

AGENDA

BROADSHEET 12

Welcome to this Broadsheet which, accompanying the recent double **Welsh issue** of *Agenda*, 'Carpenters of Song' (Vol 44 Nos 2-3), focuses mainly on the excitingly talented work of **young Welsh poets**. Particular thanks are due to **John Freeman** who has sent over the work of promising students of his. John has taught English Literature at Cardiff University since 1972, and Creative Writing since its inception there in 1983. John's work also features in the Welsh web poetry supplement on this website.

Also focused upon are **young Welsh artists** whose work can be found in the **Martin Tinney Gallery** in Cardiff: Tel 029 2064 1411 www.artwales.com

Iwan Gwyn Parry, born 1970, gained an MA from the Chelsea School of Art. His home is in North Wales and he lectures in Bangor. He is one of Wales' leading young landscape painters.

He says of his work: 'The landscapes that occupy my paintings refer as much to a state of mind as they do to particular places, namely the North West corner of Anglesey where I was born and raised. My childhood landscape is still a haunting and mysterious place, a fast and silent lowland of windswept places which have a sonic resonance in my imagination.'

The practice of painting is for me a process of uncovering, and I attempt to use metaphors of sorts to construct and present the work. The erect vertical structures in the paintings have a figurative metaphor referring to human presences and manmade structures. The remains of human activity on the land is visible in suggested elements such as embankments, sluice gates, fence-poles and structures in the landscape. These are deep-rooted preoccupations as they mark the passage of time and the passing of land from one generation to another.

I am interested in colour that produces a sense of depth and space in the landscape such as the feeling of air, atmosphere and time of day, and that colour created through an accumulation of several transparent layers. The paintings are concerned with my personal challenge of finding a visual equivalent of my sensations and inspirations which I am attempting to translate in a visceral and visionary way.'

James Donovan was born in Aberdare in 1974. He studied at Mid-Glamorgan Centre for Art & Design and Swansea Institute of Higher Education. He was the recipient of the Sir Leslie Joseph Young Artist of the Year award in 1998 and he has had very successful solo shows both at the Martin Tinney Gallery, Cardiff and in London.

The starting point for James' images is the miners' processions that used to wind their way through the streets of the valley's mining villages.

Darren Hughes R.C.A. was born in Bangor, North Wales in 1970 and is already one of the leading figures of the new generation of Welsh landscape painters. His paintings show his mastery of the ever-changing light and atmosphere of the North Wales landscape portrayed in an unsentimental fashion.

He says: 'I seek to reflect and encapsulate a sense of place and to explore the structure, the permanence and geometry of the landscape that immediately surrounds my house and studio in Bethesda.



Iwan Gwyn Parry: Rachub Hill with Anglesey Twilight

Emily Harris was born in Albany, Australia but grew up in Taunton, Somerset. From the ages of ten to eighteen she attended Wells Cathedral School as a specialist flautist and her passion for music has a distinct influence on her writing. In 2006 she began a BA in English Literature at Cardiff University which she has just completed. In September she will begin an MA in The Teaching and Practice of Creative Writing. She is 21.

Debussy's *Syrinx*

i

I climb lightly the steep uneven steps
spiralling up the North-West Turret in the dark.
My long black concert dress trails in stony dust.
I reach the heavy wooden door, exhale silently,
then pass through unnoticed onto the balcony.
The vivid, life-size figures in the stained-glass
would reveal my silhouette to the dim nave
if the people were expecting me. They are not. .

The distant echo of Bach from the Lady Chapel reaches
its final cadence. I exhale once more. Fingers
poised on silver keys play silent notes to keep warm.
Faces below begin to turn, look up, as others emerge
from hidden archways. I wait, as directed, for the last
fading light to die in the cloisters. Then it is me;
just me. Inhaling, I lift my arms and close my eyes.

ii

The first cascade of chromaticism begins,
vibrato strong, intonation exact. Repeating,
it falls lower this time, suspends, moves on

accelerando, until it jumps, pauses,
revelling in the fleeting hint of a major key.
The opening motif returns, *piano*, repeating;

another variation, brighter, a rich timbre
gradually becoming dark, wallowing
in the lower register. An octave leap

brings it back into the light, *ritardando*,
making every note count before the flurry
that builds, trills repeating, edged with tension

until the release, *forte, crescendo!*
The motif returns again, this time unstoppable,
upper register carrying the bold, keyless sound.

