek *askholia*), French *affaires* 'things to do', German *Beschäftigung*, and English *business* 'busy-ness'.²⁸

Irish *cennach* 'transaction, trade, act of buying or ransoming, trade, price', from which derive the verb *cennaigid* and a noun of agency *cennaige* (or *cendaige*), developed along different semantic lines, according to the *Lexique étymologique de l'irlandais ancien*, which suggests a derivation from the noun *cenn* 'head' (both literal and metaphorical) as it is used in various prepositional phrases having to do with exchange.²⁹ Even so, some of that commercial

²⁵ Winter, 'Homer's Phoenicians', p. 264.

²⁶ This is essentially the thesis developed in Mary A. Valante, *The Vikings in Ireland: Settlement, Trade and Urbanization* (Dublin, 2008).

²⁷ Emile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes. 1. économie, parenté, société* (Paris, 1969), p. 139.

²⁸ Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, p. 139.

²⁹ 'Vraisemblablement dérivé de *cenn* "tête," dont on peut rappeler l'emploi dans l'expression des échanges (*do cinn, di chinn, tar cenn*, "en échange de"). *Cennach* a pu signifier une forme de troc à l'origine' (J. Vendryes, E. Bachellety, and P.-Y. Lambert, *Lettre C* (Paris, 1987), s.v. *cennach*). The word *cennach* can even be applied to heroic matters: it is the term used in the Middle Irish saga *Fled Bricrenn* (Bricriu's Feast) to designate the famous

opposite of otioseness is hardly missing from the Celtic picture, coming across as it does in the portrayal of narrative figures who have mercantile associations or engage in activities redolent of craft and trade. For instance, *Samildánach*, the epithet/name by which the *incognito* young hero Lug is identified when he introduces himself to his father's kinsmen, the Tuatha Dé Danann, in the medieval text *Cath Maige Tuired* (The Battle of Mag Tuired), can be translated as 'multi-tasking'.³⁰ When told by the doorkeeper of Tara that no person without a craft (*dán*) may be allowed inside, Lug confidently proclaims that he can do everything those within can do, an assertion of a unique super- or meta-skill that wins him admission. Indeed, in demonstrating to the Tuatha Dé just how much of a 'Mr. All-Purpose' he is, and then soon taking on the role of war-leader, systematically marshalling their forces in preparation for the battle against their enemies, the erstwhile stranger Lug turns out to be exceptionally good at 'taking care of business', so to speak, both for himself and for his people in general. And that business actually becomes more specifically economic in the aftermath of the battle, when Lug forces the deposed king Bres to ransom himself, and thus wins what Bres claims is valuable agricultural advice for the Tuatha Dé and future workers of the soil.³¹ Calling this protracted negotiation and its outcome 'bargaining' might be putting the best face on the situation.³² The text itself says this was a *celg* 'deception, ambush', though it is not at all clear who has been tricked here: Bres, forced to divulge top-secret information in exchange for his life, or Lug, who lets Bres go in return for information that, the author may be implying by the use of *celg*, is mere superstition and chicanery.³³ In that case, we seem to have a comment here on the nature of mercantile transactions and motives, a comment not at all inconsistent with both ancient and modern views of the untrustworthiness of 'busy-ness-men' and the deals they seek so assiduously to make. Similarly in a late medieval tale, about the death of the sons of Tuirenn, we see Lug driving a hard bargain, a matter of life or death really, in regard to the latter sons, who have accidentally slain Lug's father, and who as a result of Lug's devious negotiation with them as to compensation come to a tragic end.³⁴ The sons of Tuirenn appear in the tale to be first and

head-wager (*Cennach ind ruanada*, Best and Bergin, *Lebor na Huidre*, p. 276).

³⁰ E.A. Gray, ed. and trans., *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*, Irish Texts Society, 52 (London and Dublin, 1982), p. 38 (see note on pp. 91-2). *Sam-* 'together' + *il-* 'many' + *dán* 'art, craft, skill' + adjectival suffix *-ach*. Gray notes the parallel between Lug's claim to be the master of all skills and his subsequently demonstrated ability to play (and win) several matches of *fidchell* (a board game) simultaneously (*Cath Maige Tuired*, p. 40): '... In both cases it is his simultaneous multiple practice which sets him apart as unique' ('Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure (24-120)', *Éigse*, 19 (1982-3), 1-35 (p. 24)).

³¹ *Abair friu*, "*Mairt a n-ar; Mairt hi corad sil a ngurt; Mairt a n-imbochdt*" "Say to them, on Tuesday their plowing; on Tuesday their sowing seed in the field; on Tuesday their reaping" (Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 68-9).

