Brendaniana, etc.

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Renewed interest in the early medieval Latin tale about St. Brendan the seafa-rer, *Nauigatio St. Brendani Abbatis* (NSB), composed probably around 800 in the Franconian empire, has led to the publication of a number of general and specialised studies on this subject in the past years. Interest in NSB goes far beyond the small circles of Latin and Irish medievalists. The modern success of the tale may lie in its interweaving of a straightforwardly told, but immedi-ately appealing narrative about the search for an ungraspable looking goal that is nevertheless attained by determination and belief, of adventurous episodes that nourish the readers imagination, and of a subtext that combines elements of a quite remarkably broad range of literary traditions with a monastic re-form programme. Still, a publicly available new complete edition of the tale that would supplant Carl Selmer's unsatisfactory text of 1959 is still wanting, even though two editions, one by Giovanni Orlandi, the other by Michaela and Klaus Zelzer, have been in preparation for many years and have indeed been accessible at least to a small circle of scholars. In this article I want to make notice of, review and comment upon a few recent contributions, books and articles (I., II., V., VI.), besides adding a few bits of ideas concerning *Brenda-niana* myself (III., IV., VII.).

I.

Perhaps of greatest importance for scholarship in the last years was the publica-tion of a bibliography on NSB:

The Legend of St Brendan. A Critical Bibliography. By Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy 2000. Hardback. xii + 287 pp. ISBN 1 874045 86 0. € 25,39.

The bibliography falls into two parts: a list and description of 'Manuscripts, Editions and Translations' (1–103) and 'Modern Studies' (105–266). The first part contains not only a list of all manuscripts of NSB known to the editors, but also of medieval vernacular versions of the tale and of other texts featuring, mentioning or making reference to Brendan. The second part is devoted to modern scholarly works on NSB and related matters. The entries are in alphabetical order, the latest entries are from 2001, a year after the publication of the bibliography itself. The works published in the modern period are accompanied, where possible, by succinct summaries and characterisations.

In addition to the works contained in the bibliography, a few more publications merit to be mentioned, some of which appeared only after the compilation of the bibliography. Admittedly, the connection of some of the below-mentioned works with NSB is rather loose and they may have been omitted deliberately by Burgess and Strijbosch. Following the approach taken by Burgess and Strijbosch, works on other *immrama*-type tales will not be included:

Hans BIEDERMANN, *Wunderwesen, Wunderwelten, oder Die Erlebbarkeit des Irrealen*, Graz 1980. – Contains some remarks on NSB as a spiritual journey.

Helmut BIRKHAN und Helmut NEMEC, *Irland. Insel der Heiligen*, Mattersburg – Katzelsdorf: Edition Tau 1989. – Contains a few general remarks on NSB.

Meike BLACKWELL, *Ships in Early Irish History*, Whilegate: Ballinakella Press 1992. – Mentions Brendan among other early Irish seafarers.

John CAREY, 'The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition', *Éigse* 19/1 (1982), 36–43. – Against Carney's remark in his review of Selmer's edition of NSB (CARNEY 1963), Carey maintains that there were primitive Irish tales where the Otherworld was located under lakes or under mountains.

John CAREY, 'The Irish "Otherworld": Hiberno-Latin Perspectives', *Éigse* 25 (1991), 154–159. – Does not mention NSB, but has some bearing on the view of the Otherworld in early medieval Ireland.

David N. DUMVILLE, 'The North Atlantic Monastic Thalassocracy: Sailing to the Desert in Early Insular Monastic Spirituality', in: *The Papar in the North Atlantic*. Ed. B.E. Crawford, St. Andrews: St John's House Publications 2002, 121–131.

Gillian FELLOWS-JENSEN, 'Language contact in Iceland: the evidence of names', in: *Language Contact across the North Atlantic. Proceedings of the Work-*

ing Group held at University College, Galway (Ireland), August 29 – September 3, 1992 and the University of Göteborg (Sweden), August 16–21, 1993. Edited by P. Sture Ureland and Iain Clarkson [= Linguistische Arbeiten 359], Tübingen: Niemeyer 1996, 115–124. – Does not mention NSB, but discusses possible early contacts between Irish monks and Vikings on the Faroes and in Iceland.

Heike LEPUSCHITZ, *Jenseitsvorstellungen in Des Heiligen Abtes Brandani Historia vnd Schiffart in dass Paradiß und ausgewählten Texten der Navigatio-Tradition*, unpubl. master thesis, Universität Graz 1993.

Proinsias MAC CANA, 'Varia III. 1. Insula Fortium: *Ynys y Kedeirn/Kedyrn*', *Ériu* 48 (1997), 273–274. – Discusses the possible connection between *Ynys y Kedeirn/Kedyrn* in the Middle Welsh tale *Branwen uerch Lyr* and the *insula uirorum fortium* in NSB.

Adolf MAHR, 'Coracles und Curachs', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 23 (1943), 39–55. – An ethnographic study of curachs and coracles that does not make mention of NSB.

G. J. MARCUS, 'Factors in Early Celtic Navigation', *Études Celtique* 6 (1952), 312–327. – Makes use of NSB and other texts of the *immrama*-genre in analysing the art of navigation in medieval Ireland.

M. SMYTH, 'The Origins of Purgatory through the Lens of Seventh-Century Irish Eschatology', *Traditio* 58 (2003), 91–132.

David STIFTER, 'Navigatio Sancti Brendani. Die Reise des Heiligen Brendan', *Brennos—Studia Celtica Austriaca* -1 (1995), 26–41. – A German translation of NSB, based on Michaela and Klaus Zelzer's provisional edition, in a journal that did not even live long enough to see its first regular volume; made accessible again, however, at: http://www.univie.ac.at/keltologie/navigatio.html.

Jürgen UHLICH, 'Einige britannische Lehnnamen im Irischen: *Brénainn* (*Brenden*), *Catháir/Catháer* und *Midir*', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 49/50 (1997), 878–897. – Argues for a British origin of the personal name *Brendan*.

Jonathan WOODING, 'Fasting, Flesh and the Body in the St Brendan Dossier', in: Celtic Hagiography and Saints' Cults. Ed. J. Cartwright, Cardiff 2003, 161–176.

Jonathan WOODING, 'The Munster Element in *Nauigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 110 (2005), 33–47. – A general survey of NSB-lore with an emphasis on the ties that relate the tale to Munster.