But it is quick to relinquish, falling, falling
until it rests, lightly, twitching only slightly,
before sounding its final, irresolute notes.

iii

My diaphragm relaxes, but arms remain in place,
eyes still closed as I bask in darkness. The echo
of that final phrase reverberates endlessly;
each semitone merges with the next, fading,
until no one note can be heard. Yet they linger
in unison, disperse leaving more than the silence.
No applause comes to break the spell; it is
an experience, not a concert. Opening
my eyes I know, though cannot see clearly,
the faces below still face my way, dilated pupils
gazing up. It is time. Slowly, I lower my arms,
my instrument, the extension of my own self.
Almost reluctant, I tread lightly back towards
the door, vaguely aware of light returning
as the Telemann duet begins by the font.

Syrinx is a piece of music for [solo flute](#) which [Claude Debussy](#) wrote in 1913 (L 129). It is commonly considered to be an indispensable part of any [flautist's repertoire](#). Many musical historians believe that "Syrinx", which gives the performer generous room for interpretation and emotion, played a pivotal role in the development of solo flute music in the early twentieth century. "Syrinx" was originally written by Debussy without barlines or breath marks. The flautist [Marcel Moyse](#) later added these, and most publishers publish Moyse's edition.

"Syrinx" was written as [incidental music](#) to the uncompleted play *Psyché* by [Gabriel Mourey](#). It was intended to be performed offstage during the play, and was originally called "Flûte de Pan". Since one of Debussy's [Chansons de Bilitis](#) had already been given that title, however, it was given its final name in reference to the myth of the amorous pursuit of the nymph [Syrinx](#) by the god [Pan](#).

The piece is dedicated to the flautist [Louis Fleury](#).



Darren Hughes: A Winter Morning in Bethesda

Rosie Seymour was born in the village of Mzuzu in Malawi in 1985. Since then, she and her family have divided their time between Malawi and North Wales. She is presently completing her final year studying English Literature at Cardiff University, and hopes eventually to get involved in theatre production.

The Study

There are your books in the glass cabinet.
I'm sitting in your chair, and here is your desk
in front of me. The same pot, with the same pens,
and two feathers, one guinea fowl, one pheasant –
a token from each continent. In the drawers are pictures,
tiny squares of personality, looking out at me.
You really did have long hair in the seventies.

I wish I could go, down to that place, down by the sea,
and turn into some wizard or angel or god.
I'd lift my face, spread my arms and summon up
your particles, little glittering ashes flying
back up towards me like fairy lights, one after the other,
after the other. To make a whole. To sit in this chair,
to work at this desk, to be a part of our lives again.

Mouse

When I was little, and I couldn't sleep,
I'd sneak into your office
with a blanket, and a book.
You'd pretend not to hear me –
"It must have been a mouse!"
And I'd smile, and settle,

snug into the window seat.
Leaning on the glass I'd listen
to the creak of your chair,
the tapping on the keyboard,
and watch your face
illuminated by the screen.

Every now and then, you'd reach
into a box, pulling out strands
of tobacco, and small white papers.
You'd smooth them between your fingers,
rolling backwards and forwards,
like little waves. Like a lullaby.

The Catch

I can hardly believe
that you were ever here.
Sitting at the table,
helping with the washing up.

Where the soles of my feet
touch the floor,
your soles touched
a thousand times.

You stare out at me
from a picture on the wall,
holding up a tiger fish,
happy, and proud.

I grip the radiator.

Suddenly breathless.

Assailed by your smile,
and the emptiness
of the kitchen.

Homecoming

You went away from us
all the time,
taxis, planes, journeying.
Each time I was frightened
you wouldn't come back,
and the banners and balloons
would float lonely in the porch.

