

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan

Heroic and Saintly patterns within

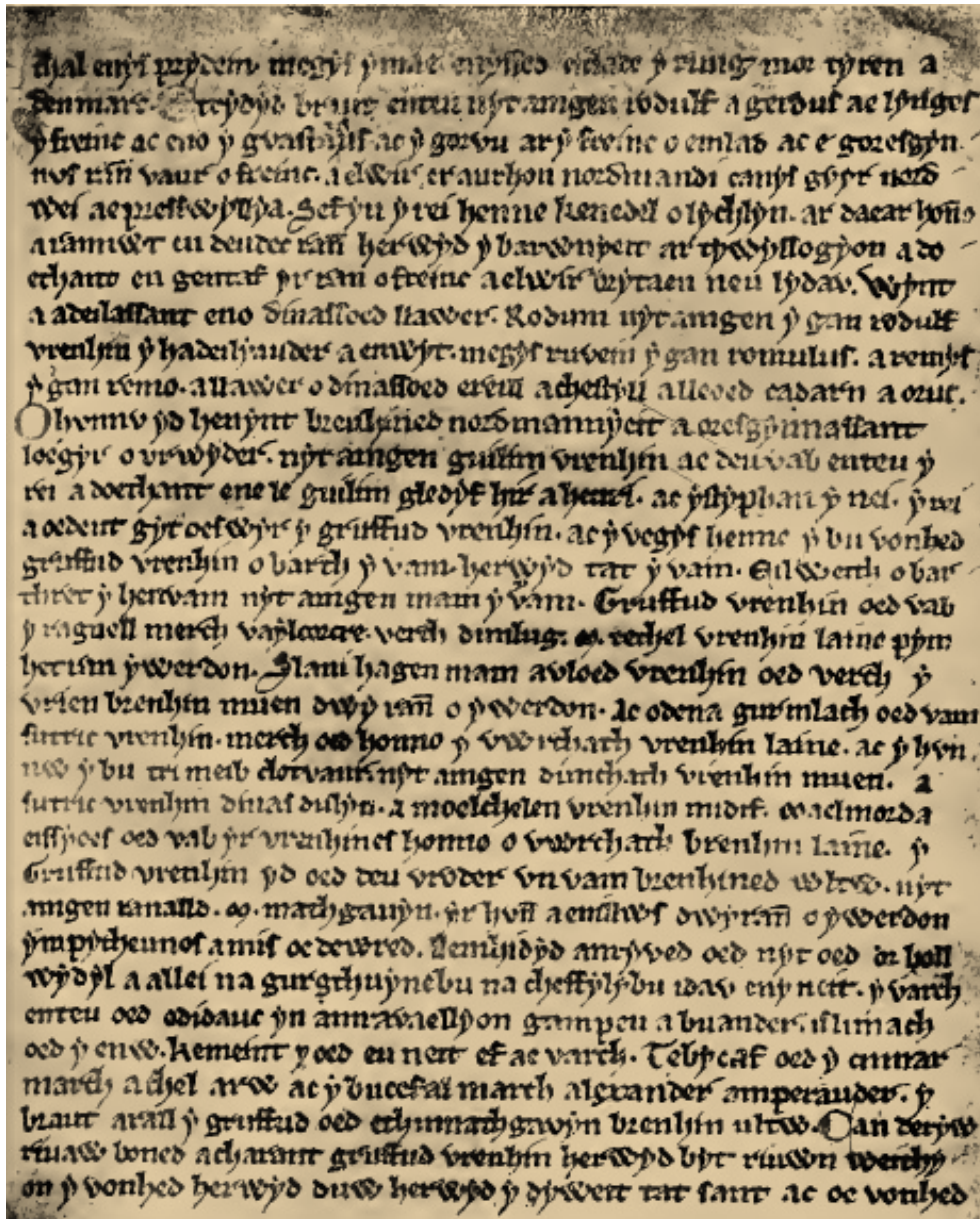


Image taken from Arthur Jones 1910

J.M.Nelemans

3546551

Bachelor Thesis

Mícheál Ó Flaithearta

BA-Eindwerkstuk Keltische talen en cultuur

07-03-2014

Plagiarism statement

I hereby declare that the following Bachelor Thesis is my own work and that I did not commit plagiarism.

Name

Signature

Date

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Plagiarism statement | 2 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Theoretical framework and methodology | 6 |
| Sources, manuscripts and editions | 9 |
| Gruffudd ap Cynan in ' <i>The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan</i> ' | 11 |
| Heroic patterns | 16 |
| The Blessed Hero | 24 |
| The Redeemer Hero | 30 |
| The Saint | 34 |
| Gruffudd ap Cynan the Hero | 39 |
| The author's motive | 41 |
| Conclusion..... | 43 |

Introduction

When I started the course 'Great Medieval Heroes', the heroic biographies and heroic patterns that are present throughout Celtic literature immediately fascinated me. The fact that similar patterns are to be discovered in the tales of the Celtic Heroes made me wonder whether there was a similar pattern to be discovered in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. My bachelor thesis is therefore written in the context of the 'Great Medieval Heroes' course.

Though the topic has been researched before, the main focus seems to have been on the historical context of the text and Gruffudd ap Cynan as a person¹. The focus of this thesis will be from a different angle; the focus will be on the text itself and the patterns that are to be discovered within it. With the help of the existing research on heroic biographies, patterns and the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan I will research if these patterns are present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan as well. The main question of this thesis therefore is whether or not there is a heroic or saintly pattern to be discovered in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. This thesis is built up as follows:

Firstly, in order to answer the main question of this thesis I will set out my theoretical framework and methodology. The importance of the works of scholars such as Jan de Vries, G. Goetinck, Elissa R Henken and Tomás Ó Cathasaigh will be looked into. This theoretical framework will enable me to deduct sub-questions that will help me to answer main question.

Secondly, the sources that mention Gruffudd ap Cynan will be briefly discussed, including the source that is the topic of this thesis, the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. The editions that are available will be discussed as well. Furthermore the Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan will be discussed here.

Thirdly, a short summary of the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan will be given with the help of the edition of Evans. Who was Gruffudd ap Cynan, where was he born, what do we know of him?

Fourthly, I will use the theoretical framework to analyze the Heroes I've chosen to research and compare with Gruffudd ap Cynan. The Blessed Hero, Redeemer Hero and Saint will be examined thoroughly and the motifs and themes within will be analyzed and compared with Gruffudd ap Cynan. The findings resulting from this analysis will help to determine what type of Hero Gruffudd ap Cynan is.

Fifthly, the author's motive will be examined in order to understand why the Life was written.

¹ This point has been made earlier by Nerys Ann Jones in 'Historia Gruffud vab Kenan: the first audience' in '*Gruffudd ap Cynan, a collaborative Biography*', Maund 1996: 149.

Finally, after having established the author's motive, a conclusion will be drawn. Is Gruffudd ap Cynan a Blessed Hero, a Redeemer Hero or a Saint, or is his Life simply an amalgamation of different heroic, saintly and 'blessed' patterns that the author was familiar with in order to portray Gruffudd ap Cynan at his best?

I would like to thank my bachelor thesis supervisor, Mícheál Ó Flaithearta, for his help in picking a bachelor thesis subject and his guidance during the process of writing this thesis

Theoretical framework and methodology

In order to answer the main question of this thesis, I will make use of several concepts as provided by Jan de Vries, Elissa R. Henken, G. Goetinck and Tomás Ó Cathasaigh. The works of De Vries, Henken and Goetinck, among others, have allowed me to analyze the text in a structural manner and determine if the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains motifs that are typical for heroic epics and what type of hero Gruffudd ap Cynan is. The use of these concepts evolves into formulating several sub-questions, which I present below.

I've researched the text given in the edition of Simon Evans thoroughly and tried to identify relevant aspects and motifs within the text. Next I've summarized the text, pointing out the most important passages and events that are contained within the Life. While analyzing the text, certain types of heroes emerged as being worthwhile examining and comparing to Gruffudd.

