

Celts, Britons, and Gaels—Names, Peoples, and Identities¹

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As far as the early names for the Celts, British, and Irish go, my task as a philologist is straightforward. I shall be telling you what some of those names are, what language they belonged to, where and when they first appear, what the names originally meant (if I think I know), and what groups of people they were first applied to. None of this is infallible, or even particularly easy work, but the basic principal is not hard to grasp and appreciate objectively.

The second prong of this paper is using names for cultural identification of people. And that, in contrast, is a complete muddle. Everybody has a cultural identity, or perhaps more than one. But for most people, the workings of cultural identity are taken for granted and largely subconscious. Like the internal grammar that allows anyone to articulate thoughts in one's native language, introspection is of limited use in untangling the enigma of identity. Excepting social psychologists and cultural anthropologists, experts are not really better qualified for this inquiry than is the public at large. Certainly, Celtic studies is a blunt instrument with which to attempt to dissect our specimens.

In the first place, the whole question of cultural identification—in early Ireland and Britain or any other time or place—has to be dealt with as two distinct, but overlapping, phenomena—namely identity

1 Earlier versions of this paper were read at Scoil na Gaeilge, National University of Ireland Galway on 7 March 2000 and at the Society for name studies in Britain and Ireland 9th Annual Conference, University of Wales Bangor—30 April 2000.

from the outside and identity from the inside, in other words ‘them’ or ‘us’. For example, there is an imperfect overlap today between the groups who would be identified as Irish or British or Welsh and those who identify themselves as Irish or British or Welsh.

Switching languages further complicates matters. For example, Welsh *Sais* as opposed to *Cymro* can mean ‘Englishman’ as opposed to ‘Welshman’ with the same ranges as the English words, but they can also mean ‘English-speaker’ (from Wales or the United States, for example) as opposed to ‘Welsh-speaker’. In the variety of Modern Irish best known to me, *Albanach* means both ‘Scotsman’ and ‘Ulster Protestant’. What this shows, I think, is that the cultural universe of the English-speaker differs from that of the Welsh or Irish speaker, not only with regards to who we are and who they are, but also with regards to what categories are available for identifying us and them.

Turning to the remote past, the disparity becomes vast. And we cannot simply ask the person in the street who ‘us’ and ‘them’ are in various languages. For example, we—our experts and the general public—can identify Neanderthals. We know what they looked like, when and where they lived, much about how they lived, their material culture, and social organisation. Now, did they call themselves ‘Neanderthals’, assuming they had the vocal and cognitive equipment to call themselves anything? Probably not. Were they aware of the existence of themselves as a subspecies with a range, say, beyond the bend of the river? We do not know. But I would doubt that Neanderthals in Spain were aware of Neanderthal communities in the Near East. Since the Neanderthals’ concept of themselves as ‘us’ no doubt differed greatly from our understanding of them as ‘them’, does that mean that Neanderthals are just a modern construct? (Whatever exactly a construct is, the term seems to imply an identity that is somehow less than legitimate.) And if yes to that question, would it follow that they did not really exist in Old Stone Age times at all?

Let us move ahead now to later prehistory, or proto-history, the European Iron Age in the last centuries BC. At this stage, we know that people speaking languages closely related to Modern Irish and Welsh were living not only in Ireland and Britain, but also in Gaul, the Hispanic Peninsula, Central Europe, Northern Italy, the Northern Balkans, and central Anatolia around Ankara. In many of these areas, including Britain and the northern half of Ireland, these peoples were using a style of art now called La Tène, for a type site in Switzerland. In Gaul and parts of Central Europe and Spain, we find the Greek and

Roman writers applying the name Κελτοί *Keltoi* or *Celtae* to these people, namely ‘Celts’. Many of the same groups on the Continent were also labelled *Gallī* or Γαλάται *Galatae*, that is, ‘Gauls’ and/or ‘Galatians’. These then, were their ‘them’ identities as far as the literate Mediterranean civilisations were concerned. The derivation of *Keltī* is unclear, but *Gallī* and *Galatae* most probably go with Old Irish *gal* ‘boldness, ferocity’, Welsh *gâl* ‘enemy’, probably related also to Welsh *gallu* ‘to be able, power’;² thus, this is a Celtic ‘us’ name to start with, but not necessarily with the same range as Greek and Latin ‘them’ names derived from it.

Now, one strand of the debate about the Celts today seems to be that if these Iron Age people did not all call themselves ‘Celts’, if they did not all use La Tène culture, or the same sort of La Tène culture, if the speaker of one of these languages in Ireland was not aware of the existence of similar languages in Spain and Turkey, then it is not permissible for us to identify them as ‘Celts’.³ But if we are obliged to wait to recover the ‘us’ identity of people who have not left full literary records—their view of the world and their place in it—before we can compare, group, and label, then we shall be waiting forever.

The recent academic controversy over the use of the term ‘Celts’ has, I think, very little to teach anyone concerning the history of the Celtic languages, the spread of Hallstatt- or La Tène-style material, or any related ancient cultural phenomena. It has, however, thrown into conspicuous relief the obscurity that surrounds the natural distinctiveness but interconnectedness of the four domains: language, material culture, human genetics, and group identity.

In the Celtosceptical publications, the point that the Celts of Britain and Ireland never called themselves Celts until modern times has been

2 See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950–), s.n. *gâl*. Patrick Sims-Williams has usefully discussed possible derivations of the names the names *Keltī*, but *Gallī* and *Galatae*, including the plausible possibility of variants of the same name transmitted through different channels; see ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 36 (1998), 1–36, at 21–9.

3 Chapman, M. 1992. *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. London; Collis, J. 1997. ‘Celtic Myths’, *Antiquity* 71, 195–201; 1999. “George Buchanan and the Celts in Britain.” In *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Celtic Studies*, Volume I. Language, Literature, History, Culture, ed. R. Black, W. Gillies, and R. Ó Maolalaigh, 91–107. East Linton: Tuckwell; S. T. James, *The Atlantic Celts: Ancient People of Modern Invention* (London, 1999).

taken as a matter of significance.⁴ In fact, this negative detail has a special centrality in the arguments of writers like Malcolm Chapman, Simon James, and John Collis. I know of no linguist who is very impressed by this point, the Greeks did not call themselves Greeks, nor the Hittites, Hittites, nor the Germans, Germans. In short, so what?