³² I am referring to the title of William Sayers' insightful article, 'Bargaining for the Life of Bres in *Cath Maige Tuired*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 34 (1986), 26-40.

³³ See Gray's shrewd comments in her note, *Cath Maige Tuired*, p. 112.

³⁴ R.J. O'Duffy, ed. and trans., *Oidhe Chloinne Tuireann: The Fate of the Children of Tuireann* (Dublin, 1901). On this text and its 'mythic' implications, see Caoimhín Breatnach, 'Oidhe Chloinne Tuireann agus *Cath Maige Tuired*; Dhá Shampla de Mhiotas Eiseamláireach', *Éigse*, 32 (2000), 35-46. As Gray points out (*Cath Maige Tuired*, p. 91), the Lug of the *Oidhe* has Manannán mac Lir as his foster father (O'Duffy, *Oidhe Chloinne Tuireann*, pp. 4-5). The latter is said in a much earlier source to have been an archetypal businessman-merchant (see below, pp. 13-4). But, as we shall see, Manannán's seeming Welsh counterpart, Manawydan fab Llŷr, in the Third Branch

foremost warriors of the ‘heroic age’ mould, fatally obliged to fetch valuable objects in order to fulfill their side of the deal struck with Lug. If, however, we take seriously earlier references to them as the main artisans of the Tuatha Dé, and the fact that the objects they obtain are to be used as weapons in Lug’s campaign against the Fomoiri, then the antagonism between the sons of Tuirenn and Lug might have a more complex subtext, having to do with the relationship between producers of goods and those eager to possess, distribute, and utilize them.³⁵

Certainly for the ancient Celts of the continent, specifically in Gaul, buying, selling, and bartering must have been important activities, if Caesar’s famous characterization of the god they revered the most has any validity: ‘Of the gods they most of all worship Mercury. He has the largest number of images, and they regard him as the inventor of all the arts, as their guide on the roads and in travel, and *as chiefly influential in making money and in trade (mercaturasque habere)*’.³⁶ Let us note in regard again to this classical observation (or projection?) of mercantilism that Caesar’s profile of this Gaulish god fits the Roman Mercury and even the Greek Hermes quite well,³⁷ except that Greek and Roman authors would never have described these gods as their most highly cherished, despite the centrality of profit-seeking to both Greek and Roman imperial enterprises. So either Caesar or his source is telling the truth as he understood it, or he is engaged in a very complicated game of depicting Gauls as what Romans or Greeks are really like, something I would consider unlikely.

Also relevant here is the fact that many years before Caesar’s conquest of Gaul, trade radiated in all directions from the Greco-Gaulish community of Massalia (modern Marseille).³⁸ And some generations after Caesar’s conquest, the city of Lugudunum (modern Lyons) became, in the words of the economic historian M.I. Rostovtzeff, ‘not only the great clearing-house for

of the Mabinogi, not only works as a tradesman but at one point in the story sows wheat (purchased with the proceeds of his plying his craft) and then strives to protect his crop from the ravages of mice. Perhaps adding to this curious nexus in these traditions between agriculture and the manufacture or selling of goods is the possibility that the name of Lug’s (perhaps originally artisanal) victims in the *Oidhe*, Tuirenn, is a word meaning ‘wheat’ (Royal Irish Academy *Dictionary*, s.v. 1 *tuirenn*).

³⁵ T.F. O’Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), pp. 308-17; Gray, ‘Cath Maige Tuired’, pp. 28-9. Tellingly, in an episode of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi in which a craftsman produces goods for his (aristocratic) client (that is, when Gwydion and Lleu, after having disguised themselves, make shoes for Aranrhod), the relationship between the producer and the consumer appears fraught with tension, dissatisfaction, and even deception (Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 79-80). A rare glimpse of the actual business practices of craftsmen in early medieval Ireland is given in Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, ‘A Legal Perspective on the Saer and Workshop Practice in Pre-Norman Ireland’, in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. Rachel Moss (Dublin, 2007), pp. 110-25.

³⁶ *De Bello Gallico*, 6.17, trans. J.J. Tierney, ‘The Celtic Ethnography of Posidonius’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 60 C (1959/1960), 189-275 (p. 272), *my italics*.