I've used Jan de Vries' *Heldenlied en Heldensage* (Utrecht 1959) as a basis for my research. De Vries has researched different kinds of epics, including Homeric-, French-, Indian-, and Persian epics, as well as Irish and Icelandic prose sagas, Germanic heroic hymns and the Slavic folk epic. Resulting from this research is the conclusion that all epics and heroic tales show similarities and that the same motifs within these tales are found all over the world. De Vries has used these corresponding motifs to form a framework in which all patterns that are found within the heroic tale are classified. I will use this framework in order to determine if the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains these motifs as well. As will become clear in this thesis, the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan does follow the conventional pattern of De Vries. Based on De Vries the following question can be posed: 1. Does the Life follow an heroic pattern?

Apart from De Vries, Tomás Ó Cathasaigh's *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin 1977) is of particular help. Ó Cathasaigh used the framework of Jan de Vries to identify the patterns, motifs and themes in the heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt. His use of De Vries' framework has been very helpful in this research.

While researching the text it became clear that certain elements within the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan show similarities with different types of heroes. The natural question that is formed from this conclusion is the following: 2. What kind of heroic pattern does the Life of Gruffudd follow? For my research I've chosen to look at 3 types of variants on De Vries' framework. These type of Heroes all have the same basis-motifs as De Vries' framework, other motifs that are typically found with the type of hero are added within the framework. I've chosen to look at the following types of heroes:

1. The Blessed Hero
2. The Redeemer Hero
3. The Saint

I've used the article by G. Goetinck 'The Blessed Heroes' to determine if the portrayal of Gruffudd ap Cynan in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan shows similarities with the 'Blessed Hero'. In his article Goetinck has described the characteristics that are typical for a Blessed Hero. A Blessed Hero is for instance described as *bendigaid* 'blessed', is buried in London and is said to wear the crown of London. Goetinck uses several examples of Blessed Heroes in his article in order to demonstrate the traditions used within the 'Blessed Hero' tales. With reference to Blessed Heroes such as Brân, Gwerthefyr, Cadwallon and Cadwaladr the pattern of the Blessed Hero emerges. If Gruffudd ap Cynan shows similarities with a Blessed Hero, can he be compared to for instance Bran?

In order to determine if the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains motifs that are found with the Redeemer Hero I've mainly used the works of Glanmore Williams and Elissa R. Henken. Glanmore Williams' article 'Prophecy, Poetry, and Politics in Medieval and Tudor Wales', mainly focuses on prophecy in Medieval Wales, which is closely connected to the Redeemer Hero. His work is of particular interest since the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains a prophecy by Myrddin. Is the presence of a prophecy sufficient in order to call Gruffudd a Redeemer Hero? Closely connected to Williams and of particular importance is Elissa R. Henken's work: *National Redeemer. Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff, 1996). Henken has researched several Redeemer Heroes, and from her research it has become clear that tales about this typical hero follow a specific pattern as well, these tales all contain the same motifs. As we will become clear in the chapter 'The Redeemer Hero' and was concluded by Williams as well, the main characteristic for this type of hero is the fact that he was prophesied, he is the long awaited deliverer. If the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains motifs that are typical for a Redeemer Hero, is Gruffudd ap Cynan to be compared with the Redeemer Heroes Henken mentions such as Owain Glyndŵr and Arthur?

Are there certain elements in the text that remind us of a Saint's Life? In order to answer this question I've used both Alwyn D. Rees' 'The divine Hero in Celtic hagiology' (1936) and Henken's *The Welsh Saints. A Study in Patterned Lives* (Cambridge, 1991). From these studies it is apparent that a Saint's Life has certain motifs that are characteristic for a saint. His birth is for instance foretold by an angel, miracles occur at the time of his birth and his death is accompanied by angelic visitations. Within this respect a comparison will be made as well in order to determine if parallels can be drawn between the Life of Gruffudd ap

Cynan and the Life of a Saint. Mícheál Ó Flaithearta justly pointed out that the Latin versions of both the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Life of St. David are longer than the original Welsh Lives. With this in mind, I've chosen to compare the Life of Gruffudd and the Life of Saint David to see if there are certain aspects and motifs that are similar and noteworthy or, maybe even more importantly, don't show similarities at all. By analyzing the different heroes, the following question arises 3. What kind of hero is Gruffudd ap Cynan?

Before a final conclusion can be formed as to whether Gruffudd ap Cynan is a Blessed Hero, a Redeemer Hero or a Saint the author's motive will be examined thoroughly with the help of the editions of D. Simon Evans and Arthur Jones. Both Evans and Jones have written about the author's motive in the introduction and notes of their editions. It is important to look at the motive of the author as it will become clear that the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan has a political motive, it was written in order to glorify Gruffudd's person. It will be clear as well that the author has intentionally interlaced many motifs that were known to the public and in doing so portrayed Gruffudd ap Cynan at his best. Besides the editions of Evans and Jones I've used G.H. Doble's 'Hagiography and Folklore' to establish the author's motive. Doble argues that it was quite common for medieval hagiographers to use their knowledge of different heroic tales, motifs and patterns as well as the lives of saints while writing. I've used both the editions of Evans and Jones and other works as well, and G.H. Doble's 'Hagiography and Folklore' to answer the following question: 4. Why was the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan written?

With the help of the aforementioned sub-questions, I will be able to answer my main question and a final conclusion can be formulated.

Sources, manuscripts and editions

Gruffudd ap Cynan, who lived from c.1055 to 1137², was a Welsh leader and king of Gwynedd from 1095 until his death in 1137³. Little is known about his character in real life and we must therefore examine the written sources that mention Gruffudd ap Cynan in order to get an image of him as an historical figure.

The small amount of sources that are available to us now give us some information on Gruffudd, though one can question the accuracy of the information and depiction within the text. This point will be discussed later on in this thesis.

One of the earliest sources that mentions Gruffudd is a poem written by Meilyr Brydydd, he "...composed an elegy to Gruffudd ap Cynan. This poem is [...] the work of an admirer, whose privilege and duty it was to declare and declaim unqualified praise."⁴ Another source that mentions Gruffudd is *Brut Y Tywysogion*. This source gives a history of Welsh princes from 682 to 1282 and refers to Gruffudd.⁵

The source that is the main concern of this thesis however is '*The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*'. One of the editions of this text that is available to us now is Arthur Jones' '*Hanes Gruffydd ap Cynan: The history of Gruffydd ap Cynan: the Welsh text with translation, introduction and notes*' (1910).

According to Jones, the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan has been preserved in six manuscripts:

1. Peniarth MS. 17
2. Peniarth MS. 267
3. MS. Vitellius C ix
4. Llanstephan MS.150
5. Pantom MS.2
6. Pantom MS.26⁶

Jones' edition is based on Peniarth MS.17⁷ and Peniarth 267. Jones refers to Peniarth MS. 17 as "...the only really old one. Written in the middle of the thirteenth century."⁸ Jones dates

² D. Simon Evans, *A mediaeval prince of Wales : the life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Llanerch 1990) 9.

³ K.L. Maund, *Gruffudd ap Cynan, a collaborative biography* (Woodbridge 1996) ix.

⁴ Simon Evans 1990: 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10. This thesis is too short to enumerate all the sources in which Gruffudd is mentioned. For more on this subject see for instance the introductions in Evans 1990, Jones 1910 and Russell 2005.

⁶ Arthur Jones, *The history of Gruffydd ap Cynan: the Welsh text with translation, introduction and notes* (Manchester 1910) 1.

⁷ A picture of a fragment (facsimile) of Peniarth MS.17 can be seen on the front page of this thesis.

⁸ Arthur Jones 1910: 5.

the other manuscript used for his edition, Peniarth 267, to the 17th century.⁹ In his edition Jones states that there are good reasons to assume that, besides the earlier mentioned Welsh version of the text, there must have been a Latin version of the text as well. "...the Hanes was originally written in Latin at an early period, and only at a later date [...] translated into Welsh in the form in which we now possess it."¹⁰ This assumption is based on the fact that a lot of Welsh place names and terms that should be familiar to the medieval Welshman reading the text are nevertheless translated, explained and glossed in the Welsh text.¹¹

According to Simon Evans, the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan is "contained in only one early text, namely that of Peniarth MS 17."¹² Evans dates the text in Peniarth MS 17, like Jones, to the middle of the 13th century. The text in Evans' edition is, like that of Jones, based on Peniarth MS. 17 and Peniarth MS.267. According to Evans "the original Latin text of the *Historia* has not been preserved, and we only have the Welsh version, which seems to be a very close translation of the original."¹³

Both Jones and Evans state that the Welsh version of the text preserved in Peniarth MS. 17 is the oldest extant version and share the view that there must have been a Latin version as well, which unfortunately hasn't been preserved.