But there is another minor point to be made here: since the people of Iron Age Britain and Ireland have left us only fragmentary written records, we do not know with absolute certainty—cannot decisively prove the negative—that they did *not* identify themselves as Celts. We do know that the surviving writings of Caesar and Tacitus did not call the people of Britain or Ireland *Celti* or *Celtae*. But did either of them ever ask a Briton? We also know that the medieval Gaels, Welsh, and Bretons did not identify with ancient people called Celts. But the people of Wales and Brittany had also once been Romans and had ceased to identify themselves as such completely by the time of Gildas wrote in the sixth century. Gildas tells us that the last *Rōmānus* in Britain had been Ambrosius Aurelianus who flourished before Gildas was born.⁵ Furthermore, in his *Agricola*, Tacitus calls the Caledonians of the Scottish Highlands *Britanni*, i.e. Britons. But 200 years later, after centuries of Roman rule south of Hadrian's Wall, *Britanni* or *Brittones* is used only for the inhabitants of the Roman provinces, the *Britanniae*. By AD 300, Caledonians have another name. They are called *Picti*. They are never called *Brython* in Welsh or *Bretain* in Irish either. But it would be naïve to think that the vernacular views of the world and its peoples had come down intact from the Iron Age and had not been reshaped by Roman political geography or the spread of Latin literacy. Therefore, it looks like the range of the term 'Britons' contracted over the course of the Roman period, and that this contraction was then reflected in the ethnographic systems of the medieval vernaculars.

Similarly, the fact that Bretons use *Gall* for the French and the Irish use it for the Vikings, and Normans, and English probably has more to do with the Roman provinces of *Galliae* in late Antiquity than with who called and did not call themselves *Gallī* in the pre-Roman Iron Age. As to 'Celts', whatever the range of *Keltī* had been in Hallstatt or

4 For Patrick Sims-Williams's useful coining 'Celtoscepticism', see 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', 1–36. His article also provides a full and balanced survey of recent publications susceptible to the label.

5 See *De excidio Britanniae of Gildas*, ed. T. Winterbottom (Chichester, 1978), §25 (p. 98).

La Tène times, for several hundred years before our oldest Insular texts, *Celtica* was officially an administrative region in what is now central France. It is one of Caesar's three parts of Gaul, after all.⁶ And this important political and geographic fact could easily have obliterated whatever 'Celt' had originally meant in pre-Roman times, in the same way that Welsh *Brython* reflects *Britanni* and *Brittones* in their Romano-British application.

If we look to Ireland—which was never a Roman province—the Roman manipulation of group names may be expected to be less of a factor, but the relative dearth of ancient documentary evidence forces us back into a position approximating the interrogation of a text-free void about group identity. If we ask when the Irish emerged, this question can mean more than one thing, and will accordingly lead to various answers separated by thousands of years. If we mean by the Irish, homo sapiens living on the island now called Ireland or Éire, the first Irish belong to the Mesolithic, the post-glacial Middle Stone Age, maybe 9,000 years ago. If we mean the biological ancestors of the present inhabitants, then we are asking for a complicated answer with statistics and percentages of certain genes and proteins—interesting and possibly of some use if you were looking for an organ transplant, but not necessarily of cultural significance. If we mean speakers of the Irish language, or of a language which became the Gaelic group of languages and no other, there is no general consensus about that amongst scholars. The Iron Age, after about 700 BC, or so, has its adherents. Gearóid Mac Eoin has made this case.⁷ I have argued for the Bronze Age, particularly the later Bronze Age after about 1200 BC or so.⁸ The Beaker Copper Age has been suggested (by Myles Dillon and Peter Harbison, for example)⁹. That was around 2500–2000 BC, as we now know. Colin Renfrew has identified the linguistic ancestors of the Gaels with first farmers of the Neolithic, beginning 4000 BC or

6 *De Bello Gallico* I.1.

7 G. S. Mac Eoin, 'The Celticity of Celtic Ireland', in *History and culture of the Celts*, ed. K. H. Schmidt, (Heidelberg, 1986), 161–174.

8 J. T. Koch, 'New thoughts on *Albion*, *Iernē*, and the "Pretanic" Isles', *Proc. Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 6 (1986), 1–28; 'Ériu, Alba, Letha: When Was a Language Ancestral to Gaelic First Spoken in Ireland?', *Emania* 9 (1991), 17–27.

9 N. K. Chadwick and M. Dillon, *The Celtic Realms*, (London, 1967); P. Harbison, 'The coming of the Indo-Europeans to Ireland: An archaeological viewpoint', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 3 (1975)101–119.

somewhat before.¹⁰ Few have conspicuously agreed with him on this.

At any rate, no one known to me is today actively arguing that first hunter gatherers of Ireland were speaking a form of Gaelic in 7000 BC, or any form of Celtic, or even of Indo-European at all. So we must count some thousands of years at least between the first Irish in the sense of human beings in Ireland and the first Irish, in the sense of *Gaeilgeoirí* ‘Irish speakers’.

The Irish and British as ‘them’ are first recorded as Latin derived from Greek *Ἰερνοί* *Īernī* and *Ἀλβιωνες* *Albiones*. Later, and undistorted by the loss of Greek *digamma* *F/w*, the former ethnonym is recorded more correctly as *Ἰουερνοί* *Īuernī*. The first occurrence of *Īernī* and *Albiones* probably goes back to a Coastal Itinerary of Marseille of the sixth century BC.¹¹ In both instances, the names of the people *Īuernī* and *Albiones* are derived from the place-names found classical sources as *Īveriō* and *Albiōn*.¹² *Īveriō* is none other than the Primitive Irish forerunner of Old Irish *Ériu*, Modern *Éire*. And these two place-names and the two derived ethnonyms are Celtic. *Īveriō* is the cognate of Greek *Πιερία* *Piería* (a district name in Thessaly).¹³ The etymological sense is ‘the Fat’ or ‘Fertile Country’. The comparison with the Greek shows us that *Īveriō* ‘Ireland’ has lost Indo-European *p*. It thus fulfils the cardinal linguistic diagnostic of Celtic speech.