³⁷ See Bernhard Maier, ‘Is Lug to Be Identified with Mercury (*Bell. Gall.* VI 17, 1)? New Suggestions on an Old Problem’, *Ériu*, 47 (1996), 127-35 (p. 132). ‘Brought to the quays of Rome by the Greek merchants, Hercules was not for them [that is, the Romans] the god of commerce, but rather of the energy demanded by their calling. The pure business technician is Mercury, who remained firmly attached to the kind of activity implied in his name. It is not possible to determine where he came from. . . . Directly or indirectly . . . the Greek Hermes stands behind Mercury, and this was clearly understood by the Romans. . . . But for a long time the Hermes whom he represented was, strictly, only the patron *negotiorum omnium* . . .’, Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, trans. Philip Krapp, 2 vols (Chicago, IL, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 439-40.

³⁸ On the history of Massalia as a place of exchange between Celtic and classical civilizations, see Philip Freeman, *The Philosopher and the Druids: A Journey Among the Ancient Celts* (New York, 2006), pp. 78-91.

the commerce in corn, wine, oil, and lumber; she was also one of the largest centres in the Empire for the manufacture and distribution of most of the articles consumed by Gaul, Germany, and Britain'.³⁹ (This *Lugus* after whom Lyon may be named may in fact be the continental counterpart to Irish *Lug* and Welsh *Lleu*, both of whom we have seen displaying mercantile traits in medieval tradition.)⁴⁰

As for the insular as opposed to the continental Celtic peoples of antiquity, it is not necessary to go so far as to envision the sea around Britain and Ireland perennially swarming with what the archaeologist V. Gordon Childe once famously called 'Neolithic Argonauts' and their descendants.⁴¹ Nor should we accept the recently promulgated hypothesis of Celtic languages having developed along the Atlantic as a result of intercultural osmosis, supported by trade and other forms of contact.⁴² Nevertheless, the evidence is there for the existence of a fluctuating network of mercantile connections operating in Northwest Europe well before the advent of the Romans. Nora Chadwick herself pointed out in a later work: '... The 'celticization' of the west does not need the mechanisms of invasion or migration, beloved of nineteenth-century archaeologists, to explain it: the processes of cultural interaction accompanying the imperative of trade were far more subtle'.⁴³ Jonathan Wooding, writing on Irish and British seaways in the Christian period, has laid to rest an earlier thesis of the existence of a busy wine trade with the continent operating on behalf of thirsty, prestige-hungry, and/or eucharistically-minded Irish customers, but this course correction leaves intact the evidence for persistent if sporadic mercantile links at least between Ireland and Britain in the pre-Viking period.⁴⁴ It is at this stage fitting to observe that with the coming of Christianity to these islands, we witness a new *intellectual* trade route established by a religion whose worldview for all its otherworldliness is grounded in commercial notions such as purchasing and redeeming.⁴⁵ In the

³⁹ *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., ed. P.M. Fraser, 2 vols (Oxford, 1957), vol. 1, p. 166.

⁴⁰ Pace Maier, 'Is *Lug* to Be Identified with Mercury?', pp. 128-31.

⁴¹ For a survey of the contributions of Childe, his predecessors, and his successors (including E.G. Bowen) to the study of cultural and economic contacts along the Atlantic seaways and across the British 'Mediterranean' between Ireland and Britain, see Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples 8000 BC-AD 1500* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 16-8.

⁴² A forceful critique of this highly dubious theory (that is, of Proto-Celtic having come into being as an Atlantic-seaboard *lingua franca*) is presented in G.R. Isaac, 'The Nature and Origins of the Celtic Languages: Atlantic Seaways, Italo-Celtic and Other Paralinguistic Misapprehensions', *Studia Celtica*, 38 (2004), 49-58 (pp. 49-54). 'There are still further possibilities: it is also plausible that such a network of material and cultural exchange could have been maintained simply by the extensive use of interpreters. Indeed, one might even speculate that a specific guild or secret sect of interpreters may have had powerful control of the trade relations' (p. 50).

⁴³ *The Celts* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 28.

⁴⁴ *Communication and Commerce along the Western Seaways AD 400-800*, British Archaeological Reports (BAR), International Series, 654 (Oxford, 1996), pp. 31-4. On the possible extent and volume of trade between pre-Christian Ireland and Roman Britain, see Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 153-8.