Michaela ZELZER, 'Die ältesten irischen Heiligenviten und die Vita (vulgo Navigatio) sancti Brendani', in: *Akten des 4. Deutschsprachigen Keltologensymposiums. Linz, Juli 2005*. Herausgegeben von Helmut Birkhan, Wien:

Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2007. – Compares the style and composition of NSB with the oldest Irish lives of saints written in the later 7th century.

Finally, the most recent publication is a collective volume of fifteen contributors, covering themes concerned with NSB as well as with vernacular versions of the tale:

Glyn S. Burgess & Clara Strijbosch (edd.), *The Brendan Legend. Texts and Versions*, Leiden – Boston: Brill 2006.

II.

Doris Edel, *The Celtic West and Europe: Studies in Celtic Literature and the Early Irish Church*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001. Hardback. 320 pp. ISBN 1 85182 269 0. € 55,-.

This volume brings together nineteen contributions, written between the early eighties and the mid-nineties by Doris Edel, former professor of Celtic languages and culture at the University of Utrecht. The book is dedicated to Maartje Draak, the author's predecessor on the chair of Celtic in Utrecht. Thirteen of the contributions, originally written in Dutch and German, appear here for the first time in an English translation by the author herself; of the six studies in English republished here, two are very difficult to obtain. The articles are grouped in eight sections, Irish themes are preponderant.[1] The selection of

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1   *Ireland and Europe*: '1. Identity and integration: Ireland in the early Middle Ages' (19–34); *People in Early Ireland*: '2. Women in Celtic culture' (35–50), '3. Common people in early Ireland' (51–63); *The Early Church and Literary Imagination*: '4. Sea-voyages and visions: the exploration of the Otherworld' (64–79), '5. Antipodes, anchors, and a world-under-the-water' (80–93), '6. The Irish background of the legend of Brendan' (94–111); *Church and Society*: '7. Usque ad ultimum terrae. The Christianization of Ireland: a learned culture between conflict and integration' (112–120), '8. The Christianization of medieval Europe: Willibrord' (121–136), '9. Church and lay society in Anglo-Saxon Britain: Northumbria and its neighbours before and after 634/35 A.D.' (137–152); *The Role of Women*: '10. Myth versus reality: Queen Medb of Connacht and her critics, ancient and modern' (153–176); *In Search of the Tradition*: '11. The insular-Celtic narrative tradition between orality and literacy' (177–196), '12. The concept of the Lord of Animals in the early epic literature of Ireland' (197–207); *Studies in the Táin Bó Cúailnge*: '13. *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and the dyna-

articles reflects the mainly literary and cultural-historical interest of the author. Occasionally, the author has added up-dates, revisions and references to more recent sholarship on the subjects in the footnotes; these are indicated by brackets {}. The author also used the opportunity of a representative collection of her works for cross-referencing between the contributions. It might have not been out of place, though, in such a collection of 'Kleine Schriften' to include a full bibliography of Doris Edel.

In line with the overall subject of this article, this book notice will concentrate on those contributions that are devoted to Irish voyage-literature and to NSB. All three relevant articles may be characterised more as general surveys of the topics, less as original studies which add something new to the discussion. As a consequence, the articles suffer from redundantl repetition.

In '4. Sea-voyages and visions: the exploration of the Otherworld' (64–79),[2] originally written for a collective volume on literary visions, Edel gives summaries of the Irish *immrama* (without NSB) and Irish visionary tales, the lost Vision of Fursa, the fragmentary Vision of Laisrén, *Fís Adamnáin* 'The Vision of Adamnán', *Visio Tnugdali* 'The Vision of Tundal' and *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* 'St. Patrick's Purgatory'. Edel makes interesting remarks about the sources on which the authors of the tales, esp. of *Fís Adamnáin*, drew. She attributes the creativeness that Irish authors exhibited in composing tales of visions of heaven and hell and the popularity which such tales enjoyed to an Irish predilection for speculative and apocryphal literature and to "image-thinking" rather than to thinking in abstract terms (66). That tales of these types flourished for a certain time in Ireland may be due to the "fruitful interaction between the Christian-Latin learning and the indigenous traditional culture" (79).

Building on a work by Maartje Draak, in '5. Antipodes, anchors, and a world-under-the-water' (80–93)[3] Edel identifies possible sources for the motif of the

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mics of the matter of Ulster' (208–215), '14. The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* between orality and literacy: prolegomena to a history of its development' (216–226), '15. Text and memory' (227–230), '16. Mental text, landscape, politics, and written codification: the Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge*' (231–238); *Wales and Arthurian Literature*: '17. The Arthur of *Culhwch ac Olwen* as a figure of epic-heroic tradition' (239–247), '18. The catalogues in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and insular-Celtic learning' (248–263), '19. Geoffrey's so-called animal symbolism and insular-Celtic tradition' (264–279).

2 Translation of 'De Keltische traditie: de verkenning van de Andere Wereld', in: *Visionen*. Edd. R.E.V. Stuip et al., Utrecht 1986, 98–121.

3 Translation of 'Antipoden, ankers en een wereld-onder-het-water', in: *Tussentijds*. Edd. A.M.J. van Buuren et al., Utrecht 1985, 101–114, 339–342

'world-under-the-water' in the "twelfth-century continental vernacular adaptation of the Brendan material, preserved in German (*Sankt Brandans Meerfahrt*) and Dutch (*Reis van Sint Brandaan*)" (80–81); a motif not found in the original NSB. On the one hand, certain ideas about the maritime environment across which Branda(a)n and his monks are travelling may be traced back via the Irish-born bishop Virgil of Salzburg to Macrobius' commentary to Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. On the other hand, the motif of a world similar to ours existing below the surface of the sea can be found in numerous tales and anecdotes in medieval Irish literature from ca. 700 onwards. Edel suggests that these ideas were passed on to the author of the *Meerfahrt/Reis* in an Irish monastic community in the Rhine-Mosel area. In the opening sentence of the article the Irish name of the saint is given quite anachronistically as "Brénaind moccu Alti" (80; likewise 94). The earliest attested form of the name, however, is *Brenden moccu Alti*. *Brénaind* is a younger variant of the name appearing in the 9th century that replaces the older form *Brenden/Brendan* (cf. UHLICH 1997: 878–888).