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- 10 C. Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins*, (Cambridge, 1987); ‘Models of change in language and archaeology’, *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 87.2 (1989), 103–155.
- 11 T.G. E. Powell, *The Celts*, (1958, rpt. London, 1980), 21–22; J. J. Tierney, ‘The Celtic ethnography of Posidonius’, *Proc. Royal Irish Academy*, 60 C.5 (1960), 189–275 (at 193); C. F. C. Hawkes, *Pytheas: Europe and the Greek Explorers (Eighth J. L. Myres Memorial Lecture)*, (Oxford, 1975); A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979) 39; Koch, ‘New thoughts on *Albion*, *Iernē*, and the “Pretanic” Isles’; ‘*Ériu*, *Alba*, *Letha*’.
- 12 *Ériu*, genitive *Érenn*, corresponds to Welsh *Iwerydd* ‘Irish Sea, Atlantic’ and *Iwerddon* ‘Ireland’. The ancient Celtic forms behind these are the *n*-stem nominative **Īveriū*, genitive **Īwerionos*. In the Antonine Itinerary, a Latin source of the early 3rd century AD, we find *Insula Clota in Hiverione* (var. *Inverione*; Rivet and Smith, *Place-names of Roman Britain*, 180f. Dative *Īveriōne* implies nominative *Īveriō* ‘Ireland’, thus directly reflecting the Primitive Irish nom. **Īveriū*.
- 13 Rhÿs, *Revue Celtique* 2 (1873–75), 196. Rhÿs also pointed out that the loss of *p* proved that *Īveriō* was Celtic, *Early Ethnology of the British Isles (Rhind Lectures in Archaeology)* (1891) 44. Thus the Indo-European preform was would be **piHwerjōn* ‘The Fertile Land’.

Albiōn (for native *Albiū*) corresponds to the Old Welsh common noun *elbid* ‘the habitable surface of the world’ and appears in the Gaulish personal name and Galatian theonym *Albiorix* ‘King of the World’. If any of this sounds familiar, Sir John Rhŷs said much the same 110 years ago. In *Emania* 9, I proposed that the ethnonym *Īuernī* proves that Irish—or the Celtic language that was to become Irish—was spoken in Ireland already at the time that the Greeks first heard of the place in the 6th century BC. More recently, Patrick Sims-Williams has doubted this conclusion.¹⁴ Instead, he argues that *Īueriō* and *Īuernī* could have been names in use by Celtic speaking peoples on the European mainland for an Ireland that was not yet itself Celtic speaking. I do not think that this alternative is plausible, for the following reasons. Not only were *Īueriō* and *Īuernī* in use in what was Ireland’s Final Bronze Age or Dowris II and not only are they Celtic names, but they have also survived in the Irish language of literate, historical times. *Īuernī*, the name that the Greeks borrowed, survives as Old or Middle Irish *Érainn*, a name which not only exists in Irish, but exists in no other Celtic language except Irish. In medieval Irish literature *Érainn* is used for tribal and dynastic groups in Munster and elsewhere. The groups in question are marginal within historical times, but credited with having ruled the prestigious royal site of Tara in remote antiquity; so the name is stratified deeply within Irish-language Irish tradition itself and occurs nowhere else in the Celtic world. Furthermore, the place-name *Ériu* has, as a byform, a common noun Old Irish *íriu*, meaning ‘earth, land’. There is no corresponding word from Brittonic or Continental Celtic. In other words, *Ériu* is explicable as having arisen out of the semantics of Irish in particular, rather than Celtic in general. Furthermore, names derived from the same root as *Ériu* (Indo-European **peiH-* ‘to grow fat’)¹⁵ have survived prominently as submerged eponyms in the Irish origin legends of *Lebor Gabála* and related texts.¹⁶ These include the prominent Milesian invaders *Iär* and *Íth*. The latter’s name simply means ‘fat’. The connection of the name *Iär* and *Íth* to *Éire* and *Érainn* is not at all apparent within the

14 ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, 19–21.

15 J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1 (Berne, 1959), 793.

16 R. A. S. Macalister, ed. and trans., *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, 5 vols. Irish texts Society (Dublin, 1939–50). For a translation of the first recension of *Lebor Gabála* by Carey, see J. T. Koch and J. Carey, ed., *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales* (3rd edn., Andover and Aberystwyth, 2000) 226–271.

literate period. But **Īueros*, the pre-form of *Iār*, would have been an obvious eponym for *Īueriō* in the Primitive Irish of prehistoric times. *Íth* ‘Fat’ (from Indo-European **piH-tu-*) was a reasonable eponym when *Īueriō* was known to mean the ‘Fat Land’, which was no longer so for the writers of *Lebar Gabála*.

Furthermore, Goidelic is the one language in which a form of the ancient obsolete name of Britain,¹⁷ that is *Alba*, from Celtic *Albiiū* survives as the regular name. The fact that this name is applied mostly in a restrictive sense to North Britain or Scotland argues strongly that this name was not recently transferred from the Continent, but is rather a survival of the oldest Insular usage before newer names arose in that part of Britain open to new cultural influences emanating from the European mainland. In other words, *Albiiū* whence *Alba* has also been in use in Ireland since the Dowris Phase.

By about 325 BC, a new name was in use for the inhabitants of Britain, and this sounded something like *Pritanī* or *Pritenī* and the Greeks took it over as Πρεταν(ν)οι *Pretan(n)oi*.¹⁸ We have already met later forms of this name, which calls for an excursus here: these are *Britanni*, which was used by Catullus, and his younger contemporary Caesar, after whom it was the standard Latin form, and then the byform *Brittones* first appears in the first century AD.¹⁹ In Greek, the variation of forms with Π- and Β- makes it clear that these are ultimately one name, in other words, in Welsh terms, *Prydain* ‘Britain’ = *Brython* ‘Britons’. *P-* > *b-* in this position is not a regular sound change, but something of the sort also occurs in another early transfer from Gallo-Brittonic to Latin, namely *gladius* ‘sword’ corresponding to Welsh *cleddyf* and Old Irish *claideb*; presumably, we start with Gallo-Brittonic **kladios* ‘striker’ borrowed as Latin *gladius*. In Brittonic, the same **kladios* regularly became **klaδiδ-* and then **klaδiv* by dissimilation, which was borrowed, probably with a late Roman-type weapon, as Old Irish *claideb*.²⁰ **Pritanī* / *Pritenī* is a P-Celtic form and thus not Proto-Irish. As well as being the source of

17 *Albion* was recognised already as obsolete by Pliny in the first century AD, (*Naturalis Historia* IV.102); see Rivet and Smith, *Place-names of Roman Britain*, 39.