⁴⁵ Among the many relevant scriptural passages one could cite in this connection is the famous parable of the pearl of great price, in which the Christian is compared to a merchant (Vulgate: *Iterum simile est regnum caelorum homini negotiatori, quærenti bonas margaritas. Inventa autem una pretiosa margarita, abiit, et vendidit omnia quæ habuit, et emit eam*, Matthew 13, 45-6). Attempting to explain Boethius's use of a word fraught with mercantile significance in the *Consolatio* to describe the winning of divine favor through prayer, Christine

literary tradition that grows in the wake of the coming of Christianity, the native Irish vocabulary of trade (such as the word *cennach*) readily adapts to religious use. As the early Irish poet Blathmac put it: ‘His [Judas’s] *cennach* was unfortunate, for the act of his evil tongue was unlucky; no good came of the silver that he had contracted for against the fair body of Christ’.⁴⁶ Elsewhere in Blathmac’s oeuvre, Jesus himself comes across as a generous lord with international purchasing power: ‘I bitterly lament Christ being crucified (his wretchedness was greater than that of any noble captive), on account of the excellent manner in which he distributes wealth, silver and exotic merchandise [*críthchaini*]’.⁴⁷ James Carney, the editor of Blathmac’s oeuvre, found a kindred mercantile spirit in one of the Old Irish ‘accentual poems’ he analyzed, describing the first-person speaker thus: ‘The traveller envisaged is at first sight neither a chieftain nor a religious: he is more like a travelling merchant. He prays to be well received by all, to incur no man’s venom, and to come home safely. He hopes that he will not over-spend, and will make a profit. The ‘commercial’ vocabulary is not inconsiderable for the length of the poem: *caingen, torbach, ad-ren, meth*. But on the whole it seems probable that the *persona* of the poem is a humble priest engaged in the dangerous business of ‘purchasing’ souls’.⁴⁸

The evidence from the law tracts as to the importance of trade and merchants in pre-Norman Ireland is open to differing interpretations. On the one hand, we have Fergus Kelly’s summation of the evidence (in a survey focused on the early Irish law tracts and the world they reflect): ‘There must have been trading settlements on the coasts, particularly in the South and the East. The wisdom text *Tecosca Cormaic* includes “ships putting into port” as one of the signs of a good king. Their cargo would have included wine, fine cloth, and various other luxury items. There is also evidence of the import of British horses. Little is known about exports from Ireland at the time of the law-texts. Writing in the 12th century, Giraldus Cambrensis refers to the export of the hides of wild and domestic animals, and this trade may also have been carried on in earlier times. A legal glossator refers to cargoes of furs and hides. It is indicative of a relatively low level of trading that the trader (*cennaige*) is neither included in the extensive list of professions in *Uraicecht Becc* or *Bretha Nemed toísech* nor mentioned elsewhere in the Old Irish law-texts’.⁴⁹ Elsewhere, in a law-tract-based survey of the economic fundamentals of life in early medieval Ireland, Kelly observes: ‘It is probable that certain professionals could also attain

Mohrmann comments: ‘*Commercium* is used in Late Latin for any exchange of goods, and especially for exchange of gifts, particularly New Year’s gifts. In early Christian and in liturgical Latin this colloquial term has become a keyword of Christological theology’ (‘Some Remarks on the Language of Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*’, in *Latin Script and Letters A.D. 400-900: Festschrift Presented to Ludwig Bieler on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. J.J. O’Meara and Bernd Naumann (Leiden, 1976), pp. 54-61 (p. 57)).

⁴⁶ *Ba dothcedach a chennach / ar imbeirt a drochthengad; / ní robae moín di argut / ru-llá i Crist caincharput*. The rendering of the first line (*Ba dothcedach a chennach*) is mine; the rest of the translation is from James Carney, ed. and trans., *The Poems of Blathmac, Son of Cú Brettan*, Irish Texts Society, 47 (London and Dublin, 1964), pp. 38-9.

⁴⁷ *Monuar dam-sa Críst i croich / ba móo a liach cech soerthroich, / ar feib fon-dáili maini / argat ocus críthchaini* (Carney, *The Poems of Blathmac*, pp. 40-1). ‘Exotic merchandise’ is perhaps far-fetched, but *críth*, the verbal noun of *crenaid* ‘buys’, certainly refers to the purchase of goods. What it refers to in the title of one of the most famous of the Old Irish law tracts, *Críth Gablach*, has not been ascertained (D.A. Binchy, ed., *Críth Gablach*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series, 11 (Dublin, 1941), pp. xvii-xviii).

⁴⁸ ‘Three Old Irish Accentual Poems’, *Ériu*, 22 (1971), 23-80 (p. 26).