'6. The Irish background of the legend of Brendan' (94–111)[4] is an introduction to the historical, social and religious background of NSB in early medieval Ireland, as well as to the literary genre of which NSB is part.

In two instances Edel repeats the opinion of Maartje Draak that *Immram Curaig Maíle Dúin* 'The Sea-Voyage of Máel Dúin's Boat' (IMCD) can be regarded "as the Irish prototype of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*" (68 and similarly 110). In both cases Edel refrains from stating her personal opinion, although on p. 110 she quotes James Carney's contrary view. The idea of the precedence of IMCD over NSB cannot be upheld under a close scrutiny of the data. Even though the date of composition of NSB is still disputed, the *consensus opinionum* nevertheless now places it around 800, with a margin of a generation before or after. Since ICMD is believed to have been composed ca. 900, at the beginning of the Middle Irish period, its priority to NSB is improbable, indeed impossible on chronological grounds alone. But also structurally NSB can easily be recognised as the model after which ICMD has been crafted. Where there are close episodic parallels between the two tales, the realisation in ICMD usually leaves a textually less cohesive impression. The mention of a druid in the introduction of ICMD is quite anachronistic for a tale of the 10th century (and

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4   Revised translation of 'Ierse achtergronden', in: W.P. Gerritsen, D. Edel & M. de Kreek, *De wereld van Sint Brandaan*, Utrecht 1986, 11–35 (which has not appeared yet, according to footnote * on p. 94).

which is otherwise set in a thoroughly Christian environment) and looks as if the author made an archaising effort to replace the saintly advisor of NSB 3 by a secular personage. The descent of Máel Dúin from the Éoganacht looks like modeled after St. Brendan' ancestry. Scenes from NSB can several times be found to make a 'double appearance' in ICMD; the episodes are then individually accentuated and further motifs are added: To the episode of the island with the deserted house of NSB 6 correspond ICMD ch. 6 and 11; NSB 11, the island of the birds = ICMD 3, 18, 19; NSB 21, the sea of glass = ICMD 22, 23; NSB 26, Paul the eremite = ICMD 19, 20, 30. It would be difficult to envisage a situation where the author of NSB deliberately merged twin or triple scenes from ICMD in the process of integrating them into his narrative. The reverse process is far more likely.

III.

Speaking of the Irish background of NSB, it seems not out of place to add a few more aspects to this subject. In my MA-thesis of 1997 I pointed out a number of linguistic and phraseological traits of NSB that betray the Irish provenance of the tale's author. Since my thesis has remained unpublished[5] apart from a paper I gave at the 34th *International Medieval Conference* in Kalamazoo and at the 11th *International Congress of Celtic Studies* in Cork in 1999, I will briefly outline my arguments for the ascription of the tale to an author whose mothertongue must have been Irish. My thesis was based on a provisional edition of the text by Michaela and Klaus Zelzer (Vienna), kindly put at my disposal. For convenience's sake, however, reference will here be made to the pages and lines of Selmer's edition of 1959, even though the wording will sometimes deviate from Selmer's who not always chose the best possible

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5   When this article was almost completed, I became aware of the most recent article by Michaela Zelzer where she presents central points of my MA thesis (Zelzer 2006). Of my arguments related there I now want to modify the point about a possible Irish origin of the construction of complex numerals: The construction *binis fratribus septem*, found in a series of manuscripts, is not as such supported by Irish parallels of the type *da apstal déc* 'twelve apostels', as I had claimed in my thesis. The Irish construction always features a digit and a multiple of ten, whereas in constructions where a multiple of a digit is expressed all numerals stand before the counted noun, e.g. *da secht mbráthair* 'two times seven brethren'. This does not imply, however, that on philological grounds the phrase in question (Selmer: *bis septem fratribus*; NSB 2, 1–2) is not best edited in the way Michaela Zelzer suggests.

readings from the over hundred MSS known to him at the time.

There could never be a doubt about the Irish background of the *Nauigatio Sancti Brendani*. The setting, the names of its protagonists, the relationship to stories in the Old and Middle Irish literature of the literary genres of *immrama* 'sea voyages' and *físi* 'visions' all speak for themselves, although it remains a remarkable fact that the name *Ireland*, or in Latin *Scottia* or *Hibernia*, is nowhere mentioned in the text. The correct translations of Irish place names into Latin like *Clúain Ferta* (lit. 'Meadow of the Virtues' or rather 'Meadow of the Graves')[6] as *saltus uirtutum* 'Meadow of the Virtues', or *Slíab Liacc* (lit. 'Mountain of Stone') as *mons lapidis* or *Inis Caín* (lit. 'Beautiful Island') as *insula deliciosa* also speak of the knowledge the author had of the Irish language. Because of this Irish background it has been generally assumed that the author of the story was Irish, though, as David Dumville put it, "evidence from his [i.e. the author's] latinity [supporting his Irish provenance] has not been noticeable by its abundance" (DUMVILLE 1988: 88). I, however, believe that there is clear evidence in the form of Old Irish substratum influence on the Latin of the text to suggest that a native speaker of Irish played an essential role in the composition of NSB. NSB was either written by an Irishman, or is based on a proto-version of the tale written by an Irishman which was subsequently lost (cp. ZELZER 2006). Some of the evidence was noticed already by Carl Selmer, James Carney and Giovanni Orlandi, but a closer scrutiny of the text with an eye to features of the Old and Middle Irish language reveals more.

The introduction calls the eponymous hero *Sanctus Brendanus filius Finlocha nepotis Alti* (NSB 1, 1; Selmer: *Althi*), with the *prima facie* meaning 'St. Brendan, the son of Findlug, of the grandson of Alte', *nepotis* being taken as an attribute of the genitive *Finlocha*. That *nepotis* cannot refer to Brendan himself is clear from two Old Irish genealogies of the saint: *Brenaind m. Findloga m. Olchon m. Gossa m. Gabli m. Ecni m. Altae m. Ogamain et cetera* (Ó RIAIN 1985: Nr. 127.2) and *Brenaind mac Findloga, maic Elchon, maic Æltai* […] (STOKES 1905: 132). Both agree in calling the grandfather of Brendan *Elchu* or *Olchu*. The first mention of Brendan is found in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, written in the last decade of the 7th century. His name there is *Bréndenus/Brendenus mocu Alti* 'Brendan belonging to the gens of Alte' in VC i.26 and iii.17 (ANDERSON & ANDERSON 1991: 52 and 206). *Mocu* is an archaic Irish