However, in 2005 a new view on this matter was given by Paul Russell's *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*. Russell's research sheds new light on the discussion about the Latin version of the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. In his research, Russell has examined and used Peniarth MS. 434 to reconstruct the original Latin text. He states that "the Peniarth 434 version of the life of Gruffudd ap Cynan represents a copy of the original Latin life which was translated into Welsh in the early thirteenth century."¹⁴ Therefore, according to Russell the original Latin version of the text has been preserved in the form of a copy, Peniarth 434, and this version has been translated into Welsh. Russell dates the composition of the text between 1137 and 1148¹⁵, which is much earlier than the 13th century dating of the Welsh text by Jones and Evans.

⁹ Arthur Jones 1910: 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 16.

¹¹ Ibid., 14.

¹² Simon Evans 1990: 21.

¹³ Ibid., 20-21.

¹⁴ Paul Russell, *Vita Griffini Filii Conani : the medieval Latin life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* (Cardiff 2005) 41.

¹⁵ Ibid., 47.

Gruffudd ap Cynan in *'The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan'*

As a background for the discussion on the heroic patterns within the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, a summary of what is known of Gruffudd ap Cynan from the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan will be given in the section below.

Gruffudd ap Cynan was born in Dublin, Ireland, and reared in the commote of Columcille three miles from where his mother and foster-mother lived.¹⁶ “*Y dat oed Kenan, vrenhin Gvyned, a’e vam oed Ragnell verch Avloed, vrenhin dinas Dulyn a phymet ran Ywerdon.*”¹⁷, “His father was Cynan, king of Gwynedd, and his mother was Ragnailt, daughter of Olaf, [the Viking] king of the city of Dublin and a fifth part of Ireland.”¹⁸

The part in the text on his pedigree is quite extended, first his pedigree on his father’s side is listed, next that on his mother’s side, followed by that of his grandfather and –mother. Apart from this, it is also mentioned that Gruffudd is the son of Adam, son of God.¹⁹

Next we learn that Myrddin, bard of the Britons, has prophesied²⁰ the coming of Gruffudd: “*Llyminauc lletfer a daroganer, anaeth diarvor dygosel. Llegrur y enw, llycraut llawer.*”²¹, “A fierce attacker is prophesied who will come intent on onslaught from across the sea. Despoiler is his name, he will despoil many.”²² This prophecy is followed by a Latin translation in the text.

The text jumps to his youth, we are told that when Gruffudd is a young boy he is apparently growing up in his mother’s home where his mother tells Gruffudd every day of his father’s kingdom and patrimony and that oppressors are inhabiting this kingdom. Gruffudd is very sad upon hearing this and travels to the court of king Murchadh to seek for his help getting his paternal kingdom back. King Murchadh promises to help him “*...pan delei amser*”²³, “...when the time should come.”²⁴

Gruffudd sails to Gwynedd, where at that time Trahaearn son of Caradog and Cynwrig son of Rhiwallon are ruling. Gruffudd takes council with the men of Anglesey and Arfon, with the three sons of Merwydd of Llyn, Asser, Meirion and Gwgon to ask them for their help

¹⁶ Simon Evans 1990: 53.

¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁸ Ibid., 53.

¹⁹ Ibid., 57.

²⁰ Prophecies, or vaticinations are not uncommon in Welsh literature. They are highly connected to the *mab darogan*, which I will come back to later in this thesis. See Meic Stephens, *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford 1986) 612, and Margaret Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh with English Parallels* (Cardiff 1937) especially.

²¹ Simon Evans 1990: 27.

²² Ibid., 58.

²³ Ibid., 28.

²⁴ Ibid., 59.

getting his rightful land back. After getting their consent Gruffudd sails to Robert of Rhuddland and receives his support as well.

At this point in the text another prophecy is given, that of Tangwystl. She is the wife of Llywarch Olbwch and a kinswoman of Gruffudd. Tangwystl prophesies that Gruffudd is going to be king in the future and gives him “...y kryd meinhaf [...], a pheiswedy y gvneithur o ysgin Gruffud vrenhin [...] canys Llewarch y gur hitheu oed wahanredolaf guas ystavell a thrysoryer y Gruffud...”²⁵, “...the thinnest and finest shirt and a tunic made from the mantle of king Gruffudd [...] because her husband Llywarch was the most trusted chamberlain and treasurer of Gruffudd...”²⁶

Next, the text tells us that the abovementioned men set off to fight Cynwrig and kill him and his men. When Gruffudd hears this good news he advances and subdues Anglesey, Arfon, Llyn and the cantrefs bordering England and sends a large host to Meirionnydd to fight Trahaearn. They kill many men on Trahaearn’s side, Trahaearn himself manages to escape but Gruffudd and his men pursue him and drive him over the borders. This defeat makes it possible for Gruffudd to begin to settle and rule his kingdom.

The story now tells us of an attack on Robert of Rhuddland and French knights, in which Gruffudd succeeds. Next, the three sons of Merwydd and the men of Llyn, who earlier promised to help Gruffudd with his conquests, betray him by first uniting against him and killing some of his men and next by allying with Trahaearn. This treachery causes the battle of Bron-yr-erw to be fought. In this battle, Tudor from Anglesey, one of the two brothers from Anglesey who betrayed Gruffudd as well, tries to kill Gruffudd but one of his men prevents this and removes Gruffudd from the battlefield.

Gruffudd then returns to Ireland to recount what has happened to the king and his chieftains and upon this returns to Wales again with a fleet full of Irish and Danes to fight Trahaearn who has taken control of Gwynedd again. However, the men who go there and fight with him get angry and betray Gruffudd by taking Anglesey by force from him and “...a’e dwyn enteu ganthunt, ac nyt o’e vod”²⁷, “...took him also with them, but against his will.”²⁸ It is not clear to me why they are mad with Gruffudd at this point, the only thing that is being said in the text is that this is “...cany cheynt eu gordyfneit mal yr adawadoed udunt”²⁹, “...because they were not getting what they were accustomed to, as had been

²⁵ Simon Evans 1990: 29.

²⁶ Ibid., 60.

²⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁸ Ibid., 65.

²⁹ Simon Evans 1990: 34.

promised them.”³⁰ Nevertheless this is the second time in the story that Gruffudd is confronted with treachery.

After this Gruffudd spends several years in Ireland, the Normans in the meanwhile having plundered and destroyed Gwynedd, Gruffudd decides to set sail to Wales again where he meets Rhys ap Tewdwr and allies with him to fight against the oppressors of Gwynedd once again. They advance and fight a fierce battle at Mynydd Carn³¹ next, Gruffudd is victorious and many men, including Trahaearn, are killed that day. Rhys ap Tewdwr however withdraws in secret from Gruffudd, Gruffudd being infuriated by this destroys the lands of Rhys as well as the lands of Trahaearn and his other enemies.

But treachery was to happen again. Meirion Goch betrays Gruffudd by letting him be captured by Hugh earl of Chester and Hugh earl of Shrewsbury. Gruffudd is imprisoned.

The author of the text now takes the opportunity to describe Gruffudd as a person, we are given a description of his appearance, nature and intelligence.

Meanwhile, earl Hugh takes over Gwynedd. It is at this point in the text that we learn that Gruffudd has been imprisoned for sixteen years before he escapes with the help of a man called Edeirion. A somewhat messy account of Gruffudd going back and forth from Ireland to Wales follows.

The author of the story now tells us about Gruffudd’s wife and children, his wife being Angharad, daughter of Owain who bore him several sons and daughters: Cadwallon, Owain, Cadwaladr, Gwenllian, Maryret, Rainillt, Susanna and Annest. It is mentioned that he did have children with other women as well.