⁴⁹ *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Early Irish Law Series, 3 (Dublin, 1988), p. 7.

wealth and status without owning land, though as we have seen above . . . the assumption in legal commentary is clearly that a successful poet, smith, builder, or lawyer is likely to put his profits into land-purchase. One could imagine that there were nonetheless many landless craftsmen in monastic settlements who made an adequate living by manufacturing articles for their clerical patrons. The merchant (*cennaige*) could also become rich without owning land, though it must be admitted that this profession does not feature prominently in the written sources'.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the historian Charles Doherty in his ground-breaking article on 'Exchange and Trade in Early Medieval Ireland' concludes, concerning the attestations of words such as *cennaige* (in Irish sources) and *negotiator* (in Irish Latin texts): 'The terminology of economics is highly developed [in early medieval Ireland]. The concepts of contract and profit are well established both in the law tracts and in the literature'.⁵¹

With the coming of the Vikings (of whose entrepreneurship historians have come to have a greater appreciation) and the Vikings' settlements in Britain, Ireland, and the continent, the Irish and the Welsh were plugged into an ever larger trade picture, with coinage coming into play, as well as the rise of trade centres and other economic developments. Gold shillings (the term *scildei* is borrowed from Old English or Old Norse) make their début on the Irish literary scene in *Cath Maige Tuired*⁵² – a text already mentioned above. The Dagda, a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann (magical primeval settlers of Ireland), is being harshly exploited by the unjust king Bres and daily compelled by the satirist Cridenbél to surrender the three choicest bits of his *cuil* 'portion' (of allotted food). He follows the advice of the Mac Óc, also known as Óengus, the son of the Dagda. Producing three gold coins (*scildei*, *scillice*) out of his purse, the Mac Óc tells the Dagda to implant them in the food he is supposed to surrender. The satirist is killed by the coins he unwittingly ingests. When Bres accuses the Dagda of having used poison on the satirist, an autopsy reveals that the latter was in fact telling the truth in claiming that he was just giving Cridenbél 'the best' of what he had, that is, the three gold coins. And so the king is not only gravely embarrassed, but his kingship moves ominously close to the brink of collapse. If the Fomoiri, Bres's patrilineal kin, reflect the Vikings (as some scholars have suggested)⁵³ as well as pre-Christian demonic beings, then this story can be read as showing how quickly and deviously the Irish could subvert economic imports and use them against their importers – as well as against each other: the satirist, we learn from other texts, was a member of the Tuatha Dé Danann himself.⁵⁴

The final major historical event to have impact both on mercantile activities in Ireland

⁵⁰ *Early Irish Farming: A Study Based Mainly on the Law-Texts of the 7th and 8th Centuries AD*, Early Irish Law Series, 4 (Dublin, 1998), pp. 424-5.

⁵¹ 'Exchange and Trade in Early Medieval Ireland', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 110 (1980), 67-89 (p. 80).

⁵² Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 28, 30, 83-4 (note). 'The loanwords for coins may modernize an older tradition in which the gold was simply in nugget form' (p. 84).

⁵³ See, for example, John Carey, 'Myth and Mythography in *Cath Maige Tuired*', *Studia Celtica*, 24/25 (1989/90), 53-69 (pp. 58-61).

⁵⁴ Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, p. 120, s.v. *Cridenbél*. On comparisons invidious and otherwise between the Irish and the Vikings in medieval Irish literature, see Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Friend and Foe: Vikings in Ninth- and Tenth-Century Irish Literature', in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, ed. H.B. Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, and Ragnall Ó Floinn (Dublin, 1998), pp. 381-402.

and Wales and on the outlook reflected in literature sustaining the ‘heroic milieu’ described by the Chadwicks is the encroachment of the Anglo-Normans, starting in the latter half of the eleventh century. The Welsh March soon established itself as a zone of production and trade, as the remarkably anachronistic episodes in the Third Branch of the Mabinogi featuring Manawydan and Pryderi’s artisanal adventures in Herefordshire reflect.⁵⁵ As for the Norman impact on the infrastructure of trade in Ireland, I quote from an archaeologist’s assessment of the ‘maritime cultural landscape’ of later medieval Ireland: ‘In order to put the Gaelic regions into their historical context it is necessary to first look at the maritime zone in the English controlled areas. A structured socio-economic and political coastal bureaucracy had been put in place by the sixteenth century along the eastern and southern coastline of Ireland. This system was based on a hierarchical port structure incorporating both the hinterland and foreland of each individual port and controlled centrally by the English crown and its agents in Ireland. Individual merchants within each port played a pivotal role in their development and commercial success. The origins of this system can be traced back to the initial Anglo-Norman invasion of the country and their selection of a series of harbours and landing places which were suitable for development as ports and centres of economic activity. Selection was based in some cases on existing historical sites such as the Viking coastal towns. . . . Individual adventurers and entrepreneurs were highly influential in initial site selection and their investment and subsequent involvement with port towns was a major contributing factor to their success’.⁵⁶

Hence the Anglo-Normans added what is in our survey only the latest, most systematic, and perhaps most ‘cosmopolitan’ layer to the complex historical picture of merchants and mercantile activity that emerges in a survey of Ireland and Britain over more than two millennia. It is conceivable that insular Celtic *literati* would have ignored this important sphere of economic and cultural life, but I deem it unlikely that commerce and its practitioners would have remained unaccounted for in the works those *literati* produced, or in the narrative traditions upon which they relied for much of their material. And so I propose that the mercantile model generated several ‘merchants of myth’ characters in the body of medieval story, both contrasting and intersecting with other productive social models also operating in the narrative realm.