18 K. H. Jackson, ‘Two Early Scottish Names’, *Scottish Historical Review* 33 (1954) 14ff; ‘The Pictish Language’ in *The Problem of the Picts*, ed. F. T. Wainwright, ed., (Edinburgh, 1956), 134–5, 158–60; Rivet and Smith, *Place-names of Roman Britain*, 28ff, 39; Powell, *The Celts*, 22ff.

19 Rivet and Smith, *Place-names of Roman Britain*, 40.

20 Cf. F. Kelly, ‘OI *claideb* and its cognates’, *Ériu* (1971), 22, 192–196.

Prydain ‘Britain’ in Welsh, in which the old group name survives as a feminine singular place-name, the latter gives Early Welsh *Prydyn* ‘Pictland, the Picts’. In their Q-Celtic variant *Cruithin* and *Cruithni*, the name is used again for the Picts and also for the early medieval east Ulster tribal group, the Cruithni. In Britain, the name *Pritanī*, etc., obliterated old name of Britain **Albiū* from an early date, but **Albiū* survived in Goidelic as Old Irish *Alba*.

Now taking these several points together—the antiquity and Celticity of the name *Ériu*, the corresponding Old Irish common noun *íriu*, the submerged eponyms *Iär* and *Íth*, the preservation of the ancient, otherwise obsolete Celtic name of the neighbouring Island (*Alba* < **Albiū*) as its regular name—, my position remains that the language that became Irish was there in the Dowris Bronze Age. *Ériu* and *Érainn* are not only Celtic names for Ireland, they are also specifically Irish ‘us’ names, not Continental Celtic or British ‘them’ names. *Éire* obviously still means ‘Ireland’. But, from our earliest sources of genealogy and legendary history, *Érainn* was not the generic name for the Irish. In fact within the historical period, the *Érainn* were not a group of great extent or political importance. And that marginalisation of the people using the name can be traced back several centuries before the first Irish texts. Ptolemy’s geography places the *Īuernī* in their historical home in Munster. That would be in the second century AD, or more probably, already during the expansionist governorship of Agricola in Britain about AD 80–85 if not from Philemon working earlier in the first century.²¹

Now, one could take an O’Rahilly-esque line and propose that the Irish tales of legendary pre-Christian kings in recollect the prehistoric political upheavals that led to the marginalisation of the *Īuernī* or *Érainn* at some point between the Coastal Itinerary of Marseille of c. 550 BC and the Ptolemaic reconnaissance of the first or second century AD.²² But such an intriguing conclusion is not necessary. It

21 Gregory Toner, ‘Identifying Ptolemy’s Irish Places and Tribes’, in Ptolemy: *Towards a Linguistic Atlas of the Earliest Celtic Place-Names*, ed. David N. Parsons and Patrick Sims-Williams (Aberystwyth, 2000) 73–82.

22 T. F. O’Rahilly, ‘The Goidels and their Predecessors’, *Proc. British Academy* (1935), 323–72; *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946). The prehistoric marginalisation of the *Érainn* is explained in two major narratives in the early Irish Kings’ Cycles of Tales. The first dealing with the reign and downfall of Conaire Mór in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, ed. E. Knott, *Medieval and Modern Irish Series 8* (Dublin, 1936) and a group of sagas concerning the kingship and downfall of Lugaid Mac Con,

was probably apparent enough to authors in the Old Irish period (with all of their etymological ingenuity, much of it owed to Isidore of Seville) that *Érainn* did, should, or could mean ‘the Irish’. At the point that the doctrine emerged that the kings of Tara should count as kings of Ireland then an explanation was required for why kings of the people called *Érainn* ‘the Irish’ were in no position to claim the Tara kingship,²³ and ‘The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostle’ and the ‘The Battle of Mag Mucraime’, both provide such explanations.

The ancient ethnonym *Īuernī* was a special subtype of ‘us’ identification. It does not define ‘us’—implicitly or explicitly vs. neighbours, nearby aliens, groups excluded from the culture and, thus, potential enemies. The etymological sense is rather ‘People of the Fat’ or ‘Fertile Land’. Thus, the name is concerned with the relationship between human beings and cosmos, particularly the beneficial forces of the cosmos. In looking at the early Irish tales, and especially wisdom texts like ‘The Testament of Morann’, it is not at all hard to relate relationship between *Iuerio* ‘The Fertile Earth’ and *Īuernī* (it’s people) to the ideology of the forces invested in the *aes síde* and secured for the tribe or *tuath* by the *fír bflaithemon* or ‘ruler’s truth’.²⁴

I have already mentioned the Welsh *Prydain* and *Prydyn* and the corresponding Irish *Cruithin* and *Cruithni*. As has been long known, these seem to mean ‘people of the forms’, in their derivation. Compare Old Irish *cruth* and Welsh *pryd* ‘form’, from Common Celtic **k^writu-*.²⁵ Some writers have seen in this etymology an irresistible connection to the possibly Latin ethnonym *Picti*. So, the P-Celtic *Pritanī* like the Latin *Picti* are the tattooed people, very picturesque. However, there are forms other than tattoos to consider. For example, the Welsh *prydydd*, the maker of forms, is not a tattoo artist, but the highest grade of poet in the pre-Conquest period. (In Irish the cognate term

edited and translated by M. O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, Irish Texts Society 50, (London, 1975).

23 On the emergence of the notion of a national Irish high-kingship centred on Tara, see F. J. Byrne, *The Rise of the Uí Néill and the High-Kingship of Tara*, O’Donnell Lecture, (Dublin, 1969); *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (London, 1973).

24 *Audacht Morainn*, ed. Fergus Kelly (Dublin, 1976).

25 W. J. Watson, *History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 13ff.; Jackson, ‘Two Early Scottish Names’; ‘The Pictish Language’, 134–5, 158–60; Rivet and Smith, *The Place-names of Roman Britain*, 28ff, 39; Powell, *The Celts*, 22ff.

occurs twice as ogam QRITTI.²⁶) So it is not impossible that it is the correct and learned linguistic forms, the proper vehicle for praise of the élite, which is reflected in the name *Pritanī*.