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6   The confusion results from the fact that in late Old Irish the gen.pl. of *fertae* 'grave' fell together phonologically with that of *fiurt* 'virtue'.

word meaning 'belonging to the gens or family of', always followed by the genitive of the name of the eponymous ancestor (DIL M 10.59–11.25). This word is found in the earliest sources from Ireland, e.g. Latin texts like the *Vita Columbae* and the annals (the latest contemporary use there dating to 690), but the word was already on the way of becoming obsolete at the time of the earliest Old Irish sources in the beginning of the 8th century, and the meaning had been lost to the speakers of Classical Old Irish within a few generations. In the old sources *mocu* (variant *maccu*) was often abbreviated *mcu*. Later copyists who no longer understood the form wrongly expanded it to *macc uí* 'son of the grandson', a mistake continued even by early scholars of modern Irish studies. This form *macc uí* could then be translated into Latin as *filius nepotis*, for example by Marianus Scottus in his *Chronicon* in the 11th century (cp. PICARD 2001: 228). NSB exhibits the same phrase *filius nepotis*, with the name of the father added in the middle for the sake of clarity by someone who was not familiar with the origin of the phrase. It can be assumed that the author of NSB had before him a source dating to the Archaic Irish period giving the phrase *Brendenus* (or younger *Brendanus*) *mocu Alti*, as in the *Vita Columbae* (thus already CARNEY 1963: 37). By a typical late Old Irish or Middle Irish error he misinterpreted it as 'son of the grandson', a misinterpretation that would have been impossible for somebody unfamiliar with the Irish language, and impossible before approximately the middle of the 8th century.

In NSB 11, 28–32 a bird comes flying towards Brendan who sits crying and wondering about an enormous tree whose branches are miraculously covered by white birds. The bird sits down on the prow of Brendan's boat and *cepit extendere alas quasi signo leticie* 'it stretched its wings as a sign of joy'. There is probably more to this 'sign of joy' if viewed from an Irish point of view. The Irish equivalent of Latin *laetitia* is *fáilte*, the abstract 'joy, happiness' of the adjective *fáilid* 'joyful, happy'. But *fáilte* is also used in the construction *fáilte fri X* 'welcome to X'. The author transferred this idiomatic use of 'joy' from his mother tongue to Latin. The sentence is therefore to be translated 'the bird stretched its wings as a sign of welcome', which makes better sense at its first meeting with Brendan. A similar, but not so evident play on the double meaning 'joy' and 'welcome' may perhaps be found in NSB 1, 11–13, when Barrind (Selmer: *Barinthus*) is welcomed by Brendan: *Pater, cur tristiciam habemus in aduentu tuo?* […] *Magis leticiam tu debes fratribus preparare.* 'Father, why do we have sadness at your arrival? […] You should rather give joy to the brothers (instead of sadness)'; or: 'You should rather welcome the brothers (now at your arrival)'.

In chapter 6, Brendan and his companions come to an island with a house where they find food and beds prepared for them. The walls of the house are decorated with vessels made from various metals, with horns of silver and with *frena* 'horse reins, bridles' of silver (NSB 6, 45). The significance of 'bridle, reins' for the tale is not clear, less so why a monk, a wicked companion of Brendan's, should feel the impulse to steal a *frenum*, a deed eventually leading to his violent death. A glance at *Immram Curaig Máele Dúin* 'The Sea-Voyage of Máel Dúin's Boat' ch. 11 immediately solves the problem. There the stolen object is called *muince*, having both the meanings 'bridle, reins' and 'necklace'. With *muince* 'necklace' in mind, the author of NSB translated from his mothertongue Irish, but picked the wrong translation.

There are three instances of the Hibernic use of *alius* 'other' for Classical Latin *quidam* 'some, someone' (cp. HERREN 1984: 208): *alii teneant ex uobis interim fibulas chonopei* 'some of you in the mean time hold the threads of the net' (NSB 22, 11–12); *et alii tenebant ex fratribus fibulas chonopei* 'and some of the brothers held the threads of the net' (NSB 22, 39); *alii iactabant post famulos Christi massas* 'some threw lumps after Christ's servants' (NSB 23, 26–27). This peculiar usage is due to a translation into Latin of Old Irish *alaile, araile*, which means both 'the other' and 'some'.

Also in chapter 22 we find a peculiar usage of *umbra* 'shadow'. Selmer's edition reads *per umbram solis calorem poterant sentire ultra* (NSB 22, 23–24), which would translate as 'through the shadow they could still feel the heat of the sun'. But, as so often, Selmer has chosen the wrong reading. Instead, the great bulk of manuscripts testifies for a reading *semper umbram solis et calorem poterant sentire*. The rather perplexing 'shadow of the sun' can be clarified from Irish where the word for 'shadow' *scáth* also means 'reflection', cp. *seacht scéith co scáth na gréni* 'seven shields with the reflection of the sun; seven shield reflecting the sun' (*Book of Rights* 74, 24; cited after DIL S 76.84–85). What the voyagers in NSB experienced was the reflection of the light of the sun even where his rays were obstructed by the enormously high column in the middle of the sea, perhaps an iceberg.

The word *obsequium* in Latin and medieval Latin basically means 'obedience, service', but the corresponding loan in Old Irish *osaic* has come to be restricted in its meaning to 'a service to the feet, .i. the washing of the feet'. No such special use of the word is recorded for middle Latin e.g. by NIERMEYER 1976. But in two instances *obsequium* without a qualifier like *pedis* or *pedum* may perhaps be understaood in that narrow meaning in NSB: *cepit obsequium famulorum Dei et omnia que necessaria erant in crastinum preparare* 'he began

to wash the feet of God's servants and to prepare everything that was necessary for the following day' (NSB 9, 31–32) and *preparauit balneum* […] *et induit omnes fratres nouis uestimentis et fecit illorum obsequium per triduum* 'he prepared a bath […] and gave the brothers new clothes and washed their feet for three days' (NSB 15, 16–18).

These are unintentional lexical slips of the tongue of someone whose prime language was Irish but who had attained great fluency in Latin. Nevertheless, occasionally the idiomatics of Irish would shine through. Other hibernisms affect deeper layers of the grammar.