In fact, we have a surviving medieval Irish text in which two such figures are specifically designated as *cennaigi* ‘merchants’: the ninth-century compendium *Sanas Cormaic*, usually referred to as Cormac’s Glossary. Dr. Paul Russell of ASNC has translated the more famous of the two relevant entries as follows: ‘Manannán mac Lir, he was a wonderful merchant (*cendaige*) in the Isle of Man. He was the best helmsman in the western world. He would know through his knowledge of the weather, i.e. by examining the aspect of the sky, i.e. of the atmosphere, how long the good weather and the bad weather would last and when each one of the periods would change. As a result the Irish and the Britons called him a god of the sea, and so said that he was

⁵⁵ It is also, observes Jon Kenneth Walker, a zone of cultural and economic contention: ‘Manawydan’s synchronic gesture, then, is to indicate that Wales, for all its proud mythology and supposed otherness, is well able not only to operate in but also to succeed in a transnational medieval market economy’ (‘Sleeping with an Elephant: Wales and England in the *Mabinogion*’, in *Cultural Diversity in the British Middle Ages: Archipelago, Island, England*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York, 2008), pp. 173-89 (p. 186).

⁵⁶ Colin Breen, ‘The Maritime Cultural Landscape in Medieval Gaelic Ireland’, in *Gaelic Ireland c. 1250-c. 1650*, ed. P.J. Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth FitzPatrick (Dublin, 2001), pp. 418-35 (p. 419).

the son of the sea, i.e. mac Lir. From the name of the Isle of Man he was called Manannán'.⁵⁷

While it is true that there is no easy way to derive the Irish name *Manannán* and the Welsh *Manawydan* from a common ancestral form, they are in fact both said to be 'sons of Sea' (*mac Lir*, *mab Llŷr*), and the profile of Manannán given in Cormac's Glossary accords well with the unwarlike but decidedly enterprising 'businessman' that Manawydan proves to be in the Third Branch of the Mabinogi. For his familiarity with crafts; his intuitive sense of when to act and when to withdraw; the willingness he displays in putting aside the aristocratic life of leisure and going to work; the ease with which he shifts from manufacturing to farming; and the quiet single-mindedness with which he seeks to rescue his wife Rhiannon and his friend Pryderi (a 'heroic' rather than a 'selfish' goal, we should note) – for all these qualities, Manwydan has been dubbed by one critic the prototype for the 'New Man' emerging out of the world of the Mabinogi,⁵⁸ and described by another as an innovator who implicitly presents both a contrast to and a critique of what we might call the more conventional 'heroic age' characters in the Four Branches.⁵⁹ Manawydan, however, is also a traditional 'merchant of myth', like his Irish cousin Manannán, uninhibited by boundaries and social distinctions, and undaunted by the ambiguities of what they do. Moreover, the freedom of movement and ability to multi-task these industrious characters exemplify are as essential to the well-being of their respective societies as Lug's being *samildánach* is to the military and cultural victory of the Tuatha Dé in *Cath Maige Tuired*.⁶⁰

In bringing this paper to a close, I would like to return to the famous quatrain with which I began, supposedly said by Gráinne to her husband Finn, who, if he ever occupied a place in her

⁵⁷ 'Poets, Powers and Possessions in Medieval Ireland: Some Stories from *Sanas Cormaic*', in *Law, Literature and Society: Celtic Studies Association of North America Yearbook 7*, ed. J.F. Eska (Dublin, 2008), pp. 9-45 (p. 37). The sentence in which the author euhemeristically claims that this maritime trader enjoyed the (posthumous) status of a native god is in Latin. (The language switch here constitutes a 'distancing technique', expressing 'a note of scepticism', p. 19). Russell comments: 'An important aspect of the perception of successful merchants as quasi-divine is that they can control the weather and tides and so succeed in those liminal areas of the world where strange things can happen' (p. 27). On the history of Manannán as a recurring figure in both medieval and modern Irish literature, see C.W. MacQuarrie, *The Biography of the Irish God of the Sea from the Voyage of Bran (700 A.D.) to Finnegans Wake (1939): The Waves of Manannán* (Lewiston, NY, 2004). The story of the other merchant mentioned in Cormac's Glossary – Breacán, 'a famous merchant of the Uí Néill' who along with the crews of his 'fifty currachs trading between Ireland and Scotland' perished famously in a whirlpool – is translated in Russell, 'Poets, Powers and Possessions', pp. 33-4.