Another thing that happened between the time that the Greeks heard *Albiones* as the name for the people of Britain in the 6th century BC and then *Pritanī* in the later 4th is that the La Tène art style came into existence and had spread from the Continent to Britain. The La Tène style took another century, at least, before taking hold in the northern half of Ireland. Whether the forms in question in the name *Cruithin*, etc., are tattoos, poetic praise, or ornamental metalwork, this ethnonym denotes people with a distinctive culture, external forms that define a special group identity and probably an élite status. Implicitly, there are other groups within this worldview who lack the requisite forms and are thus excluded from the group. In contrast with *Īuernī*, the ideology of *Pritanī* is not humanity in the bosom of nature, but one group of people purposefully distinguished from others.

In Ireland, *Cruithin* or *Cruithni* never designated the principal domestic group. As I mentioned, *Īuernī* had already been marginalised by the time of Ptolemy's geography. What then did the Irish call themselves? Or did they have a generic term at all? Either in the sense of 'all inhabitants of this island' or 'all speakers of Primitive Irish'? It is not impossible that they did not. What is our word for all native speakers of English, irrespective of the political entity to which they are assigned or place they live? *Scotti* occurs in Latin sources from about 300. It is not certain whether this is of Irish derivation or not. The Old Irish ethnonym *Scuit* and language name *Scoitic* are quite likely to be borrowed from Latin *Scotti* and *Scotticellinqua Scottica*.

St Patrick uses *Hiberionaci* (*Epistola* §16) to mean 'the Irish'.²⁷ This name would correspond exactly to Modern *Éireannaí* 'the Irish' from Primitive Irish **Īuerionākī*. The *-ac-* suffix and Patrick's genitive plural *Hiberionacum* (*Confessio* §23) corresponding to Irish *Éireannach* from Primitive Irish *Īuerionākan*, not to Latin *Hiberniacorum*, show clearly that this is a Celtic formation, more probably Irish than British. As such, it is a productive replacement for the marginalised *Érainn*, in use the 5th century. Patrick is the first

26 R. A. S. Macalister, *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum* (Dublin, 1945) nos. 57, 146.

27 As emended from *Hiberia nati* in the manuscripts, see A. B. E. Hood, *St Patrick: His Writings and Muirchu's Life*, *Arthurian Period Sources* vol. 9 (Chichester, 1978), 40.

Insular Celt to provide us with an explanation of his identity. For him, *Hiberionaci* is both an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ name; he writes: *indignum est illis Hiberionaci sumus* ‘it is an indignity to them that we are Irish’. This sentence is a powerful illustration of the capacity of religious conversion to change an individual’s sense of identity. Patrick was a native of the late Roman provinces of Britain, the *Britanniae* as he calls them. And though his first language was explicitly not Latin and therefore can hardly have been other than Brittonic (*Confessio* §9), he nonetheless identifies with *ciues Romanorum sanctorum* ‘fellow citizens of the holy Romans’ (*Epistola* §2) when he writes to excommunicate the British chieftain Coroticus. Thus, when he calls *Hiberionaci* ‘us’, the missionary has assumed the group identity of his converts. By referring to himself as a *Hiberionacus*, that is *Éireannach*. Patrick is telling us, the same thing he says by way of introducing himself in the opening sentence of his *Epistola ad milites Corotici*, where he describes himself as *Hiberione constitutus* ‘established in Ireland’ or ‘resident in Ireland’. He does not mean that he is of Irish descent, which he is explicitly not, or that he was an Irish speaker, which he probably had become. In other words, Primitive Irish **Īuerionākī* had come to mean ‘people living in Ireland’ by the fifth century AD, what *Īuernī* had meant in the sixth century BC, but had already come to mean something more restricted by c. AD 100.

At the opening horizon of history and full literacy, a century or two after Patrick’s day, Ireland was not politically united. A well-known formulation of Old Irish date, which looks back to the pre-Christian heroic age, states *batar trī prīm-cinēla in Hére .i. Féni 7 Ulaith 7 Gaileōin .i. Laigin* ‘there were three principal peoples in Ireland, namely Féni, Ulaid, and Gaileōin or Laigin’.²⁸ Thus, *Féni* has tribal as well as sociological limitations; *Ulaith* and *Laigin* are distinct, and in later versions also *Érainn*.²⁹ In the laws, the *Féni* are a specific class, the legally-competent freemen of the tribal polity, hence the term *fénechas* signifies the code maintained by the enfranchised Irish. Accordingly, slaves are not *Féni*, nor are the highest grade of professional poets (the *filid*), nor the clergy.³⁰ *Féni* thus always means something more restrictive than the people in Ireland or all the

28 D. A. Binchy, ‘The Saga of Fergus mac Léti’, *Ériu* 16 (1952), 32–48.

29 D. O’Brien, ‘The Féni’, *Ériu* 11 (1932), 182–83; T. M. Charles-Edwards and Fergus Kelly, *Bechbretha: An Old Irish Law-tract on Bee-keeping*, Early Irish Law Series vol. 1 (Dublin, 1984), 133–4.

30 D. A. Binchy, ed., *Críth Gablach* (Dublin, 1941), 88–89).

speakers of Gaelic.

As to the etymology of *Féni*, Eric Hamp proposes that Old Irish *Féni* and the partly-synonymous Old Irish *Goídil* ‘Gaels’ ultimately go back to the same root and are in fact ‘suppletive members of the same paradigmatic stem. In other words, simply contextual shapes of the same thing’, **weidh-(e)l-o-* and **weidh-n-jo-*, comparable to the byforms Welsh *mael* ‘prince’ and *maen* ‘stone’ < Celtic *maglo-/*magno-*, both based on **méġH_q-* ‘great’.³¹ The root appears as Old Irish *fiad*, Old Breton *guoid*, and Middle Welsh *gŵyð*, all meaning ‘wild, feral, uncultivated’.³² These would go back to Celtic **wēdu-* < Indo-European full-grade **weidh-*. The zero-grade of the same occurs as Old Welsh *guid* ‘wood, trees’ in the Nine Juvencus *Englynion*, Old Breton *guid* in various compounds,³³ Old Cornish singulative *guid-en* glossed ‘arbor’ (*Vocabularium Cornicum*), the Gaulish tribal name *Vidu-casses*, Old Irish *fid*, genitive *fedo*, Old English *widu*, *wudu* < Indo-European **widhu-* ‘tree, wood’.³⁴ The original sense of the ethnonym is, therefore, ‘forest people’. Accordingly, we should think that early culturally dominant Insular Celtic groups had called people that they perceived to be at the cultural fringe as **weidh-(e)l-*, **weidh-n-* ‘forest people’. As Hamp recognised, the extratribal bands of warriors and hunters called *fianna* probably go with this root as well.

