

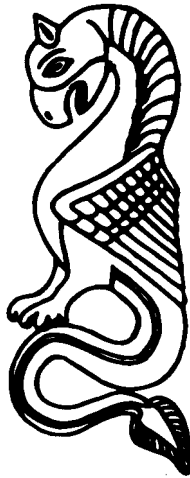
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learning, and his inability to take any account of arguments in *The Origins* is unfortunate. He cannot defend himself on the recentness of its appearance. The case was put in the reviewer's *Medieval Welsh Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), a book that Professor Sims-Williams appears quite unaware of.

Many readers will, therefore, find *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* a curious work. They will think of its author, as Lord Macaulay said of Horace Walpole, that what is great seems to him little, and what is little seems to him great. Throughout the study one encounters, not errors of fact, but errors of judgement, so that readers by the end will feel that they have gone through a gallery of distorting mirrors, which confuse and baffle the visitor. Here are a few instances. *Ynys Wair* (p. 66) is not Lundy or Wight and has nothing to do with *gwair* 'hay'. It is Orkney, by the great bend (*Gwair*) of Duncansby Head. It is inappropriate (p. 119) to spot an allusion to the Song of Songs in words of Branwen, whose story is singularly devoid of scriptural and clerical traits, as one would expect of a tale authored by a layperson. It is a mistake to regard Glewlwyd's boast of being in 'Caer Se and Asse, in Sach and Salach, in Lotor and Fotor' (p. 136) as 'high-sounding' nonsense, when it instead presents corrupt allusions to Syracuse, Arachosia (in Afghanistan), and the river Ottorogora (in south-east Asia). These names appear together in Orosius's *History*, which was a source for *Culhwch and Olwen* (a narrative that does have clerical symptoms, as the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* do not). The date 'tenth-century(?)' for the poem *Armes Prydein* 'Prophecy of Britain' (p. 160) is vague. Professor David Dumville and the reviewer have both published papers allowing a dating to 940, in the immediate aftermath of Wessex's capitulation that year at Leicester to the Vikings. There is no basis whatever (p. 286) to link the tale of Branwen, which is quite secular in its ethos and allusions, with an author amongst the Celtic monks of Ferns in Ireland or Clynog Fawr in Gwynedd.

Despite its ambitious scope and the privileged aegis of a major learned press, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* will not enjoy assiduous use. As the years pass, it will instead become a seldom-visited monument on the highway of learning. Life will be found in other places, particularly where investigators discuss that question to which Professor Sims-Williams gives the minimum possible attention, as to whether the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* are, or are not, the work of a female member, active in the earlier twelfth century, of the royal house of Gwynedd.

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Constructing Nations, Reconstructing Myth: Essays in Honour of T.A. Shippey. Edited by Andrew Wawn, with Graham Johnson and John Walter. Making the Middle Ages, 9. Turnhout: Brepols, 2007. 382 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-52393-4. €70.00

This welcome book honours Tom Shippey by presenting a series of investigations into topics close to his scholarly heart. A visual clue to these interests is provided by the fact that the image on the front cover of the Festschrift is not of Shippey himself, but of the Grimm brothers. After reading the warm words of Wawn's introduction, we find that the work consists of sixteen contributions, divided into three sections: 'Nations and Nationalism', 'Philology and Philologists' and 'Myths and Mythology', with Shippey's academic bibliography rounding the work off. The book proper begins (as so much else did) with Ossian. But the citation-heavy