⁵⁸ Andrew Welsh, 'Manawydan fab Llŷr: Wales, England, and the "New Man"', in *The Mabinogi: A Book of Essays*, ed. C.W. Sullivan III (New York, 1996), pp. 121-41 (originally published in *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings of the Second North American Conference of Celtic Studies held in Halifax, August 16-19, 1989*, ed. C.J. Byrne, Margaret Harry and Pádraig Ó Siadhail (Halifax, 1992), pp. 369-82).

⁵⁹ Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff, 1992), p. 48.

⁶⁰ To be sure, that there is something 'old' as well as perhaps something 'new' in the character of Manawydan is enthusiastically acknowledged by Welsh, who characterizes the matter of this Branch as 'a story of something gone badly wrong, or a journey for a remedy, of finding instead a new way of seeing things—which, it turns out, is the remedy. It is an old, traditional story' (Welsh, 'Manawydan fab Llŷr', p. 137). Perhaps the most astute and to-the-point description any reader of this text has devised for Manawydan is Catherine McKenna's 'wily negotiator', especially if we consider the original (classical and medieval) meaning of Latin *negotiator* ('Learning Lordship: The Education of Manawydan', in *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, ed. John Carey, J.T. Koch, and P.-Y. Lambert (Andover, MA, 1999), pp. 101-20 (p. 117)).

heart, has by now been displaced by (we assume) the darling of the *flan*, Diarmait: ‘There is one on whom I should gladly gaze, to whom I would give the bright world, all of it, all of it, though it be an unequal bargain’. The poetic first-person voice envisions a lopsided exchange, which in the last line is designated by a word of both legal and commercial significance: this is *díupart*, which could be translated into English as ‘fraud’ or ‘scam’.⁶¹ As noted above, it clearly echoes and forms a pair with *díuderc* ‘gazing’, that for which the lover would happily give all in exchange. This would seem from a practical point of view to be a case of giving away everything for virtually nothing, for to see something is hardly to possess it. Citing a parallel instance, Murphy observes that in a legal text ‘Adam’s loss of the world for an apple’ is similarly designated a *díupart*.⁶² I would propose, however, that the one who is really being cheated in the context of the poem is not the lover, who, fully realizing what she is doing, would sacrifice everything to see the beloved. Let us remember that the poem is supposedly addressed to Finn, the husband who has, we presume, been cuckolded (or would be, if Gráinne had her way), and who thus would be the unwittingly defrauded spouse. The unseen lover of Gráinne, meanwhile, is engaged, complicitly or innocently, in a long-distance act of thievery. That purchase, theft, and forfeit are concepts relevant to the situation the poem presents is not surprising, given the vocabulary of the marriage contract in medieval Irish legal literature. As Fergus Kelly has pointed out, verbs of buying and selling underlie the descriptions of the process called *creic cétmuintire*, literally ‘the buying of a wife’, predicated on the payment of *tinnsra* and/or *tochra* (verbal nouns based on compounds of *crenaid* ‘buy’).⁶³ And while merchants are not the ones who sell wives – families do – another notable woman scholar of Celtic literature of an earlier generation, Gertrude Schoepperle (later Loomis), brought to our attention that merchants or those in the guise of merchants, as featured in the French and German multiforms of the Tristan legend and perhaps in their Celtic prototypes, tend to steal other people’s daughters and wives.⁶⁴ The point was also made almost twenty-five hundred years ago by Herodotus in his history of the contentious relations between Asia and Europe.⁶⁵

The outcome of the explosive threat of *díupart* embedded in Gráinne’s poem is unclear: who will be defrauded in the bargain, the husband, the wife, or both? In the early text, ‘Finn and Gráinne’, there is in fact not even any mention of a lover to whom Gráinne is attracted, a figure who could predictably complicate the relationship between Finn and his wife, not to mention the relationship between himself and Finn. Gráinne, according to this Middle Irish text, grows literally sick of Finn as her husband, and he simply and sensibly lets her go.⁶⁶ The famous

⁶¹ It is the verbal noun of *do-opir* (**di-uss-beir*) ‘takes away, deprives, defrauds’ (Royal Irish Academy *Dictionary*, s.v. *díupart*, *do-opir*). ‘If a contract contains a fault which could not reasonably have been detected or predicted by the disadvantaged party, it is a case of *díupart* ‘over-reaching’. The contract can then be rescinded or adjusted. . . . In non-legal material. . . *díupart* is used for an overreaching with or without the knowledge of the disadvantaged party’. (Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 160).