And then you didn't.
You got as far as Amsterdam
but something horrible
happened on the concrete –
something to do with blood
and veins.
And there were no banners,
there were no balloons,
just a house full of people,
and tissues, and tears.



Iwan Gwyn Parry: The Road through the Estuary

Lamorna Elmer, 20, was born in Cornwall and has lived in Cardiff for the past three years. She studied English Literature at Cardiff University and has a place on the university's masters degree in Creative Writing, starting in September 2009, with intentions to continue writing and teaching within the field in the future. This is her first publication aside from those in student newspapers and magazines.

Daddy, Asleep

You can feel noon. The sun at its highest
invites a flurrying drone of bees. By the lake,
the ducks are stiller than usual.
They sit in the shade of weeping trees.

You didn't get out of bed today,
so you may not have seen. Twilight came
upon the room and I leant toward you,
my breath on your clammy cheek.

I had opened the window, so you
might've woken to hear the sawing
of crickets in dewed grass, or to see
the sunset dying through the bottle
on the windowsill, orange rays made green.

Now, nighttime, the headiness of honeysuckle
infuses the air and gnats dissolve
into the hazy light-bulb balls that hang
in strings from the decking's beams.

Your pillow is soaked with dribble. I draw the curtains
and prop up your head. Here's your pint of water,
the pain-killers, beside the empty bottle of spirit.

Grandma

The rain tip-tapped at the window as we filled
the lounge with the staccato of knitting needles,
clicking as ice does in a glass. Weaving our bond

of wise and young, she passed on her pearls--
(*men are like buses* and such) and the amber scarf
began with its first shaky loops and knots, slipping,

pricking fingers. Now, grown, I wrap myself
in the product of our Sunday afternoons. Our clicking
ceased, the rain beats its windowpane rhythm alone

making the room seem a little greyer. I still don't know
how to finish, tie off the loose threads, her teaching cut short
before we were ready. The scarf reached the end

of the wool, unravelled. But I'll repeat it, knit it again,
so it'll last, its colour ablaze like the fire in the hearth.

Leah

*Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift.
This time my husband will treat me with honour,
because I have borne him six sons."*

– Genesis 30:19

I wonder how many other women have done
as I have –

skilfully arranged the contraceptive packet
on the bedside table, flanked by the tissues
and the night-time read, then crumbled a tablet
into the waste paper basket each morning
while their lovers shower.

I wonder if they feel as I do –

that the guilt is somehow rinsed away
by the thought of his hands inching up
his other woman's thigh.

X

However much I try to think in rational terms,
you will never be mine, lock, stock and barrel.

She is always there, scowling at me,
following us around.
A ghostly wisp with female form
and skinny wrists, tugging at your earlobe
like the miniature devil.

Of course, it could be worse.
There could be a whole paper-chain
of little ladies being pulled along behind us.
At least you've left the dullards out,
cut them loose.

But she was the one you learnt from.
Holding our hands in her wraithlike
authority she wraps her red tail around your neck,
dribbles saccharine insinuations into your ears.

Sarah Grocott was born in Aylesbury in 1988 and grew up in Gloucestershire. She played the clarinet for her home county and for South Wales. She studied English Literature at Cardiff University and hopes to teach English abroad on her gap year. This is her first publication.

The Morning After You Were Gone

Walking into school, I wondered what to expect. The night before, you had left us.

In the common room, I met tear-stained faces, and a headmistress fumbling for words. Your best friends sat in silence. A few girls, wanting something to do, made mugs of tea, which sat unwanted on tables, turning cold. I wrote in the large book, the soft pad of my pen-nib hitting the page as I marked my goodbye. Photographs were pinned to the wall, snapshots of class assembly, school discos, your birthday. One girl, alone in the corner, began to make a paper swan.

She creased coloured paper over and over, her artful hands forming the neat lines of the wings, shape of the head, beak, graceful curve of the neck. Another girl joined in, watching the first carefully, mirroring her craft. One by one, we all took part, bending back red, gold, and blue. Together, we built fragile birds, all alike, yet each one wholly personal, unique. They were all for you.