William Rufus tries to take over Gwynedd in the next passage but does not succeed for Gruffudd fights back, Gruffudd however spares William and his Frenchmen. Hugh earl of Chester and Hugh earl of Shrewsbury decide to fight Gruffudd once again and take a fleet by sea to the territory of Gruffudd, Gruffudd receives help from Ireland in the form of ‘sixteen ships with long keels.’³² Upon hearing this the earls send messengers to these ships to ask them to betray Gruffudd, Gruffudd is betrayed once again. Gruffudd flees, meanwhile Hugh earl of Shrewsbury is killed by a fleet from the king of Llychlyn³³. When Gruffudd returns to Wales again he finds his land desolate. Gruffudd thereupon makes peace with Hugh earl of Chester and consolidates his position in Gwynedd with help of Henry, king of England.

³⁰ Ibid., 65.

³¹ The battle of Mynydd Carn took place in 1081, Meic Stephens, *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford 1986) 594.

³² Simon Evans 1990: 76.

³³ According to Evans’ notes, Llychlyn probably means ‘Norway’ in this case. He states however that ‘Harald Harfagyr’s father could at no time be described as the king of Norway’, Simon Evans 1990: 94.

“*Oddyne eissyoed pob dryll y rhwyddhaws pob peth rhag Gruffudd [...] a pheunydd y llithrynt attaw ereill o Ros ag eu hanrheithyeu ganthunt hep gannyat yarll Kaer, ag amlau y bobyl.*”³⁴, “However, from then on everything gradually prospered for Gruffudd [...] and there slipped to him daily others from Rhos and their possessions with them, without the consent of the earl of Chester, and his people multiplied.”³⁵ The earl and king Henry are offended by this and take the king of Scotland with them as well as the Scots and the men of the South to fight against Gruffudd.³⁶ Instead of fighting each other they negotiate and make peace. King Henry tries to fight Gruffudd after this once more but they make peace again.

We are now told that Gruffudd ruled his kingdom from that day on with an iron rod, was good to his people and built many churches. Gruffudd becomes old, loses the sight of his eyes and retires. He divides his wealth to the churches and monasteries as well as to the archdeacon and bishops. He died at the age of 82 and is buried in Bangor in “*y mewn yskrin yn y parth assw y’r allawr fawr yn yr eglwys*”³⁷, “a tomb on the left side of the high altar in the church.”³⁸

The mentioned retirement of Gruffudd is of particular interest, why would he retire after overcoming such difficulties to regain Gwynedd? And what did Gruffudd actually do between his retirement and his death at the age of 82? The answer may lie in another account of his death, it is mentioned in the *Brut Y Tywysogion* in 1136:³⁹

“In the same year Gruffudd, son of Cynan died – the king and sovereign and prince and defender and pacifier of all the Welsh, after many dangers by sea and land, after innumerable spoils and victories in war, after riches of gold and silver and costly garments, after collecting together into Gwynedd, his own country, those who had been before scattered into various countries by the Normans, after building in his time many churches, and consecrating them to God, and after habiting himself as a monk, and receiving the communion of the Body of Christ, and extreme unction.”⁴⁰

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, however, states that “*ef a arfaethws [...] fynet e hun y le dirgel ysgafalaf, y ddwyn buchedd ddwywawl, a thremygu y holl arglwyddiaeth vydawl yn*

³⁴ Simon Evans 1990: 48.

³⁵ Ibid., 80.

³⁶ Ibid., 125. According to Evans’ notes, this fight probably refers to the expedition in 1114 which is also mentioned in the *Brut Y Tywysogion*.

³⁷ Ibid., 52.

³⁸ Ibid., 83.

³⁹ According to Evans the death of Gruffudd ap Cynan is mentioned in 1137 in the *Brut Y Tywysogion*. The year of death in John Williams, *Brut Y Tywysogion*, (London 1860 however is 1136.

⁴⁰ John Williams, *Brut Y Tywysogion* (London 1860) 161.

llwyr.”⁴¹, “he resolved [...] to go on his own to a secret, secure place, to lead a godly life, and despise all his worldly dominion completely.”⁴² Though it is not explicitly stated in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, this may suggest that Gruffudd spent the last years of his life in a monastery.

⁴¹ Simon Evans 1990: 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 82.

Heroic patterns

At first sight some of the themes and events in the Life seem to be somewhat similar to events and themes that occur in other Celtic sources and the heroic tales in particular.⁴³

In order to identify the heroic patterns that are used in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan it is necessary to look at the heroic pattern that is often used in heroic tales. As scholars have pointed out, heroic tales all seem to follow a similar pattern. This pattern makes up the 'heroic biography'⁴⁴ and is described by Tomás Ó Cathasaigh in his book: *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt*. Ó Cathasaigh adopted the framework of Jan de Vries to identify the heroic patterns in the tale of Cormac mac Airt. Likewise, with the help of De Vries' framework, I will try to identify the heroic motifs and themes that are present and absent in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan.

De Vries' framework:

- I. The Begetting of the hero.
- II. The Birth of the hero.
- III. The youth of the hero is threatened.
- IV. The way in which the hero is brought up.
- V. The hero often acquires invulnerability.
- VI. The fight with a dragon or other monster.
- VII. The hero wins a maiden, usually after overcoming great dangers.
- VIII. The hero makes an expedition to the underworld.
- IX. When the hero is banished in his youth he returns later and is victorious over his enemies. In some cases he has to leave the realm again which he has won with such difficulty.
- X. The death of the hero.⁴⁵

The framework of De Vries gives an insight into the patterns that are present in the 'heroic biography'. Often there are several separate tales of a hero which constitute the hero's heroic biography. When we look at a hero such as Cú Chulainn for instance, the tales that form his heroic biography are '*Compert Con Culainn*', 'the conception and birth of Cú Chulainn', '*Macgnímrada Con Culainn*', 'the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn' and '*Oidheadh Con*

⁴³ It should however be noted that since Gruffudd ap Cynan is an historical character, supernatural elements are most likely not to be found throughout the Life.

⁴⁴ Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin 1977) 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

Culainn’, ‘the death of Cú Chulainn’. These tales, as other tales in which Cú Chulainn features, form the heroic biography of the hero Cú Chulainn. They give us an overview of the life of the hero and enable us to establish recurring themes and motifs.

When examining Gruffudd ap Cynan however there aren’t many sources that provide us with information on Gruffudd as a person besides the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. When applying the framework of De Vries to the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan the following emerges. We do not know anything about (I) his begetting. Within the framework of De Vries, variant themes and motifs are added from different traditions.⁴⁶ From these variant motifs and themes it becomes clear that the begetting of a hero is usually unusual or supernatural. The mother is either a virgin, the father a god or an animal or the child was conceived from an incestuous relationship.⁴⁷ This point in the framework is also present in the Saints’ Lives. When we look at the conception of St. David for instance, we learn that David’s mother was a virgin called Nonnita, and that he was conceived through rape.⁴⁸ The Life of Gruffudd, however, simply starts with an extensive overview of his pedigree. This section in the tale states that “*Y dat oed Kenan, vrenhin Gwynedd, a’e vam oed Ragnell verch Avloed, vrenhin dinas Dulyn a phymet rann Ywerdon*”⁴⁹, “his father was Cynan, king of Gwynedd, and his mother was Ragnailt, daughter of Olaf, king of the city of Dublin and a fifth part of Ireland.”⁵⁰ The Life does not mention anything about his begetting.

Secondly, the tale does not mention (II) the birth of Gruffudd ap Cynan. The hero’s birth either is unnatural or the hero is unborn, the latter in which the child is delivered by cesarean section.⁵¹ Llew Llaw Gyffes for instance was born while his mother, who’s being challenged in a virginity test, steps over a magic wand and in doing so drops a baby. Other Celtic heroes are usually born in an unnatural way as well.⁵²

Furthermore, there is no mentioning of (III) his youth being threatened. Gruffudd seems to grow up as a normal boy and there is no mentioning of an attempt being made on his life when he is a young boy. He is not a foundling who is raised by animals nor does he grow up or is he reared by a mythical figure.⁵³

(IV) According to De Vries this point in the framework has two variant motifs. The

⁴⁶ Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 6.