In classical Latin verbs of the first Latin conjugation would be expected to form an *e*-subjunctive, but at least in NSB 12, 79 a number of manuscripts display forms that have *a* in the phrase: *intramus in ecclesiam et cantamus uesperas* 'let us enter the church and let us sing the vespers'. Most manuscripts show the expected *e*-subjunctives *intremus* and *cantemus* and Selmer adopted them for his edition as well, but still the *a*-forms are widely enough attested to award them weight as *lectiones difficiliores*. Their explanation is as follows: In Old Irish just as in Latin there is a class of weak verbs that has *a* as the present stem suffix. These verbs build their subjunctive with an *a*-suffix as well so that there is, except for a few forms, no way to distinguish formally between indicative and subjunctive, e.g. the OIr. conjunct 1st pl. *·móram* is the same for the present indicative 'we praise' and for the present subjunctive 'we would praise'. Furthermore it is formally identical with the 1st pl. imperative *móram* 'let us praise', although the syntactic constructions of the forms would be different. Like in NSB, sometimes this formal identity has been exported by Hiberno-Latin authors to Latin. There are other possible instances of *a*-subjunctives in NSB, but the two discussed above are the ones for which the strongest case can be made.

Some further pieces of evidence are not as compelling as the above-mentioned ones and might also be explained in other ways:

In chapter 7 Brendan uses the phrase *usque ad diem iudicii* 'till Judgement Day' (NSB 7, 16–17). This recalls the Irish phrase *co bráth, co dé mbrátha*, literally 'till Judgement (Day)', but usually simply used to mean 'for ever'.

There are a number of instances of the so-called *figura etymologica*-construction, where an abstract noun or verbal noun appears as the object or adverbial phrase of a verb with the same root, as in *exsultabant exsultatione* 'they rejoiced in rejoicing' (NSB 1, 64), *de habitatione, in qua habitavi* 'from the living quarters where I lived' (NSB 7, 13–14), or *ascensum difficillimum ad ascendendum* 'an ascent difficult to ascend' (NSB 26, 18). This construction

is not only very popular in the Old Irish language (cf. GOI 317), but it is also found in other Hiberno-Latin texts, e.g. in Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*. But this feature need not necessarily be derived from Old Irish usage, but might be an attempt at biblical style where it ultimately goes back to a Hebrew predilecture for the *figura etymologica*.

A clear picture emerges: The substratum influence of Irish on the Latin of NSB is so extensive, that it can be best explained by the hypothesis that a native speaker of Irish wrote the tale, be it in Ireland or on the Continent.

IV.

It was stated above that a wide consensus would now date the composition of NSB sometime around 800. Agreeing with this in general, I want to present a strategy for a more particular, relative dating of NSB. Certain correspondences between NSB and passages about islands in the North Atlantic in Dicuil's *Liber de Mensura Orbis Terrae* 'The Measurement of the World' (ed. TIERNEY 1967) must be more than mere chance, and it will be argued that NSB is dependent on this geographical treatise. Dicuil was an Irishman who lived at the end of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th centuries at the court of Charlemagne. In 825 he wrote a geographical treatise on the measurement of the world. Though the greatest part of the work is based on ancient geographical works, in paragraphes 14 and 15 Dicuil speaks about his own experience and mentions various islands to the north of Britain:

14. Sunt aliae insulae multae in septentrionali Brittaniae oceano quae a septentrionalibus Brittaniae insulis duorum dierum ac noctium recta nauigatione plenis uelis assiduo feliciter uento adiri quaeunt. Aliquis presbyter religiosus mihi retulit quod in duobus aestiuis diebus et una intercedente nocte nauigans in duorum nauicula transtrorum in unam illam introiuit.

15. Illae insulae aliae paruulae, fere cunctae simul angustis distantes fretis; in quibus in centum ferme annis heremitae ex nostra Scottia nauigantes habitauerunt. Sed sicut a principio mundi desertae semper fuerunt ita nunc causa latronum Normannorum uacuae anchoritis plenae innumerabilibus ouibus ac diuersis generibus multis nimis marinarum auium. Numquam eas insulas in libris auctorum memoratas inuenimus.

'14. There are many other islands in the ocean to the north of Britain which can be reached from the northern islands of Britain in a direct voyage of two days and nights with sails filled with a continuously favourable wind. A devout priest told me that in two summer days and the intervening night he sailed in a two-benched boat and entered one of them.

15. There is another set of small islands, nearly all separated by narrow stretches of water; in these for nearly a hundred years hermits sailing from our country, Ireland, have lived. But just as they were always deserted from the beginning of the world, so now because of the Northman pirates they are emptied of anchorites, and filled with countless sheep and very many diverse kinds of sea-birds. I have never found these islands mentioned in the authorities.' (Tierney 1967: 74–77)

There are verbal echos between these two paragraphs and passages in NSB. The sentence *sunt aliae insulae multae in septentrionali Brittaniae oceano* 'there are many other islands in the ocean to the north of Britain' has its implicit correspondence in the story of NSB itself, its main plot being sea-voyages, referred to by the mention of *nauicula* 'boat' in Dicuil. *Fere cunctae simul angustis distantes fretis* 'small islands, nearly all separated by narrow stretches of water' has a nearly literal correspondence in NSB 11, 3 *ad aliam insulam prope sibi iunctam interveniente freto non magno* 'to another island close by, with only a small stretch of water between'. The *heremitae ex nostra Scottia* 'the hermits from our Ireland' have various counterparts in Brendan's story, all of who could also be called *aliquis presbyter religiosus* 'a devout priest' like Dicuil's informant. Dicuil's islands are *plenae innumerabilibus ouibus ac diuersis generibus multis nimis marinarum auium* 'filled with countless sheep and very many diverse kinds of sea-birds', illustrated in NSB by the islands of the sheep and of the birds. NSB's expression in 9, 10–11 *diuersos greges ouium* […] *ita ut non possent ultra uidere terram prae multitudine ouium* 'various flocks of sheep […] so that they could not see the earth because of the number of sheep' reminds one of Dicuil's *plenae innumerabilibus ouibus* 'filled with countless sheep'. And Dicuil's *sed sicut a principio mundi desertae semper fuerunt ita nunc* […] *uacuae* 'just as they were always deserted from the beginning of the world, so now […] they are emptied' reminds one of the *Terra Repromissionis* about which NSB 1, 55–56 says: *sicut illam uides modo ita ab initio mundi permanet* 'as you see it now it has remained since the beginning of the world'.