We made one thousand paper swans, and hung them from the ceiling.

Clarinet

Lifting it out of the box, I study the tiny marks where my teeth rest on the mouthpiece, worn in. On a black wooden body, beautifully formed, silver ornaments gleam in the light. My fingertips cover the holes, from where the music will seep. With the grain of the reed on my lip, I inhale, then play. Between the warm notes and the clicking of the keys, it is not only sound that leaves my body, infusing the room. As I breathe, the argument with housemates over an unpaid bill melts into the air. The deep sound of the low notes soothes exam nerves, and in the melody I find a voice louder and more articulate than my own. I move upwards to a high pitch, struck every time by its range, the calm of a perfect scale. In my mind: a looming graduation, my brother's birthday present, a doctor's appointment. These thoughts are all there, but they sing their way out, escaping.



Iwan Gwyn Parry: Estuary Pool at Twilight

Renyi Lim, 20, was born in Malaysia and studied at St Mary's School, Calne in the UK. She read English Literature at Cardiff University, where she further developed her interest in creative writing, particularly Microfiction and Poetry. This is her first publication

Because the words do not come

Two weeks, and still, the drought is here.
I do not know where the fault lies –
in my hands or in my mind. It is as if
the ink of my pen has boiled dry.

I have tried to conceive
some winning formula, verse that will please,
only to slide into cliché. I have tried
Satie, Debussy, standing at my window

desperate for words to come to me.
They haven't yet, and my thoughts are bare
as a field planted with dead seeds.
Worse than the stillness of the room

are the blank sheets of paper, pregnant
with absence. I mark the midnights that slip
past me, bite sour nectarines and pray
for the shuttered clouds to break into rain.

Message Deleted

I hold in my hands our history, the words
which have sizzled between us for two years:
tiny love bytes passed back and forth, each text typed
with twitching, nervous fingers, leaving trails

of punctuation and spare letters smoking in our wake.
Your messages I've read over and over, storing them
with foolish care, as if they're The Sonnets themselves,
these twenty-first century *luv*letters. I've enjoyed

our correspondence, from that first hopeful *hey*
u okay? which left me smiling for days, my ears
tuned to the joyful chime of my phone. Most treasured
is that startling text loaded with one deceptive word:

love, and I'm forced to love you back every time
I read it. This too must go, like the less pleasant records
of our past – your throwaway apology, *sorry cant make it*,
the first of many disappointments. I bid goodbye

to each single x for which my heart once leapt. Your words
dissolve at the touch of a button, now beyond recall.
Your number I erase last, but what you wrote stays tattooed
on my memory, haunting as your hands upon my skin.

Rachel Faulkner, 22, grew up in Dorset. She studied English Literature at Cardiff University and is now completing a Master's degree at the University of Warwick, with the hopes of ultimately establishing a career in publication and book illustration.

Blackberry Picking

Out walking in late September,
the last stroll before another year away,
and you at home, now working in the office
with your father. We carry with us buckets
we have fashioned from ice-cream tubs
we emptied last night with spoons
and clumps of chocolate spread,
as we had thought to do as children.
The evening sun is warm still,
and water tracks its way
between the hairs along our necks.

Picking blackberries from the bushes,
fat as plums, packed with orbs –
swelling black pupils.
Not checking for dust or bugs
but, with each bucketed fruit,
another tasted, straight from the stem.
Painted jeans and Wellington boots -
children's clothing. We walk slowly
down the long road from my house.
We'll reach the end just to come back again,
mouths bleeding sweet and sticky juice
over our lips and chins. Red smiles
stuck with seeds between the bottom teeth.

These summer walks.
These makeshift hampers,
purple fruit packed in like butter.
They are the same as they ever were.

Alan Kellerman, 29, was born in Wisconsin, USA. He is working towards a PhD at Swansea University, Wales, where he is on the Swansea Review editorial board. His work has been published in many journals and magazines and has been anthologised in Parthian's *Nu: Fiction and Stuff* anthology.