⁴⁷ Jan de Vries, *Heldenlied en Heldensage* (Utrecht 1959) 195-6.

⁴⁸ A.W. Wade-Evans, *Life of St. David* (London 1923) 4.

⁴⁹ Simon Evans 1990: 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵¹ De Vries 1959: 196 points out that this motif is present in Persian and Russian tales, and in the Welsh tale of Tristan. Since this point does not apply to the Life this point will not be discussed any further in this thesis.

⁵² See for instance Sioned Davies, *Mabinogion* (Oxford 2008).

⁵³ De Vries 1959: 197.

hero either A. reveals his strength, courage and other special qualities at a very young age or B. is very slow in his maturation, stupid or pretends to be simpleminded.⁵⁴

An example of A. is found in the boyhood deeds of Cú Chulainn. When Cú Chulainn is young “he heard great rumours about the boys in Emain. Three times fifty boys [...] are always playing in Emain.”⁵⁵ Cú Chulainn, though he is still a little boy begs his mother to join this boy-troop. His mother tells him that it’s too dangerous and he can’t go until the Ulster-warriors go with him, but Cú Chulainn “set off, with a toy shield made out of sticks and a toy javelin and his hurling-stick and ball.”⁵⁶ The story of Cú Chulainn as a young boy shows a high resemblance with the young Gruffudd. Cú Chulainn hears about a boy-troop in Emain and wants to join them, and although his mother forbids him he decides to go anyway at a very young age. One passage in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan may indicate that he was demonstrating his heroism from a very young age:

“Pan ytoed Gruffud etwa en vab da y deuodeu a drythyll y vakyat, ac yn esgynnv ar vlwydyned y yeugengtít en ty e vam [...] ymplith henne y managei y vamm idav beunydw pwy a pha ryw wr oed y dat, a pha dref tat oed idav, a pha ryw vrenhinyaeth, a pha ryw dreiswyr a oed en e phressvyllyav. A phan gígíeu enteu henne, gorthrum y kemyrth a thrist vu llawer o dydyeu. Ac urth henne y kerdus enteu y lys Mvrchath vrenhin, a chvynav urthav ef en benhaf [...] bot estravn genedloed en argluydi ar y dadaul deyrnas.”⁵⁷

“When Gruffudd was still a lad of good manners and sumptuous upbringing, ascending the years of his youth in his mother’s home [...] during that time his mother used to tell him every day who and what kind of man his father was, what patrimony had belonged to him, what kind of kingdom, and what kind of oppressors were inhabiting it. And when he heard that, he took it greatly to heart and was sad for many days. He, therefore, travelled to the court of king Murchadh, and complained to him chiefly [...] that foreign peoples were lords over his paternal kingdom.”⁵⁸

The passage ends with the consent of king Murchadh to help him and in the next passage Gruffudd sails to Abermenai, Wales. Though there isn’t any information on the age of Gruffudd in these passages, the fact that we are told that he was still in the household of his mother and ‘ascending the years of his youth’ suggests that Gruffudd was still a little boy at

⁵⁴ De Vries 1959: 198.

⁵⁵ Thomas Kinsella *The Tain* (Oxford 1969) 76.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁷ Simon Evans 1990: 28.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-9.

this time. Gruffudd ap Cynan hears about his patrimony everyday and saddened by this, decides to leave and ask for the help of king Murchadh. This shows many similarities with the young Cú Chulainn who hears about the boys in Emain. As a young boy Gruffudd hears that foreign people are inhabiting Gwynedd and Gwynedd is rightfully his because of his pedigree. If Gruffudd is still a little boy at this time and travels to king Murchadh to ask for his help to get Gwynedd back, this may indicate that Gruffudd is a brave and courageous boy from a very young age. He is not afraid to get back what is rightfully his. In my opinion, this point in the framework therefore can be present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, though this point of course depends on the age of Gruffudd at this time and his age is unfortunately not stated in the text. This passage does however show similarities with the young Cú Chulainn. Interestingly enough though, John Davies states that Gruffudd was “a boy of eight who lived in Ireland with his mother.”⁵⁹ If this is the case, this point is without a doubt present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan.

(V) The invulnerability of a hero often refers to for instance a special feature which makes it harder to injure or kill him. De Vries justly refers to Llew Law Gyffes who reveals that it would be necessary to spend a year making the spear to strike him with, and that he cannot be killed inside a house, nor outside and cannot be killed on horseback or on foot.⁶⁰ This point isn't present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan.

Throughout the story, Gruffudd fights several enemies that prevent him from claiming his rightful throne in Gwynedd. First, there are Trahaearn son of Caradog and Cynwrig son of Rhiwallon who are sitting on the throne in Gwynedd, Trahaearn and Cynwrig fight Gruffudd ap Cynan to prevent him from claiming the throne. Second, we have the three sons of Merwydd of Llyn, Asser, Meirion and Gwgon. Though they help Gruffudd initially, later in the story they betray Gruffudd by fighting against him. Meirion Goch even causes Gruffudd's imprisonment, making it impossible for Gruffudd to continue his battle. Hugh earl of Shrewsbury and Hugh earl of Chester are the ones responsible for his imprisonment, they capture Gruffudd and imprison him for 12 or 16 years. They sabotage Gruffudd's quest over and over again, asking people to betray him and fighting Gruffudd till the end until they finally make peace. As can be concluded from these examples, Gruffudd does not (VI) fight with a dragon or other monster in the story, however his constant fight against his oppressors, for instance Trahaearn son of Caradog and Cynwrig son of Rhiwallon, can be seen as a fight with a metaphorical dragon or monster in the form of 'the enemy'. As Dean Miller has

⁵⁹ John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London 2007) 99.

⁶⁰ Sioned Davies, *Mabinogion*, (Oxford 2008) 60.

pointed out, often “...the “bad king” is imagined as the holdfast dragon full of venomous powers, who must be fought or fooled (or both) for the hero to gain his goal.”⁶¹ Though a dragon and monster are not mentioned in the Life of Gruffudd, this point is therefore present in the Life in my opinion.

It is mentioned that Gruffudd does have a wife, we are told that “[...] *val yd oed Gruffud y velly weithieu en rwyd, weithyeu en afruyd racdav, ef a gemyrth gureic, Angharat y henv, merch y Ewein vab Edwin*”⁶², “[...] as Gruffudd thus at times found the path of life smooth, and at other times rough, he took a wife, namely Angharad, daughter of Owain son of Edwin...”⁶³ He does not however (VII) win her after overcoming great dangers, since he simply takes a wife.

At first sight it seems that Gruffudd does not (VIII) make an expedition to the Underworld. However, the Celtic Otherworld can have many different forms. As Howard Hollin Patch has pointed out “the journey to the Otherworld is nearly always over an expanse of water, frequently across the sea itself”⁶⁴ and that it can have the form of “a remote island.”⁶⁵ Gruffudd has to cross the sea in order to reach Wales. “*En y lle esgynnv llong a oruc, a dyrchavael hwylyeu y’r gvynt, a cherdet mor parth a Chemry, a chaffael porth Abermenei.*”⁶⁶, “Forthwith he embarked in a ship, raised sails to the wind, voyaged by sea towards Wales, and arrived at the harbor of Abermenai.”⁶⁷ Not only can the Otherworld be reached by a voyage across the sea, “quite frequently the Otherworld is separated from us, not by the ocean but merely a river.”⁶⁸ A river is mentioned in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan as well: “[...] *Jyd aeth en yscraff e canonwyr en Aberdaron, ac en honno a dan rwyf yd aeth hyt en Ywerdon. Odeno eilchuyl ym pen y mis y doeth dracheuyn en [...] er vn yscraff, ac y cavas aber er vn avon o’r lle y kychvynnassei. Ac odeno y kerdus eilweith dracheuen hyt en Ywerdon.*”⁶⁹, “[...] he went into the skiff of the canons in Aberdaron, and in it he rowed as far as Ireland. From there again in a month’s time he returned in the same skiff, and reached the mouth of the same river whence he had set forth. And from there he voyaged again back to Ireland.”⁷⁰ Gruffudd ap Cynan makes many expeditions over water towards Wales, he

⁶¹ Dean Miller, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore 2000) 168.