In my eyes, the correspondences between Dicuil's work and NSB must be more

than mere chance. But what then is the relationship between the two texts? Dicuil wrote about his own experience; he had spent some time on those islands north of Britain himself. But he found these islands mentioned nowhere in the authorities. These matters are so important to him that he devotes four paragraphes to them in a work where he otherwise merely quotes what other people had said before him. So Dicuil had private reason to write about these matters. Furthermore, had Dicuil known NSB he could perhaps be expected to say a few words about the *Terra Repromissionis*, if only for a negative statement. But he stays silent about this point, and this may indicate that NSB was still unknown when Dicuil wrote *De mensura orbis terrae*. The scenario that I want to propose for the composition of NSB is that an Irish exile, perhaps from the circle around Sedulius Scottus in the middle of the 9th century, inspired by those parts of his fellow countryman Dicuil's geographical work where he talked about islands in the Atlantic unknown to the Continent up until then, sat down to expand on these islands in a kind of popular account of what Dicuil had presented in strictly scientific terms. This is of course not to say that this was the only purpose of the work, but this may have been one of the the initial impulses. If this scenario is correct, the composition of NSB must be dated after 825.

<center>V.</center>

Studies in Irish Hagiography. Saints and Scholars. John Carey, Máire Herbert & Pádraig Ó Riain Editors, Dublin: Four Courts Press 2001. Hardback. xii + 418 pp. ISBN 1 85182 486 3. € 50,-.

This volume contains the proceedings of an international congress on hagiography held in April 1997, organised by the Dept. of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork, in commemoration of the 1400th anniversary of the death of St. Colum Cille. Twenty-two contributions by renowned experts from thirteen countries examine aspects of Columban and Irish hagiography and of their transmission in Ireland and in Continental Europe. They are arranged in six sections.[7]

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[7] *I. The Columban Tradition*: Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Tombs of the Saints: their Significance for Adomnán' (1–14), Aidan MacDonald, 'Aspects of the Monastic Landscape in Adomnán's *Life of Columba*' (15–30), Máire Herbert, 'The *Vita Columbae* and Irish Hagiography: A Study of *Vita Cainnechi*' (31–40), Nathalie Stalmans, 'Le jugement de l'âme dans la Vie de Columba' (41–48), John Carey, 'Varieties of Supernatural Contact in the Life of Adamnán'

Again, the emphasis in reviewing will be put on those contributions that feature NSB.

Jonathan WOODING has been one of the most prolific contributors to scholarship on NSB in recent years. In this volume, he again turns to this subject. His contribution 'St. Brendan's Boat: Dead Hides and the Living Sea in Columban and Related Hagiography' (WOODING 77–92) has the aim to call critically into question the positivist historical approach to use saints' lives as sources for economic and social history and "as evidence for processes of travel, transport and *Gesellschaft* […]. Such use […] may have proved an obstacle to our understanding of the religious and literary function of such texts". WOODING (77) argues that "descriptive elements in hagiography" have "functions […] in the context of the entire narrative" and need not be viewed as "simply incidental details". He exemplifies this with the motif of the boat made of hides in *immrama*-type tales. Wooding argues convincingly against the wide-spread belief in hide-covered boats as a particularly 'Celtic' ship type. Instead, in classical literature hide-boats were a feature attributed to many sea-faring barbaric peoples on the Atlantic fringe;[8] only slowly it came to be a cliché restricted to

(49–62); *II. Traditions of other Irish Saints*: Elizabeth McLuhan, '*Ministerium servitutis meae*: The Metaphor and Reality of Slavery in St Patrick's *Epistola* and *Confessio*' (563–71), Walter Berschin, 'Radegundis and Brigit' (72–76), Jonathan Wooding, 'St Brendan's Boat: Dead Hides and the Living Sea in Columban and Related Hagiography' (77–92); *III. Irish Saints and Brittany*: Gwenaël le Duc, 'Irish Saints in Brittany: Myth or Reality?' (93–119), Karen Jankulak, 'Fingar/Gwinear/Guigner: an 'Irish' Saint in Medieval Cornwall and Brittany' (120–139), Bernard Merdrignac, 'Une course en char dans l'hagiographie bretonne? Saint Samson contre la *Theomacha*' (140–158), André-Yves Bourgès, 'Les origines irlandaises de Saint Briac honoré en Bretagne: Légende ou réalité' (159–171); *IV. Irish Saints' Lives in Continental Europe*: David N. Dumville, 'St Cathróe of Metz and the Hagiography of Exoticism' (172–188), Claire Stancliffe, 'Jonas' *Life of Columbanus and his Disciples*' (189–220), Jean-Michel Picard, 'The Cult of Columba in Lotharingia (9th–11th Centuries): The Manuscript Evidence' (221–236); *V. Approaches to the Study of Irish Hagiography*: Paul Russell, 'Patterns of Hypocorism in Early Irish Hagiography' (237–249); Edel Bhreathnach, 'The Genealogies of Leinster as a Source for Local Cults' (250–267), Dorothy Ann Bray, 'The Study of Folk-Motifs in Early Irish Hagiography: Problems of Approach and Rewards at Hand' (268–277), Joseph Falaky Nagy, 'The Reproduction of Irish Saints' (278–288); *VI. Hagiographical Scholarship: From Seventeenth-century Beginnings to Contemporary Projects*: Robert Godding, 'Irish Hagiography in the *Acta Sanctorum* (1643–1794)' (289–316), D.J. Thornton, '*Vita Sancti Carthagi* in the Seventeenth Century' (317–336), Guy Philippart, François de Vriendt, Michel Trigalet, 'Problèmes et premiers résultats d'une histoire générale de la littérature hagiographique' (337–356).

8   As a side note, the same prejudice towards a barbaric custom is evident in a short description of native Welsh fisher-boats that Gerald of Wales in the late 12th century gives in his *Descrip-*

the British Isles and only modern reception has made a symbol of 'undiluted' Celticity out of it.