For a word that defines the Irish as ‘us’ linguistically, as Irish speakers or Gaels, we have Old Irish *Goídil*. Thus, in the opening section of Thurneysen’s *Grammar of Old Irish*, under the heading of ‘The Celtic Languages’, we read,

Gaelic or Goidelic. *Goídil* (sg. *Goídel*) was the ancient name of the people who spoke this language, which itself was called *Goídelg*. The form ‘Gaelic’ in English corresponds to the Modern Scottish pronunciation (*Gàidhlig* as opposed to *Gaoidhealg* in classical Modern Irish). In Medieval Latin it was called *scottice*, *scotice* from *Scotti*, the name by which the Irish tribes were known to the Romans

31 E. P. Hamp, ‘Goídil, Féni, Gŵynedd’, *Proc. Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 12 (1995), 43–50.

32 See *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.n. *Gwyddel*; P. Mac Cana, ‘Y Trefedigaethau Gwyddelig ym Mhrydain’, in *Y Gwareiddiad Celtaidd*, ed. G. Bowen, (Llandysul, 1987), 153–89, at 169.

33 L. Fleuriot, Fleuriot, L., 1985. *Dictionnaire des gloses en vieux breton*, (Paris, 1964); revised version *Dictionnaire du vieux breton*, 2 vols., (Toronto, 1985), 190.

34 Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1, 1177.

since the fourth century.³⁵

What is perhaps the most interesting fact about the ethnonym *Goídil* and language name *Goídelg* is not mentioned here, namely, that these words are not native vocabulary, but loans from the Brittonic forms that became Middle Welsh *Gŵyðyl* and *Gŵyðelec*.³⁶ And, ignoring this point, one might imagine that this linguistic ‘us’ identification of the Irish had existed already in remote prehistory, before literacy, Christianity, contact with the Romans, etc. In fact, the formulation in *A Grammar of Old Irish* is potentially misleading on this point in referring to *Goídil* and *Goídelg* as ‘ancient’ names. They are Old Irish forms. By general agreement, Old Irish covers a span of *c.* AD 600–900, which also by general convention, usually counts as Europe’s early Middle Ages and not Antiquity. Furthermore, from the historical linguistic point of view, Old Irish is not counted as an Old Celtic language, ogamic Primitive Irish is. More to the present point, as I discussed in an earlier paper, the date of borrowing of *Goídil* and *Goídelg* from Brittonic into Irish can be established as having occurred within a narrow horizon within the Old Irish period: the occurrence of these forms in early texts shows that borrowing can hardly have been later than *c.* AD 700, on the one hand, and two Brittonic sound changes show that the borrowing could not possibly be earlier than *c.* 600.³⁷ The British preforms were **Wēdeli* and

35 R. Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish*, trans. D. A. Binchy and O. Bergin (Dublin, 1946), 2.

36 See E. Mac Neill, ‘Ancient Irish Law: The Law of Status or Franchise’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 36 C (1923) 265–316, at 267; D. Greene, ‘Irish as a Vernacular Before the Norman Invasion’, in *A View of the Irish Language*, ed. B. Ó Cuív, (Dublin, 1969), 11–21, at 14; Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 8; Mac Cana, ‘Y Trefedigaethau Gwyddelig ym Mhrydain’, 168–9; Hamp, ‘Goídil, Féni, Gŵynedd’, 43–50; cf. H. Pedersen, *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen*, 1 (Göttingen, 1909) i.23f., 58.

37 Koch, ‘On the Origins of the Old Irish Terms *Goídil* and *Goídelc*’, in *Origins and Revivals: Proc. First Australian Conference of Celtic Studies*, ed. G. Evans, B. Martin, J. Wooding (Sydney, 2000), 3–16. See also Mac Cana, ‘Y Trefedigaethau Gwyddelig ym Mhrydain’, 168–9; J. T. Koch, Koch, J. T., 1985/6. ‘When Was Welsh Literature First Written Down?’, *Studia Celtica* 20/21.43–66, at 48–9.

**Wēdelica*,³⁸ which had necessarily become Archaic Welsh **Guoidil* and **Guoidelec*. *Goídil* and *Goídelg*—with British fortis *w-* > *gw-* and long *ē* > to *oī* (later Old Welsh *ûi*, Middle Welsh *wy*)—before the borrowing took place.³⁹ Contrast, for example, the older and different treatment of [W-] in Old Irish *fírión*, *fírián*, *fírién* ‘just’ < Neo-Brittonic pre-velarised *[Wirjo:n], whence Welsh *gwirion*.⁴⁰ Both sounds are found in Old Irish *féil* ‘vigilia, feast, holiday’, Welsh *gŵyl* < Brittonic *[We:l(-)] < Latin *vigilia*. In the case of *fírión*, etc., the long vowel in the second syllable and the preservation of *-j-* indicate that the borrowing is not amongst the earliest stratum of Christian loan-words in Irish. Jackson placed the diphthongisation of *ē* in the ‘second half of the seventh century’.⁴¹ He also assigned initial unlenited [W-] to [g^w-] to the late eighth century in Welsh, later in Cornish and Breton.⁴² But this second date is problematical for *Goídil* and *Goídelc*, this date is problematical, because we clearly have both words in seventh- to early eighth-century Irish texts. Several pieces of evidence point to the sound change being earlier, thus *Guoidel* ‘the Gael’ occurs as a personal name in charter 209b of *Liber Landavensis*, datable to *c.* 765.⁴³ In the Annals of Ulster at 657 (=658), we have the entry *mors Gureit regis Alo Cluathe* ‘the death of Guriat, king of Alt Clut [i.e. Dumbarton, Citadel of Strathclyde]’, in which the velarisation has occurred in the king’s name prior to its borrowing into Irish. At 622 (=623), there is *expugnatio Rātho Guali la Fiachna mac Bāetāin* ‘the storming of Ráith Guali by Fiachna son of Bāetán’. This latter event is probably the same as that celebrated in a lost saga, the name of which occurs in the mediaeval tale lists as *Sluagad Fiachna maic Baítáin co Dún nGuairé i Saxanaib* ‘The Hosting of Fiachna son

38 I write **Wēdelica* with a *c*, rather than a *k*, here because Brittoni language-name suffix *-eg* is of Latin origin: cf. Caesar’s (*lingua*) *Gallica* for Gaulish, the same preform as behind Breton *Galleg* ‘French’.