⁶² Simon Evans 1990: 42.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶⁴ Howard Rollin Patch, ‘Some Elements in Mediaeval Descriptions of the Otherworld’, *PMLA*, Vol. 33. No. 4 (1918) 627.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 627-8.

⁶⁶ Simon Evans: 1990: 28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1990: 59.

⁶⁸ Patch 1918: 630.

⁶⁹ Simon Evans 1990: 40.

⁷⁰ Simon Evans 1990: 72.

voyages across the sea towards Wales and voyages a river as well. Likewise, Gruffudd voyages across the sea back and forth from Wales to Ireland. If Gruffudd was exiled to Ireland as a little boy, which the Life suggests since he is the rightful heir of Gwynedd, Ireland may be seen as the Otherworld as well. I would therefore argue that both Wales and Ireland may well function as the Otherworld in the Life.

Point (IX) of De Vries' framework, 'when the hero is banished in his youth he returns later and is victorious over his enemies', seems to be present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan as well. Ó Cathasaigh has justly pointed out that this point applies especially to king-heroes⁷¹, which may therefore apply to Gruffudd since he was a Welsh ruler. Although it is not explicitly mentioned that Gruffudd was banished, Gruffudd however spends years in exile in Ireland. According to C.P. Lewis "the idea of exile dissolves into soft focus, merging variously into banishment, flight, enforced removal, captivity, voluntary departure, and many other types of displacement."⁷² Exile therefore can take many forms, and some of these forms are present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan as well. The forms of exile that are present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan include flight, enforced removal, and captivity, as will become clear when examining the passages about treachery in the section 'The Blessed Hero'. From these accounts it will become clear that Gruffudd was exiled many times. Gruffudd was not the only king of Gwynedd who went into exile, others kings include Dafydd ap Owain⁷³ and Cadwallon ap Cadfan.⁷⁴

The episode of being captured is particularly interesting. Gruffudd is imprisoned for 12 or 16 years⁷⁵, escapes with the help⁷⁶ of Cynwrig Hir and hides him for a few days in his home. Next, he takes him to Anglesey where he is hidden once more. After this episode Gruffudd fights the people of Deheubarth, and after being victorious continues his voyage but not knowing where to go because of constant treachery, "...y gueles meibeon Gollwyn ef, Eginir, Gellan, Merwyd, Edneuet, y truanassant urthau, ac y diwallasant ef a dan gel y mevn gogoueu diffeith. A guedy diwed missoed e dvnassant idav wyth ugeinwyr..."⁷⁷, "...the sons of Gollwyn, Eginir, Gellan, Merwydd, Ednyfed, saw him, they took pity on him and supported him secretly in desolate caves. After some months there joined him a hundred and

⁷¹ Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 7.

⁷² C.P. Lewis, 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Reality and Representation of Exile', *Exile in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laura Napran, Elisabeth van Houts (Turnhout 2004) 39.

⁷³ John T. Koch, *Celtic Culture: A Historic Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbara 2006) 672.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁷⁵ The text is not consistent about this and both mentions 12 and 16 years as a duration.

⁷⁶ Helpers are often found in heroic tales, as has been pointed out by Dean Miller 2000: 167-8.

⁷⁷ Simon Evans 1990: 40.

sixty men...”⁷⁸

Cave legends are not uncommon in Celtic literature.⁷⁹ In her article ‘Three forms of a Hero: Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, and Owain Glyndŵr’, Elissa R. Henken has discussed the legends of caves that are associated with these three heroes. One of these legends includes the ‘Sleeper in the Cave legend’, Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, and Owain Glyndŵr being the only three Redeemer Heroes associated with this legend.⁸⁰ Of particular interest is the use of caves in the stories about Owain Glyndŵr since “Glyndŵr’s cave legends [...] are about the caves he retreated to during the periods of guerilla warfare or where he hid for weeks at a time while closely hunted by the English.”⁸¹ The secret hiding of Gruffudd in a cave for months shows similarities with the hiding of Owain Glyndŵr in a cave. After escaping prison, Gruffudd ap Cynan sets sail to Porth Hoddni in Deheubarth, fights its people and in doing so “*a llad ohonav enteu e hyn vn o’r gueissyon bonhedicafa a hanoed o’r kyuoeth hunnv.*”⁸², “killed one of the highest born youths who belonged to that territory.”⁸³ He escapes and when he reaches Ardudwy and doesn’t know where to go “*rac brat y Freinc*”⁸⁴, “because of the treachery of the French”⁸⁵, he hides in desolate caves from his enemies for several months. Owain Glyndŵr did the same, he hid from the English for weeks at a time in caves. Though it is not explicitly stated that he was banished, Gruffudd did however spent years in exile in Ireland and his hiding in a cave from the enemy shows similarities with the hidings of Owain Glyndŵr. Though these ‘sleeper in the cave legends’ seem to be legends of later tradition⁸⁶ it is interesting to notice the similarities between the hiding of Gruffudd from the French and the hiding of Owain from the English, if only because Owain Glyndŵr was a Welsh ruler⁸⁷ just as Gruffudd was. Interestingly enough as well, Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, and Owain Glyndŵr who are associated with cave legends are all ‘Redeemer Heroes’, a type of hero that will be discussed further on in this thesis.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁹ See John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore. Welsh and Manx* (Oxford 1901) 454-497 for Welsh cave legends.

⁸⁰ Elissa R. Henken, ‘Three Forms of a Hero: Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, and Owain Glyndŵr’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 15 (1995) 23. Fionn mac Cumhaill is also said to be sleeping in a cave sometimes, however, the original manuscripts in which his death is contained, London, British Library, MS Egerton 92 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 610, do not mention anything about Fionn not being dead. This therefore seems to be a later tradition. See James MacKillop’s, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford 2004) entry Fionn mac Cumhaill, for this tradition.

⁸¹ Henken 1995: 26.

⁸² Simon Evans 1990: 40.

⁸³ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁶ Henken 1995: 22.

⁸⁷ See R. R. Davies, *The revolt of Owain Glyndŵr* (Oxford 1995) for an extensive overview of Owain’s life and career.

(X) The death of the hero. According to De Vries, heroes usually die young and often in a wondrous way. When we look at the death of Cú Chulainn for instance, Cú Chulainn breaks his *geis* not to eat dog-meat, thus weakening him. In a fight with Lugaid, who has made three spears, Cú Chulainn is struck by the third spear and mortally wounded. Cú Chulainn thereupon collects his bowels and bathes, goes to a pillar-stone, puts his breast-girdle round it so that he will not die seated or lying down since he wants to die standing up.⁸⁸ There is nothing wondrous about the death of Gruffudd ap Cynan. "Ag yn y diwedd, eissyoed, Gruffudd a hynhaws, a cholli trem y lygeit a orug; a rhoddi a orug ynteu y ynni y weithredoedd y trugaredd"⁸⁹, "In the end, however, Gruffudd became old and lost the sight of his eyes, and he devoted his strength to the deeds of mercy"⁹⁰. He doesn't die young, but at the age of 82. "Dwy vlwydd a phetwar ugeint oedd Ruffudd, ag yna y bu farw[...]"⁹¹, "Eighty-two years of age was Gruffudd, and then he died [...]"⁹²

As can be concluded from the analysis by using the framework of De Vries, The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains various elements that are present in heroic tales. As O'Rahilly for instance pointed out "the theme of the rearing of the rightful heir in a distant place, far from his enemy, followed by his recognition and the winning of his inheritance, is widely spread in place and time. [...] In Irish tradition it occurs in many forms, the story of the youth of Finn mac Cumail being the best-known example."⁹³ This is certainly the case in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, he is a rightful heir who is reared in Dublin and eventually receives recognition and claims Gwynedd. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan seems to follow the conventional pattern of the hero in De Vries' framework, with a few exceptions. It is important to keep in mind that the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan is a tale of a Welsh king and not a mythological character, it is therefore not surprising that mythological themes and motifs, such as that of an expedition to the Otherworld, in the form that is usually found in other Celtic tales, or special or magical powers, are absent in the Life. As De Vries pointed out earlier, not all of the heroic tales follow the framework with its motifs, themes and elements fully.⁹⁴ It is therefore not necessary that all points are met in order for the character to be a hero.