The Soldier Drinks, 1911-12

Marc Chagall, oil on canvas

It's one of those evenings
come screaming yellow
across the bar, the kind
when daylight refuses
to die.

Here, only
the soldier and his cup –
and the mad evening
sky. He takes his drink
like a bullet, as if de
rigueur or decorum, then
a shot from one rifle barrel
finger orders another.

Light
hangs on in vermilion now,
looks foreign on the back
of his hand, and the way his hat
sits leaves dire thoughts
a hole to plug. Maybe
it's his wife again, splayed
finally,

as she'd
threatened each time
he shipped,

accepted
this gun, a stranger
at attention

enseamed
in her lips—

an empty shell
falls to the bar

crimson, the last
red of evening split wide.

AU DESSUS DE LA VILLE, 1924

Marc Chagall, oil on canvas

*And it's hard being dead and straining
to make up for it until you can begin to feel
a trace of eternity.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies: The First Elegy*

At night I dream fences like soldiers, shoulder-
stacked and marching out from the city where you live in

pieces – sips of coffee, teaspoon moments in monuments
erected to ourselves that we rattle around, discarded

tins marking the passing days. Are you really
any more beautiful in red brick and slate tile, leaning

on the breakfast table the way you do knowing
morning best from every window's darker side?

I prefer you in nothing
more than broken
promises and red hair – enrhythmed in sleep

it seems I can climb your ribs
to the forgotten loft of you, familiar as fingertip

to latch – *click* – I unlock you
grow around you in wings stirring tornadoes

from loose soil, as we rise in knife-breaths stabbing sky-
ward – jagged armies beneath ranging across the plains.



James Donovan: Bard

Jonathan Edwards, 29, lives in Crosskeys, South Wales. He has an MA in Writing from the University of Warwick and currently teaches in a Secondary School. His work has appeared in *Poetry Wales*, *Planet* and *The Rialto*; it is due to appear in *Envoi* and *The Frogmore Papers*.

Police Cell

It's big enough for pacing in socks,
as if a princess dreams in a room beneath.
An airport toilet, a frosted bathroom window:
a pane of glass is made of many shards.
A button in the wall, at the height of a light switch:
only press in case of emergency.

A single bed: a mattress of blue plastic
made from the upholstery of my dad's Rover
when I was a kid. *Are we nearly there yet?*
The door with its Soho peephole, its sparkling metal:
a full length mirror in a fitting room,
opened by a man in fancy dress.

Jack-in-the-Box

Just when I think I've forgotten you,
they play that song on the radio,
or, sorting through junk, I come across photos:
you spring up again,
with your made-up smile and stupid little hat.

With a school compass I gouge and scrape,
give you a Hitler moustache and a Glasgow smile,
then shut you up, lock you in.
As I'm fiddling with the matches,
you bounce up, prettier than ever.

I try the doll with long blonde hair,
who'll never give me the silent treatment
so long as I pull that string in her back.
But she doesn't have your spiral staircase neck,
your irrepressible energy.

I snap and show up at your door.
You invite me in for coffee.
In the living room, there's a box, about my size.
You place a hand on my head
and push down against my suddenly springy legs.



James Donovan: Scribe

Owain Williams, 21, was born and raised in Swansea. He has recently completed an English with Creative Writing degree at the city's university. In September 2009 he will be returning to Swansea University to begin a Master's course in Creative and Media Writing.

They Sang *Gwahoddiad*

On a liquescent summer evening
from a pallid hospital bed,
you cancelled your subscription
to the daily news
peacefully
after a long illness
patiently borne.

We finally lost you
to tobacco smoke and chalk dust.

A week later, at your funeral,
they sang *Gwahoddiad*;
the sonorous mixed voices
of Morryston
so loud
that I'm sure you'd
have heard them
had you been sitting
at home, in your chair.

But you weren't,
and you never would be again.

As your town sang for you,
I cried
like the little boy who had
wished that his Bamps
could come outside to play
instead of being stuck indoors,
short of breath.