But WOODING's (83) further assertion that, in view of the "common features of context in which this craft is represented", the image of the hide-covered boat in Irish literature may be indebted to patristic and classical literature is not so convincing to me. What are these common features? Facing the perils of the ocean in a fragile boat may be a literary motif, but first of all it is a reality for those who experience it. Putting a narrative weight on the dangers of such journeys may be nothing else than typological, necessitated by the circum-stances. That the specific perils related in the tales may be literary motifs (like the whale in NSB, the *bestiolae* in Cormac's voyage, etc.), is a totally different matter. WOODING's (83) other observation that leads him to assume patristic and classical influence is that "In literary contexts […] hide-covered craft in Irish texts occur predominantly in a penitential context". Again the observa-tion is valid as such, but hardly very conclusive. What texts could there be that told us about other uses of hide-covered craft? Only a limited corpus of medieval literature is now extant, and the focus of this literature is again lim-ited to a few aspects of life, usually that of the upper echelons. Stressing the parallels of the subject of hide-covered boats with classical literature builds on the *argumentum ex silentio* that – if we had more reliable, native information about such boats – the picture would look quite differently or – possibly – that there would be no picture at all. But the archaeological wisdom that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence is valid in philology as well. So we are left with the methodological choice of either trying to connect as literary motifs the few mentions of hide-boats in Irish literature with a few passages

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tio Kambriae I, 17. Gerald's choice of words does not suggest that he used NSB as the model for his description, even though a very similar description can be found there (NSB 4):
Sunt et his naviculæ ad piscandum, seu flumina transnavigandum, vimineæ; non oblongæ, non rostratæ, sed quasi rotundæ, vel potius in triangulum formatæ; undique coriis anima-lium crudis non intus, sed extra contectæ. Cum autem naviculam salmo injectus forte cauda fortiter percusserit, non absque periculo plerumque vecturam pariter et vectorem evertit. Naviculas istas piscatores, barbaro ritu, ad aquas eundo et redeundo humeris portant.
'They have boats for fishing or for crossing the rivers, made of wicker. These are not very long, they have no bow, but they are practically round, or rather triangular. On all sides, they are covered by raw animal hides not on the inside, but on the outside. When a salmon, thrown into the boat, perchance beats the boat forcefully with its tail, there is frequently the danger that it overturns both vehicle and the one in it. The fishermen carry these boats like barbarians on their shoulders, when they go to the waters and when they return from them.'

in classical literature,[9] or to look at the passages in Irish literature in isolation and then to try to extract information about material culture from it. Indeed, the information about material culture that can be gained from the texts is hardly better than the shadows on the wall in Plato's simile of the cave, but still these shadows *are* a picture, no matter how distorted. After all, the pictures we have of the possible literary *comparanda* in antiquity are just as distorted.

The interpretative approach on a symbolistic path calls for more general considerations. We are clearly confronted with the question of the hen and the egg. Is a descriptive element of local material culture integrated into a text because of its symbolic function, or is it awarded symbolic function (through equation with similar or resonant motifs in religious texts) because it is an incidental element of a tale? *Mutatis mutandis*, this question is, of course, also relevant to other literary genres in medieval Ireland. Inevitably, no simple answer can be given to this question. But, for example, the detailed circumstantiality of how the construction of the boat is described in NSB 4 (to which to my knowledge so far no symbolic value has been ascribed) suggests very strongly that for the author of the tale the use of hide-covered craft in *peregrinatio* was a matter of reality.[10] Only when circumstantial details are found that are suspect of having no basis in reality, like the boat covered with three layers of hides in the relatively late tale *Immram Curaig Úa Corra* 'The Voyage of the Boat of the Uí Chorra' (Wooding 87 and 90), it is evident that a symbolic interpretation must take precedence. But the symbolic use of a motif in one text does not imply the symbolic use of the same motif in another one, especially if the other text is earlier or otherwise underived from the first one.

If philology is the art of establishing the context, it is also the art of keeping the number of contexts (there may be more than one) within reasonably realistic limits. Or, to put it in a classical language: *contextus non sunt multiplicandi praeter necessitatem*. Surely, if one searched long enough, a symbolic context for any motif, even the most trivial, could be found. Where are the limits of interpretation? But if everything were reduced (or elevated) to mere symbolism, our texts were deplete of all immediate meaning. This is not to say that this might not be the adequate approach to the understanding of some texts, but surely not of all,

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9   Thereby following the axiom that the less information we possess about a matter, the more we are inclined to draw a causal connection between two random facts or events. This axiom goes back to Helmut Birkhan.
10   To be precise, NSB does not figure strongly in Wooding's contribution, suggesting that for him, too, the symbolic value of hide-covered boats in an early text like NSB is not very prominent.

not even in a literary genre like saints' lives that are highly fraught with symbolic motivry. Personally, I prefer to tread a more cautious path in interpretation where one stays on the surface as long as possible, even though I am well aware that certain aspects of texts may be missed that way. But in the end, the choice of the method of interpretation must remain a matter of belief.

Gwenaël Le Duc's contribution, 'Irish Saints in Brittany: Myth or Reality?' (93–119), is a study in deconstruction. Starting from the popular idea that over the centuries 8.000 Irish saints had come to Britanny (an idea not to a small degree propagated for the benefit of tourism), Le Duc eliminates step by step irrelevant classes of saints until he remains with two dozen or so saints who have been or are called Irish in some sources. Le Duc then discusses the philological background for these saints one by one. In almost all cases his conclusion is that either the saint in question or at least his ascription to Ireland is more than dubious. Unfortunately, Le Duc's methodology is rather impressionistic and erratic and his lines of argument cannot always be classed as very lucid. In a final chapter, Le Duc summarises the various steps in the tradition from the 12th until the 20th century by which the number of putative Irish saints in Brittany continuously grew. As for St. Brendan, he is mentioned only briefly in the article (Le Duc 96). St. Brendan figures as a Welsh abbot of Llancarfan in the life of St. Malo, his pupil. There may be more to this Welsh connection of Brendan, however. In his *Vita*, Brendan is associated with St. David, and it has been shown that the name Brendan is a loan from Old Welsh (Uhlich 1997: 878–888).

The same subject, that is, possible or assumed Irish saints in Brittany, although restricted to a single saint in each case, is treated by Karen Jankulak, 'Fingar/ Gwinear/Guigner: An 'Irish' Saint in Medieval Cornwall and Brittany' (120– 139) and by André-Yves Bourgès, 'Les origines irlandaises de Saint Briac honoré en Bretagne: Légende ou réalité' (159–171).

VI.