⁸⁸ <http://www.maryjones.us/ctexts/cuchulain3.html>, accessed on 31-01-2014, 15:17.

⁸⁹ Simon Evans 1990: 50.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁹¹ Ibid., 52.

⁹² Ibid., 83.

⁹³ Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 9, quoted from O'Rahilly in J. Ryan, ed. *Féils gribhínn Eóin Mhic Néill* (Dublin 1940) 106.

⁹⁴ De Vries 1959: 200.

The Blessed Hero

The question that arises is what kind of hero Gruffudd ap Cynan is. When examining the character of Cú Chulainn for instance, there are notable differences between him and Gruffudd ap Cynan. While Cú Chulainn is portrayed as a martial hero⁹⁵, with emphasis on his special feats, ‘warp-spasm’ and other wondrous characteristics, Gruffudd ap Cynan is portrayed in a different way.

When examining the text one thing that immediately stands out is the recurring theme of ‘treachery’.⁹⁶ The first time treachery is mentioned in the text is in the passage on the battle of Bron-yr-erw. When Gwrgenau, son of Seisyll, the king of Powys comes to overthrow Gruffudd “[...]gigleu tri meib Merwyd a gyvr Lleyl ac Eiuuonyd henne, y bredychasant wynteu Gruffud vrenhin, eu hargluyd priodaur, megys guyr anudonyl anfydlavn, a chanorthuyau eu gelynyon a bot en dywyssogyon udunt y’r kyuoeth. A deu vroder o Von, Tudur a Gollwyn, a wnaethant en gyffelip y henne [...]”⁹⁷, “[...] the three sons of Merwydd and the men of Llyn and Eifionydd heard that, they betrayed the king Gruffudd, their rightful lord, like perjured, faithless men, and assisted their enemies, serving as their guides to the territory. Two brothers from Anglesey, Tudur and Gollwyn, did likewise [...]”⁹⁸

The second time Gruffudd is betrayed is when Gruffudd returns to Ireland with “thirty ships full of Irishmen and men of Denmark.”⁹⁹ The Danes who are mad that they did not get what was promised them “yd anreithyssant can mwyaf Mon y dries y arnav, ac emchuelut y eu gvlav ac eu llongeu en llavn o deneon a goludoed, a’e dwyn enteu ganthunt, ac nyt o’e vod. Ac ny bu lei ena y Gruffud brat y Daenysseit noc vn y Gemry.”¹⁰⁰, “[...]took most of Anglesey by force from him, and returned to their land with their ships full of men and riches, and took him also with him, but against his will. Not less then for Gruffudd was the treachery of his Danes than that of his Welsh.”¹⁰¹

The third and last time Gruffudd is betrayed is when Gruffudd is imprisoned:

“...y kyffroet Meiryaun Goch o saeth diauwl, y varwn e hun, ac y kuhudus ef urth Hu yarll Caer, ac y bredychus en e mod hvnn. Peri a oruc y deu yarll o Freinc [...]dyvot y gyt ac

⁹⁵ Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 11.

⁹⁶ An interesting article about treachery in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan is Patricia Malone, ‘“There has been treachery from the beginning”: The *Historia Gruffudd ap Cynan* as narrative hybrid’, *CSANA Yearbook* 10 (2011) 61-74.

⁹⁷ Simon Evans 1990: 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

amyllder marchogyon a phedyt ganthunt, hyt y Ruc en Edeirnyavn. Y bradwr, hagen, a'e bredychvs ef o'r geiryau hynn, 'Argluyd,' heb ef, 'mae deu yarll o'r ardal y'th annerch ac y'th wediav, am dy dyuot en diogel gyt a'th wyr dieither y gyfruch ac wynt hyt yg Gruc yn Edeirnyavn."¹⁰²,

"Meirion Goch, his own baron, was stirred by the devil's arrow, accused him before Hugh earl of Chester, and betrayed him in this way. He argued that the two earls from France [...] should come along with a multitude of footsoldiers as far as Y Rug in Edeirnion. The traitor then betrayed him with these words: 'Lord', said he 'two earls from the border greet thee and beseech thee to come safely with thy foreigners to talk to them as far as Y Rug in Edeirnion.'"¹⁰³ Gruffudd, believing this, sets off to meet the earls and is captured and imprisoned.

This theme of 'treachery' is common in tales about 'Blessed Heroes' as Goetinck pointed out in his article 'The Blessed Heroes'. Examples of Blessed Heroes from Celtic literature, and more specific Welsh tradition are Brân, Gwerthefyr, Cadwallon and Cadwaladr.¹⁰⁴ These Blessed Heroes all share a common feature, they are described as *bendigaid* 'blessed'. According to Goetinck the following characteristics make these heroes 'blessed':

- I. The hero is described as '*bendigaid*'.
- II. The hero is buried in London.
- III. The hero is said to wear the crown of London.¹⁰⁵

When examining the Welsh text of the Life of Gruffudd, the word *bendigaid* appears only once, it is mentioned when the text recounts Gruffudd's pedigree from his father's side. "*Canys mab oed Gruffudd y Gynan vrenhin, mab Yago [...] mab Catwalader Vendigeit.*"¹⁰⁶, "For Gruffudd was son of king Cynan, son of Iago [...] son of Cadwaladr Fendigaid."¹⁰⁷ This does not apply to Gruffudd himself, but to one of his forefathers.

Another passage in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan that mentions a blessing is contained in the episode on the battle of Mynydd Carn: "*A guedy emdivnav onadunt en e lle honno a*

¹⁰² Simon Evans 1990: 38.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 69

¹⁰⁴ G. Goetinck, 'The Blessed Heroes', in *Studia Celtica* 20/21, red. J. E. Caerwyn Williams (Oxford 1985/6) 87.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 87-88.

¹⁰⁶ Simon Evans 1990: 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 53.

*chemryt bendith er escop...*¹⁰⁸, “After they had entered into an alliance in that place, and they had received the blessing of the bishop...”¹⁰⁹ In this particular passage, Gruffudd is said to have received a blessing, or *bendith*, from the bishop.

Later in the text, when Gruffudd is dying, there is another instance of a blessing: “*E feibeon hefyt oedd yno ymplith hynny, ag ynteu yn eu bendigaw wy, ag yn dywedut pa ryw wyr vyddunt rhagllaw, megis Yago padriarch yn bendigaw y feibeon gynt yn yr Eifft.*”¹¹⁰, “His sons also were there during that time and he blessed them and declared what kind of men they would be in the future, like the patriarch Jacob blessing his sons of yore in Egypt.”¹¹¹ Both Gruffudd and his sons received blessings of David bishop of Bangor.

Since Gruffudd is not described directly in the text as *bendigaid*, one might ask if he was in fact blessed at all. Perhaps his burial may give an answer to that question. As Goetinck pointed out, the talismanic burial is an important characteristic of the Blessed Hero. This talismanic burial is directly connected to the “cult of the Great Head.”¹¹² The body parts of the buried hero play an important role, even after his death, there was an “ancient believe in evil-averting powers of the head, body, or parts of the body of a great hero, a belief which had persisted into Christian times and is still current, transferred to the bodies of the various saints, their tombs, or any other objects with which they had contact with.”¹¹³ The place in which the hero was buried was therefore of great importance. Not only could the hero be buried in a strategic position overlooking the sea, thus protecting the land from invaders coming from across the sea,¹¹⁴ the hero, or more precisely his head, could also be buried “in a place of importance with which it had been associated – a strategic defensive position, the precincts of a royal court, or, in Christian times, a cathedral or otherwise important church.”¹¹⁵ Since not only the head, but the entire body as well, could have a protective role the fact that Gruffudd was buried in a tomb may indicate that he was *bendigaid*. Tomb burials are found associated with this tradition, and since Gruffudd was buried in a tomb in a church, this may give the epitaph *bendigaid* to Gruffudd, although he is not directly described as such in the text.

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan ends with Gruffudd’s death: “...*ag yna y bu farw; ag y*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁹ Simon Evans 1990: 67.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 83.

¹¹² Goetinck 1985/6: 94.

¹¹³ Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 95.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 95.