39 With this in mind, we must be doubly wary when speaking of Goidelic in pre-Christian times, and we are probably fooling ourselves if we think using ‘Goidelic’ wins us any better understanding than would ‘Gaelic’.

40 Thurneysen, *Grammar of Old Irish* §917.

41 K. H. Jackson. *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), §28.3, placed the diphthongisation of *ē* in the ‘second half of the seventh century’.

42 *Language and History in Early Britain* §49.

43 Twice also as the defective spellings *Guodel*. While these spellings may have been modernised in copying, they collectively point towards *Guoidel* in the exemplum. See W. Davies, *Llandaff Charters* (Aberystwyth, 1979).

of Báetán to Dún Guaire in England'.⁴⁴ The place in question we know from the ninth-century Welsh Latin *Historia Brittonum* as *Din Guairoi*, which is the Brittonic name for Bamburgh, citadel of the Bernician Angles on the Northumberland coast, near Lindisfarne. Now, while it is possible that either or both of these names (*Gureit* and *Dún Guaire*) were borrowed later — and thus reflect a later linguistic stage in Welsh/Cumbric —, the more straightforward likelihood is that monks at Iona learned of these events—and acquired the two Brittonic names—near the time of the events themselves.⁴⁵

A different and earlier treatment is probably found in the name of the fourth abbot of Iona *Uirgnou* (*Vita Columbae* iii.19). More than one source implies or simply states that Uirgnou was a Briton.⁴⁶ He ruled c. 607–c. 623,⁴⁷ and we are told by Adomnán that he had been a monk at Iona during Colum Cille's lifetime (†597). The Gaelicised form of his name is *Fergnae Brit*. The name was evidently received as [WIrɣno:w] or [WUrɣno:w] without velarisation in the late sixth or earliest seventh century and then subsequently underwent Irish [W-] > [f-] or was assimilated to the cognate Irish name. The same treatment is found in the name of Uirgnou's brother *Fedgenus*;⁴⁸ this is the same name as Old Welsh *Guidgen* in the Harleian genealogies < Celtic **Widu-genos*—again passing into Irish about 600 without Neo-

44 Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 112; P. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland*, (Dublin, 1980), 48, 59.

45 It is not impossible that either or both of these names contains etymological (i.e. Celtic) *g-*, rather than Neo-Brittonic *gw-* < Celtic *w-*; however, *w-* is by far the more common source of Neo-Brittonic *gw-*, and *Gureit* in particular resembles a derivative of Neo-Brittonic *g(u)ur* 'man, hero' < Celtic *wiro-*. In the case of Bamburgh, it would run contrary to historical expectations to suppose that speakers of Brittonic would have been in a suitable position to supply the Gaels with the names of places in eastern Northumberland any later than the seventh century. In fact, for a Bernician stronghold two miles from the Anglo-Irish foundation at Lindisfarne, we would anticipate the name to be taken from Old English if the borrowing had been any later than Oswald's accession and Northumbria's second, Irish conversion in 635. In other words, if the setting of Fiachna's battle had been a new invention of, say, the eighth or ninth century, we would expect an Irish form of Old English Bebbanburh, not of Brittonic Din Guairoi.

46 M. Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford, 1988), 39; R. Sharpe, trans., *Adomnán of Iona, Life of St Columba*, (Harmondsworth, 1995), 370.

47 A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, ed., *Vita Columbae*, (1961, rev. ed. M. O. Anderson, Oxford, 1991), xxxviii; Sharpe, *ibid*.

48 Herbert, *Iona, Kells and Derry* (Oxford, 1988), 39.

Brittonic velarisation. Going back a further half century, another datable example of the earlier treatment is the name which occurs variously as *Uennianus* (Columbanus' *Epistola I*); *Uinniauu*, *Findbarrus*, and *Finnio* (accusative *Finnonem*) in *Vita Columbae*; genitive *Uinnaui* in the kalendar of Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Aug. perg. 167 (*saec.* IX¹); *Winniaus* or *Winniauu* in the earlier (seventh-century?) Breton *Vita* of Samson; *Uuiniaus* in a 549 obit in a Breton source (Angers 477, AD 897)⁴⁹; gen. *Uinniani* in a 578 (=579) obit in AU; *Findbarr* in *Féline Óengusso*; and as *Finnian* in later Irish sources.⁵⁰ For the present purpose, it is not of great importance whether we regard Finnian/Uinniau of Clonard (obit 548/9) and Finnian/Uinniau of Moville (obit 579) as two individuals or (as plausibly argued by Ó Riain)⁵¹ as one. The name is Brittonic, was borrowed by the Irish in the mid sixth century; it had Celtic initial *[W-] and shows no tendency to Neo-Brittonic velarisation, but rather goes to Gaelic *F-*. Given what we know of the importance of St Uinniau/Finnian/Findbarr (in the intellectual background of Colum Cille and Columbanus, e.g.), it is not unlikely that some of the later strata of Brittonic and Brittonicised Latin Christian loan-words in Irish are due to the mission of this particular Briton.

The most likely explanation is that *Goídil* and *Goídelg* were borrowed as new words in the seventh century to express concepts which must themselves have been in some way new at that time. That is not to say that the language and ethnolinguistic group speaking the language had no prior existence; rather, the new currency of *Goídil* and *Goídelg* reflect some sort of changed circumstances and hence changed awareness of language and group identity. And these changes are not hard to find in the seventh century, at which time the Irish first emerge as a fully Christian group, literate in Latin and their vernacular, and fully intellectually engaged with developments in both Britain and mainland Europe. Obviously, the two conditions cultivating a written vernacular and being massively in contact with

49 D. Ó Cróinín, 'Early Irish Annals from Easter-Tables: A Case Restated', *Peritia* 2 (1983), 74–86. The usual practice of that manuscript and period would be to write **Guinniau* or **Guenniau*.