apologia for MacPherson found here adds little new. This is followed by Martin Arnold's intriguing chapter which tells the story of north European Romanticism, and especially the question of Dano-German relations, via the prism of portrayals of Thor in the works of Klopstock, Ewald, Grundtvig, Grimm and Uhland. Arnold underlines the presence of political attitudes and arguments within the poetry and philology, most notably the whole Schleswig- (or Slesvig-) Holstein question. John Hill's contribution discusses the ways nineteenth-century editions and translations of *Beowulf* from Kemble to William Morris also presented views on the supposed identity (Scandinavian, Anglian or Teutonic) of the poem and on the Christianity (or lack thereof) of its author. Keith Battarbee provides a solid account of the rise of Finnish from peasant tongue to *Kultursprache* that draws freely on the work of Kaisa Häkkinen. In the course of his chapter Battarbee makes the useful distinction between Jacob Grimm's reconstruction of Germanic mythology and Lönnrot's reworking of Finnish mythology. This opening section on nations and nationalism is rounded off by Hans Frede Nielsen's sceptical discussion of the supposedly close relationship between Jutlandic and English. His brief account is perhaps the seed from which a more substantial account could emerge on this important question, which would, as he suggests, involve viewing Jutlandic and English in a much wider perspective, and which would emphasize linguistic data primarily rather than the research history of the topic.

The section on 'Philology and Philologists' opens with Terry Gunnell asking 'How Elvish were the *Álfar*?', and answering 'not very'. Although Gunnell criticizes the Grimms for their excessively coherent and variation-poor account of Germanic mythology, he notes that they 'were also the founding father of modern folkloristics, in which ... the concept of local variation is fundamental ... Jacob Grimm may have led us up the wrong road, [but] he and his brother also unconsciously [via their collections of local and comparative source material] provided us with the map and the methodology to get back on the right track'. Robert Fulk, one of the team who produced the revised fourth edition of Klaeber's *Beowulf*, provides a fascinating and at times quite detailed account of Klaeber's editorial practice, which concludes with a statement of the principles which his team's edition goes by. Andrew Breeze gives an account of the history of research into the *Mabinogion*, in which he shows that 'sub-Grimmian attitudes' survive to this day. Rory McTurk reprints Samuel Ferguson's 1833 version of the *Krákumál*, together with his own stricter translation, by way of investigating the reception of Norse mythology. Keith Busby, Andrew Wawn and Jonathan Evans provide the last three chapters in this section, which focus on three philological and folkloristic researchers, Roquefort, Baring-Gould and Tolkien, and their relation to Grimm. These researchers and relations are highly varied. While Busby's account of the Grimm-Roquefort correspondence casts the latter as (to quote from Busby's title) 'a bit of a lad', Andrew Wawn's sympathetic and persuasive vindication of Sabine Baring Gould, on the other hand, casts him as 'the most influential provincial English Grimmian of his generation'. Evans's long, learned but rather inconsequential discussion of Tolkien's use of 'ent' and of what it might echo concludes this section.

The third and final section, on 'Myths and Mythology', opens with perhaps the most original of the chapters here, that of Peter Orton, who applies cognitive metaphor theory to the Old Norse concept of poetic mead. Orton seems to hold much greater scepticism about the value of Grimm's ideas and practice than many of the other contributors, commenting that the imaginative power released by Grimm's piling up of comparisons (and the connections back in time which they imply) can also make 'us forget how little comparativism really reveals', in

Reviews

this case about the origins of the Old Norse myth of the poetic mead. Joyce Tally Lionarons then provides a discussion of Old Norse narratives where both weaving and witchcraft occur, which is followed by Paul Battles' chapter, which begins as an exploration of the meaning of 'Middle Earth' and its cognates in Old English verse, in the *Edda* and Tolkien, before morphing into a comparison of Tolkien and John Milton.

David Elton Gay, in the final chapter of the book, provides us with an exposé of the Grimmian assumptions underlying the work of the twentieth-century students of Estonian mythology Mattias Eisen, Oskar Loorits and Ivar Paulson. In particular, Gay reveals how their ignoring of or hostility to the Christian aspects of the nineteenth and twentieth century folklore records they built their reconstructions from led to serious distortions in their work.

Overall, Andrew Wawn and his helpers should be commended for producing a Festschrift that possesses a unity found in few works of this type, and which also contains much which relates to the work of the book's honorand.

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