I know that you, from behind
glass, wished that too.

And, with his stomach full of tears,
adult disbelief suspended,
that little boy heard you,
lungs *hwyl*-filled,
singing in the rows behind;

*Arglwydd, dyma fi
ar dy alwad di,
canna f'enaid yn y gwaed
a gaed ar Galfari.*

But dolour still blurred the vision
of the black-tied man who'd grown
to know that even
the most sonorous of voices
cannot sing
through death's silence.

School Eisteddfod

For Sospan Fach
I sang too fast,
he says,
placing me joint-third,
one from last,
although
only four of us competed.



Iwan Gwyn Parry: Twilight Estuary at Cymyran Bay

Meirion Jordan, 23, is the **chosen Broadsheet poet**, along with **Anna Lewis**, in the **Welsh issue** of **Agenda**. He was born near Swansea in South Wales in 1985. He studied mathematics at Somerville College, Oxford, and has just completed an MA in Creative Writing at UEA, Norwich. His first collection of poems, *Moonrise*, is published by Seren and is reviewed in W S Milne's *Omnium Gatherum* of Welsh books in the Welsh issue of *Agenda*.

Prologue to a Mort Darthur: Merlin

Arthur

was my king:

nameless, and placeless, shaped only by sea;
let us say: I was a beginning,
the north.

I was the saints, and the wild barley;
the wood wose upon a time beggingⁱ,
until I found him. He

who was my mould, my vortex
warping tales into his shape;
face shear as a chiselled stone,
eyes whorled into La Tèneⁱⁱ pools;

angelic, mute. Yet

I was before him, and after him

without him, nothing.

I, who was time before knowledge,
before the names of the walls,

and the hills

and the riversⁱⁱⁱ

knew him like my own,
shaped him, fathered him

on the pieces of Britain, which lodged piercing
in his too human heart. Britain was him

and Britain, wrenching with grief
the poor strands of his story

made him king.

What was he sum of? He

ebb-tide of the Caesars lapping
past Glevum, past Venta Icenorum^{iv},

the memory of Maximianus and Constantine^v
drawing itself tall in the ashes, and he
the brand still glimmering.

Arthur was king; but he was more
than lances in frost

and their shining;

far more than trumpets
mouthing in the camps of Mars;

he too was red Apollo, and Rigantona,
Maponos splitting sky like hoofbeats^{vi}:

more,
he was Maglocunos, and Owain and Urien^{vii},
a watcher of coasts and safe harbours,
seafarer, Breton, husband and lord^{viii};

and unhappy father, he who was all kings
before and after,

least happy of all;

far more than the sunset, and the rider black
against the stars.

I dreamed

that he was us,
and we, filling him like a cup
which, drawn, shows itself the void
between two faces staring,

not kissing, nor reconciled;
a hope never quite realised, or lost:

Arthur

was a trick of the light, he was

the long shadow
of his own name, and we behind him
were the flame, we in the mouth spitting
toothless into the fire, against the cold, or the murrain,
or the evil eye: we in the mouth

of the dragon, Britain.

Whether the saints and the holy wells,
or the sons of Llyr striding between water-spirits^{ix},

a land of sees and sea-curbed monasteries
or genius loci, giants and undines,
of which Arthur was king;

Britain it was, Britain it always was,
in the tides, and the surf raking
back blood from shore
to shingled shore:

he, canopied in his *aulae*, his lances
the very bloom of cavalry gone questing^x
eastwards and west,

for the calvary's gift;

or king of his hall, and the reeked turf, and a few hills
and sodden ground, showing his hearth's honour

in the cutting of hair^{xi};

always of Britain, he was our king;

always of Britain, in the long years dwindling,
always of Britain, with the Saxons burning
homestead and harvest, in the blue of spring;
always of Britain, and his own heart breaking:

Arthur was Britain, Arthur my king.