⁶² *Early Irish Lyrics*, p. 263, s.v. *díupart*. Murphy also points out here that the word can also refer to the waning (‘deprivation’) of the moon.

⁶³ *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 72.

⁶⁴ *Tristan and Isolt: A Study of the Sources of the Romance*, 2 vols (London, 1913), vol. 1, pp. 188-94, 197.

⁶⁵ A.L. Purvis, trans., *The Landmark Herodotus: the Histories*, ed. R.B. Strassler (New York, 2007), pp. 4-5 (*Histories*, 1.1-4).

⁶⁶ Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., ‘Finn and Gráinne’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 458-61.

medieval Fenian omnibus *Acallam na Senórach* (Dialogue of the Old Ones) acknowledges Diarmait's death as the result of a tragic boar hunt but nowhere mentions Gráinne by name or the machinations of the jealous Finn that lead to the hunt and Diarmait's demise in the well-known, 'traditional' telling of the story.⁶⁷ Is this an omission resulting from the *Acallam* composer's wish to avoid mention of any scandal in the *fian*, or evidence for an alternative strand of the tradition, according to which the connection between Diarmait and Gráinne never existed or did not end in tragedy and destruction? Even in the surviving versions of the 'classic' telling of the tale, the Early Modern Irish *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne), apart from the death of Gráinne's lover Diarmait at the hands of a treacherous Finn, there is precious little agreement as to just what happened after the 'end of the affair'.⁶⁸ In earlier Fenian literature, the story of the *gilla* Derg Corra, arguably a multiform of the figure of Diarmait, features a member of the *fian* who is even more reluctant than Diarmait to engage in sexual relations with Finn's seductive consort. Nevertheless, after becoming the victim of false accusation, Derg Corra is forced into exile and pursued by the vengeful Finn, who finds and recognizes him in a tree – the same arboreal environment where in the *Tóruigheacht* Finn climactically comes across Diarmait (and Gráinne).⁶⁹ Remarkably, the story of Derg Corra ends at this moment of revelation, even more abruptly and inconclusively than the *Tóruigheacht*, without the reader being given any indication as to whether Finn and Derg Corra are reconciled, or what happens to the faithless consort. Clearly, the complexities of trade and exchange, and those resulting from the violation of expectations – in effect, the *díupart* in which our 'merchants of myth' can be said to specialize – permeate life as lived in stories of the 'heroic age', even extending into spheres as intimate as the domestic and the marital.

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⁶⁷ Ed. Whitley Stokes in *Irische Texte*, 4th ser., vol. 1, ed. W. Stokes and E. Windisch (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 43, 191.

⁶⁸ Says Nessa Ní Shéaghdha, the editor of the text (*Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne: The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*, Irish Texts Society, 48 (London and Dublin, 1967)): 'The question arises as to which of these five endings is the original one. . . . It is difficult to believe that the original ending of the *Tóruigheacht* was as indefinite as it is in the popular manuscript version [featured in this edition]. Gráinne undoubtedly had a purpose in sending for the children of Diarmaid; this is explained in the last incident at the end of the present text where, at their return, Gráinne exhorts them to avenge their father's death. The Early Modern poem on the daughter of Diarmaid [Eoin MacNeill, ed. and trans., *Duanaire Finn: Book of the Lays of Fionn*, vol. 1, Irish Texts Society, 7 (London and Dublin, 1908), pp. 45-7] . . . throws light on this matter of revenge. It tells of a fierce war between Diarmaid's children and Finn, the result of which was that Diarmaid's daughter, Éachtach, was killed and Finn badly injured. This is undoubtedly a more fitting ending to the tale and may perhaps have been the original ending of *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*' (p. xviii).

⁶⁹ Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', *Revue celtique*, 25 (1904), 344-9 (see also E.J. Gwynn, 'Varia III.3. Fionn and the Man in the Tree', *Ériu*, 1 (1904), 152-3); Ní Shéaghdha, *Tóruigheacht*, p. 70 (in an earlier episode, Diarmait and Gráinne take refuge in a grove (*doire*), which Diarmait seemingly fashions into a treehouse (p. 16)).

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