Brendans Inseln. Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis. Aus der Urfassung übertragen und herausgegeben von Wolfgang Schlüter, Wien – Lana: edition per procura 1997. Hardback. 110 pp. ISBN 3 901118 33 0. € 12,50.[11]

11 Two book notices for this book can be mentioned: *Wiener Zeitung*, 6. Feber 1998; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30./31. Mai 1998.

The great interest in *Brendaniana* is also manifest in the first modern German translation that was published 1997 in *Edition per procura*. Under the title *Brendans Inseln*, Wolfgang Schlüter, an author and translator living in Austria and Ireland, produced a German version that, according to the subheading, has been "aus der Urfassung übertragen und herausgegeben". 'Original version', referring to the Latin text of NSB, is in contrast to late medieval vernacular versions of the tale (Schlüter 106–107). Schlüter basically follows the text and the arrangement of Selmer 1959.[12] The translation occupies pages 11–85. The language of the translation is in an excessively high and antiquated style that – in my opinion – does not do justice to the spirit of the original. NSB's language is a plain, basically artless Latin of the early middle ages. The second paragraph of the postscript reveals that Schlüter (99) is aware of this. Still, the solemnity that Schlüter has chosen for his translation runs contrary to the purpose of entertainment and edification which probably played an important role in the composition of NSB. In a translation of my own I attempted the exact opposite of what Schlüter did by staying idiomatically close to what would sound as neutral as possible to contemporary ears (Stifter 1995).

The very first paragraph may serve as an example for the difference in style: *Sanctus Brendanus, filius Finlocha, nepotis Alti, de genere Eogeni stagni Len regione*[13] *Mumenensium ortus fuit. Erat uir magne abstinencie et in uirtutibus clarus, trium milium fere monachorum pater* (NSB 1.1–4). Schlüter (11) translates: "Sankt Brendan, Findlugs Sohn, Altes Abkömmling, ward unter der Herrschaft der Eoganacht von Lough Léin geboren im Lande der Männer von Munster. Er war ein Mann von großer Selbstzucht, berühmt für seine mächtigen Werke und Vater über annähernd dreitausend Mönche." I would translate: "Der heilige Brendan mac Findlocha úa Alti stammte aus der familie der Éoganacht von Loch Léin in der provinz Munster. Er zeichnete sich durch strenge askese aus und war berühmt für seine wunder. Er war abt von etwa dreitausend mönchen." It is unclear to me if Schlüter's "unter der Herrschaft der Eoganacht von Lough Léin" (note the inconsistent spelling that mixes Old Irish and anglicised names) is meant in a temporal sense which would be clearly wrong.

On pages 87–94 follows a brief commentary. Schlüter makes a number of interesting observations about parallels with Christian symbolism, e.g. in the

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12 But Schlüter did critically evaluate Selmer's text, as is shown by the translation "von Lough Léin" (Schlüter 11) where Selmer has *stagnili regione* (NSB 1.2). Apparently, Schlüter followed Carney 1963: 38 here.

13 See Carney 1963: 38 for the reading of this passage.

Apocalypse, but he also tries to convey the reader a picture of the historical setting of NSB. Since the book is more geared towards the general reader than to the scholarly community, no strictly scholarly standard must be applied to these sections of the book. Still, certain errors could easily have been avoided: The Latin name of St. "Columbkille" is not "St. Columban" (*recte*: Columba); he is said to have founded the monasteries in "Hy und Iona (Schottland)" (*recte*: Hy = Í = Iona), and he was the victor (!) in the battle of "Culdreime" (*recte*: Cúl Dreimne) (Schlüter 87). The popular misconception of the inherent paganism of medieval and modern Ireland underlies some remarks: The name of Brendan's father *Findlug* is said to be made up of the two names *Find* and *Lug* which are "Synonyma einer keltischen Gottheit. Der Name [of Brendan's father] erinnert an Lug's [sic!] zeitweiligen Sieg über seinen Widersacher Crom Dubh" (Schlüter 87). He connects the motif of the well with the "in Wales, Schottland und Irland noch heute verbreiteten heidnischen Traditionen im Zusammenhang mit dem Glauben an die verjüngende Kraft der ›holy wells‹" (Schlüter 90). Even if the cult of the holy wells ultimately goes back to pre-Christian roots, the modern traditions are certainly not heathen, but have become utterly christianised in their medieval and modern contexts. Schlüter (88) wonders if "der Mt. Brandon seinen Namen dem Heiligen oder dem mythischen Brain [sic!] verdankt". In no variant of even the most vulgar Latin can the etymology of the whale *Iasconius* (or perhaps *Casconius*) be sought in "lat. ›iacere‹= liegen, daliegen, flach liegen, versunken sein" (Schlüter 89); the name must surely be derived from either OIr. *íasc* 'fish' or *cásc* 'Easter'. But it would be unfair to point out only the howlers. Some of Schlüter's ideas are original and creative, even if incorrect. He sees in the mention of *frenum* a "Symbol für eine der vier Kardinaltugenden: Temperantia (Mäßigkeit)" (Schlüter 89); but cp. my explanation of *frenum* above.

A poetical "Nachwort. Textinseln, Metaphernlogbuch und Ozeanisches Labyrinth" (a slightly reworked version of Schlüter 1979), drawing on and drawing connective lines between an impressive list of literary, scientific, religious, philosophic and even cinematographic sources (Schlüter 97–107), and a short bibliography (Schlüter 109–110) conclude the book.

VII.

In summer 2006, the *Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde* in Vienna (Laudongasse 15–19, 1080 Wien) featured an exhibition of Irish *currach*s or cora-

cles. On display were modern boats from the collection of the National Museum of Ireland and a tiny hundred-years old boat that at the beginning of the 20th century had been collected in Ireland by the Austrian ethnographer Rudolf Trebitsch and donated to the *Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde*. For the general interest of the readers of a contribution to *Brendaniana*, some photographs from the exhibition are appended to this article. The pictures were taken and are reproduced by the kind permission of the *Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde* and the *National Museum of Ireland*.

Ill. 1 & 2: A 'one-bencher' *currach* probably from the River Boyne, collected by Rudolf Trebitsch (ÖMV 23.119).

Ill. 3 & 4: The ribs of this *currach* (North Donegal, 1999; NMIF 1999:351) are of rough hazel and are tied to the long laths with cords – a most ancient technique.

Ill. 5: A paddling *currach* (Co. Donegal 2004; NMIF 2004:133) and a modern fibreglass *currach* (Co. Mayo 2000; NMIF 2000:60).

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