-
- i The earliest traditions relating to Merlin – the Galfridian vaticinator and prototype for the character of the later Arthurian cycles – probably have their origin in the Old North, where there is mention of a Lailoken (Llallofan) who lost his wits at the battle of Arfderydd and fled to live as a wild man in the woods. This was probably a widely-used trope at the time – it has parallels in Irish tales – and the Welsh tradition of the *gwyllon* has many points of contact with the later Insular understanding of monasticism and saintliness.
 - ii The practice of throwing precious objects, often 'killed' or made useless beforehand, into ritual pools or shafts is generally associated with the iron age cultures of northern Europe; Llyn Cerrig Bach on Anglesey is one such site - as is in all probability the place on Lake Neuchâtel for which the material culture is named. But the spiralling, interlacing designs of the La Tène culture were themselves frequently based on circular forms, whether shield-bosses, jewellery or vessels.
 - iii Outside Wales and Cornwall, it is remarkable how bland some of Britain's Celtic toponyms can be: for example the rivers Avon take their name from a Brythonic (and Welsh) word for river; compared to the rich and descriptive nature of other surviving names, I am often inclined to wonder if names such as 'Penhill' (hill hill?) are not a kind of shorthand for more descriptive ones that have been somehow lost. The walls (Dun-, Caer-) the hills (Pen-, Tor-) and the rivers (Avon-, Aber-) are all common Celtic toponyms.
 - iv Glevum = Gloucester. Venta Icenorum is modern Caistor St. Edmunds, near Norwich, the site of a substantial Roman town.
 - v Maximianus, or Magnus Clemens Maximus (Maxen Wledig in Welsh) was a late Roman general who took his British legions to Gaul in 383AD with the intention of becoming Emperor – which he achieved, for four brief years ruling as Augustus of the West from his capital at Augusta Treverorum. Constantine the Great was similarly acclaimed Emperor by his British legions before crossing to the continent: their exploits lie behind not only the Galfridian episodes where Arthur conquers Rome, but also the parallel Welsh traditions relating to Helena and Maxen Wledig.
 - vi Rigantona and Maponos are celtic gods; the name Rigantona is hypothetical, being back-derived from the better-known 'Rhiannon' by Proinsias Mac Cana and others, whilst Maponos (who is sometimes equated with Apollo) is attested in both inscriptions and place-names found in the Ravenna Cosmography. The hoofbeats refer to the numerous associations between these gods and horses.
 - vii Maglocunos: Maelgwn Gwynedd, a 6th-Century ruler of North Wales who was named in Gildas' *De Excidio* as one of the most powerful kings of the British isles at that time. Urien and

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- Owain are father and son, rulers of the northern kingdom of Rheged in the late 6th Century and descendants of Coel Hen. They are the subjects of some of the earliest Welsh poetry (attributed to Taliesin), including the remarkable 'Gweith Argoed Llwyfain' and 'Marwnad Owain'.
- viii It is worth noting that in the Galfridian tradition, Arthur is of mixed Cornish and Breton descent.
- ix The surprising numbers of holy wells in Wales has been suggested to result from a co-opting of localised water-spirit cults by early Christian missionaries, reinterpreting pagan forms of worship as misguided Christian rites. In all likelihood such methods were preferred by the Christian church of late antiquity in its spread across northern Europe. Llyr is a sea-god whose parentage usually confers some sort of gift relating to the sea and, via Geoffrey of Monmouth, he is also the prototype of Shakespeare's Lear.
- x *Aulae*: hall, court, as in the hymn of St. Ambrose '*Ecclesiarum principes / Belli triumphales duces / Caelestis aulae milites / Et vera mundi lumina.*' The words 'cavalry' and 'chivalry' have the same etymological root – but it is not uncommon for European languages to equate an armed horseman with a member of the nobility.
- xi See *Culhwch and Olwen*, where on admitting the young Culhwch to his court Arthur cuts his hair in what can be interpreted as a ritual manner. It has been suggested that this is a ceremony of kinship-recognition, in that by so doing Arthur acknowledges his obligations as superior kinsman to Culhwch.



Darren Hughes: Storm Clouds over Bethesda