50 See D. N. Dumville, 'Gildas and Uinniau' in *Gildas: New Approaches*, ed. M. Lapidge, D. N. Dumville, (Woodbridge, 1984), 207-214. 1984; cf. Ó Cróinín 'Early Irish Annals from Easter-Tables'.

51 Ó Riain, 'St Findbarr: A Study in a Cult', *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society* 82 (1977), 291–303.

other linguistic groups will have combined to make the Irish newly aware of themselves as a group in the domain of language, as well as opening the possibility of expressing this awareness with loan-words, in other words, taking over a ‘them’ identification as an ‘us’ identification.

Interestingly and perhaps not coincidentally, Welsh *Cymry* meaning the Britons of Wales and the North, emerges at about this time. What is likely to be the group name’s first appearance—clearly an ‘us’ name from the beginning, as still—is in a poem addressed to Cadwallon ap Cadfan of Gwynedd, seeming to be panegyric belonging to the last year or two of his life, thus *c.* 633.⁵² *Cymry* is the form that corresponds to the language name *Cymraeg*, meaning ‘Welsh’ or ‘Cumbric’. An early form of *Cymraeg* was borrowed into Irish as *Combrec*, a word which appears in several early sources, including the first stratum of O’Mulconry’s glossary (more accurately titled *Descriptio de origine Scoticae Linguae*).⁵³ As *Combrec* ‘Welsh, Brittonic’ must have been borrowed about the same time as *Goídelg* and from the same language, and as both belong to very much the same semantic sphere, as language names, it is inherently likely that they were borrowed at the same time within a single domain of cultural interaction. Why the seventh century was promising horizon for such developments is not hard to appreciate given the broad outlines of the historical context. The relationships between the peoples of the British Isles had altered, not just through Anglo-Saxon military and political success, but through their conversion. The second and lasting conversion of the largest and most dominant of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms Northumbria had been affected by the Gaels of the island monastery of Iona in Scottish Dál Riata in 635. Thus, not only were Britons, Gaels, Anglo-Saxons, and Picts in contact in Britain as sometimes allies and sometimes adversaries, as they had been for centuries, they were now for the first time four literate Christian peoples on the threshold of vernacular literacy. The educated élite of these four groups were now able to appreciate as Bede was to formulate a century later of Britain as an island inhabited by four peoples speaking four languages: *linguae Brettonum, Pictorum,*

52 R. G. Gruffydd, ‘Canu Cadwallon ap Cadfan’, *gol.*, *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd (Studies in Old Welsh Poetry) cyflwynedig i Syr Idris Foster*. Bromwich, Rachel, and R. Brinley Jones, eds. Caerdydd [Cardiff]: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1978. 25–43.

53 E. Mac Neill 1933

Scottorum, et Anglorum.⁵⁴ It was the emerging awareness of this situation without an adequate native vocabulary to describe it that was the vacuum that drew Brittonic *Gŵydelec* and *Cymraeg* into Gaelic. Such a new awareness crossing cultural and linguistic frontiers also helps to explain the emergence of the new name *Cymry* ‘people of a common *bro* (bounded country)’, more meaningful in the current multi-cultural reality than the old *Brython* with its ancient overtones of primacy within the island as a whole and the old Roman province.

As to what *Goídil* had meant in its source language as a ‘them’ identifier at the time of borrowing, we can see that Welsh *Gŵyðyl* had come to mean the Gaelic-speaking peoples, i.e. exactly the same as Latin *Scotti*, by the early Middle Ages. In the tenth-century Welsh prophecy *Armes Prydein*, the leading Insular political and ethnic groups of the day are named. *Gŵyðyl* occurs three times, once in the revealing collocation *Gŵyðyl Iwerðon, Mon, a Phrydyn*. *Gŵyðyl Iwerðon* means the Gaels of Ireland. *Gŵyðyl Prydyn* are the Gaels of North Britain, the former realm of the Picts, Welsh *Prydyn*, that is the Scots of Scotland. So we have here the sea-divided Gael quite explicitly.⁵⁵ What are probably the oldest surviving occurrences of *Gŵyðyl* are repeated variants in the B-text of the *Gododdin*. The better reading is in *awdl B*¹.6, lines 491–92: *goruchyd y lav lof=len| ar gynt a Gŵyðyl a Phryden|* ‘with his gauntleted hand he vanquished (heathen) tribes of Scots and Picts’.⁵⁶ The name *Pryden*, which is proved by end-rhyme, is derived from the old inflected genitive plural **Pritenon*. It is correctly used in this context. The usual Old Welsh word is the petrified nominative plural *Prydyn* < **Priteni*.⁵⁷ The Picts and Scots are termed *gynt* from Latin *gentes*: if this means ‘heathens’, as it did originally,⁵⁸ then we are glimpsing North Britain before the

54 *Historia Ecclesiastica* iii.4.

55 It would be especially tidy if we could make *Mon* somehow mean *Manaw* ‘the Isle of Man’. If not, the allusion may be to some ephemeral Norse-Irish presence in tenth-century Anglesey; see I. Williams, *Armes Prydein*, ed. R. Bromwich (Dublin, 1972), 21.

56 I. Williams, *Canu Aneirin* (Caerdydd, 1938), 20; J. T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context in Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff, 1997), 32–33.

57 See J. T. Koch, ‘Gleanings from the *Gododdin* and Other Early Welsh Texts’, *BBCS* 38 (1991) 111–18, at 113–4)

58 The fourth-century Romano-British usage is now revealed in the usage of a *defixio* from Bath *seu gen(tili)s seu Ch(r)istianus*; see R. S. O. Tomlin, in *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath: 2 The Finds from the Sacred Spring*, ed. B. Cunliffe (Oxford, 1988) no. 98.

Columban mission (563–597). But by the time the Gaelic speakers adopted *Gwýdyl* in the seventh century, the meaning had changed because the world itself had changed. All Irish speakers were by now Christians. As a name for a Christian ‘them’, it had become acceptable to the Early Christian Irish as a name for ‘us’.