Mangor y kladdwyd y mewn yskrin yn y parth assw y'r allawr fawr yn yr eglwys"¹¹⁶, "...and then he died; and in Bangor was he buried in a tomb on the left side of the high altar in the church."¹¹⁷ Gruffudd was not buried in London, so this point is not present in the Life. The word *Llundain*, or London, in fact does not appear in the text at all. Gruffudd is not said to wear the crown of London and therefore this point is also absent in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. The theme of the "...talismanic burial in which the body was placed in a strategic position overlooking the sea whence the enemy would come"¹¹⁸ seems to be absent as well since it is not explicitly stated that the church in Bangor in which Gruffudd was buried overlooks the sea.

The death of Gruffudd ap Cynan is however of particular interest when examining the similarities with Blessed Heroes. Dean Miller described the deaths of the hero extensively in his book *The Epic Hero*, from this it can be concluded that the hero usually dies heroically on the battlefield.¹¹⁹ The hero gives his life in the fight with the enemy or oppressor, as we have seen before. There are however instances where the hero does not die on the battle-field but of old age instead. In the case of Cadwallon for instance, "Cadwallon's attempt to wipe Northumbria and its inhabitants from the face of the earth when he had cleared Edwin's forces from Gwynedd [...] killed Edwin [and] himself."¹²⁰ However, according to Goetinck there is a tradition wherein "Cadwallon's death is softened by causing him to die, not in battle with Oswald, but of old age, in London, having borne the crown of London for many years."¹²¹ The death of Gruffudd ap Cynan is similar, Gruffudd does not die heroically on the battlefield but of old age, after being king of Gwynedd for many years.

Several themes and motifs in the Life show striking similarities with tales featuring Blessed Heroes. Tales within the *Pedair Cainc y Mabinogion*, of which *Branwen ferch Llŷr* is a perfect example, for instance "...contain the same elements: an alliance which is sourced by treachery from within, and a greedy, treacherous, untrustworthy enemy".¹²² As said before, treachery is a recurring theme in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Gruffudd is betrayed many times throughout the Life, people who promise him to form an alliance and fight against his enemies are betraying Gruffudd over and over again, causing him to be defeated several times. Goetinck explains this motif as follows: "The heroes had fought valiantly, but they had

¹¹⁶ Simon Evans 1990: 52.

¹¹⁷ Simon Evans 1990: 83.

¹¹⁸ Goetinck 1985/6: 98.

¹¹⁹ Dean Miller 2000: 120-2.

¹²⁰ Goetinck 1985/6: 90.

¹²¹ Ibid., 91.

¹²² Ibid., 88.

lost, and thus in order to explain the loss and assuage the hurt, one finds heavy emphasis on the treachery and perfidy of the enemy.”¹²³ Indeed, when examining the text more thoroughly, a pattern of treachery followed by defeat or retreat emerges. When Gruffudd is betrayed by the sons of Merwydd and the men of Llyn, an attempt is made on his life but “*a phan weles Gwyncu, barwn o Von, henne y tynnvs ef o’r urwyder o’e anuod hyt y long a oed en Abermenei*”¹²⁴, “when Gwyncu, a baron from Anglesey, saw that, he took him against his will from the battle to his ship, which was in Abermenai.”¹²⁵ When a fleet full of Irish and Danes agree to fight Trahaearn, they too betray him and Gruffudd is moved from the battlefield again, taken back to Ireland with them against his will: “*Odena y llidyus y Daynysseit ef guyr y dy a’e dylwyth e hun, [...] ac emchuelut y eu gvlac ac eu llongeu en llavn o deneon a goludoed, a’e dwyn enteu ganthunt, ac nyt o’e vod.*”¹²⁶, “then his Danes, the men of his household and his own family were angered [...] and returned to their land with their ships full of men and riches, and took him also with them, but against his will.”¹²⁷ Meirion Goch betrays Gruffudd causing him to be “*y dodassant ef yg geol Gaer e carchar guaethaf, a geuyneue arnav, deudeng blyned.*”¹²⁸, “[...]put in the gaol of Chester, the worst of prisons, with shackles upon him, for twelve years.”¹²⁹ And lastly, Hugh earl of Chester and Hugh earl of Shrewsbury send messengers to sixteen ships from Ireland who sailed out to support Gruffudd and ask them to betray Gruffudd, “*a phan wybu Ruffudd hynny, doluryaw a chymrawu yn fawr a orug, kany wyddiat pa gynghor a wnei yn erbyn y wrthwynebwyr o Ffreink a’r brat longheu Ag yna, [...] y kerddassant y mewn ysgraff yny ddoethant hyt yn Ywerddon, ag adaw eu kiwdawt ag a oedd eiddunt yn ewyllys Duw a’e amddiffyn [...]*”¹³⁰, “and when Gruffudd knew that, he grieved and feared greatly, for he knew not what counsel he should follow against his adversaries the French traitor-ships. Then [...] they voyaged in a skiff until they came to Ireland, and left their people and possessions to the will of God and His protection [...]”¹³¹ The passages on treachery all follow the same pattern and seem to be a substantiation for Gruffudd’s behavior in battle, he either is removed from the scene against his will or he flees. According to Goetinck “the defeat [*sic*] of the British, in spite of their valour and the might of their heroes, is rationalized [...] by presenting the enemy as

¹²³ Ibid., 90.

¹²⁴ Simon Evans 1990: 32.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 63.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 34.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 38.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 44-5.

¹³¹ Ibid., 76.

treacherous, untrustworthy, quick to take unfair advantage, aided in his ambitions by the moral weakness of the British themselves. The self-interest, pride, jealousy, and lust of the Britons constantly work against the efforts of their leaders, resulting in disaster.”¹³² The treachery in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan seems to fulfill the same purpose, the many defeats that Gruffudd experienced are rationalized by depicting the ones responsible, the enemy both within and without, as treacherous and untrustworthy. As I have argued in the previous chapter, these passages involving treachery followed by flight, captivity or removal can be seen as a form of exile as well, Gruffudd therefore was exiled many times throughout his life.

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan shows many similarities with the tales of the ‘Blessed Heroes’, for treachery is an element which is very present in the tale. Gruffudd ap Cynan, however, is different from the characters in the tales of the Blessed Heroes. As Goetinck pointed out the stories about the Blessed Heroes originated from a “...desire to create a Hero, a martyr, who gave his life for his people, in defence of the honour of his country, and whose betrayal by his followers destroyed his ability to deal with the treachery of the enemy[...].”¹³³ Though Gruffudd was betrayed over and over again by his enemies, he did succeed in the end to rule Gwynedd and did not give his life during this process. Gruffudd died at the age of 82, which is the main difference between him and the Blessed Heroes of Goetinck.

¹³² Goetinck 1985/6: 92.

¹³³ Ibid., 95.

The Redeemer Hero

Throughout the Middle Ages, many prophecies are found in the Welsh tales. They usually appear in verse¹³⁴, but they are also found with the tales on the Blessed Heroes, the Redeemer Heroes and a prophecy is even found in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. In order to understand this prophecy it is important to first look at the role prophecy played in these tales.

One of the most extensive works on prophecies in Wales is probably the work of Margaret Enid Griffiths, *Early Vaticination in Welsh, with English parallels* (Cardiff 1937). Griffiths has extensively researched prophecies in Wales, from the earliest prophecies prior to the twelfth century up to the fourteenth century, drawing parallels between the Welsh and the English prophecies.

In his article 'Prophecy, Poetry, and Politics in Medieval and Tudor Wales', Glanmore Williams too has written extensively about the development and eventual decline of the use of prophecies in Wales. According to Williams, the following motifs are found in the Welsh prophecies:

1. A great British hero will return.
2. His reappearance will presage great cataclysms, furious battles and copious bloodshed.
3. These tribulations will be surmounted and crowned with complete victory, in which the Welsh, will be wholly and lastingly triumphant.¹³⁵

These prophecies about future events are called vaticinations, or *canu darogan*.¹³⁶ The Welsh vaticinations all have the same essence: "the Welsh will regain sovereignty over the Isle of Britain under the leadership of a messiah known as *Y Mab Darogan* ('The Son of Destiny')." ¹³⁷

The *mab darogan* therefore is central to the Welsh vaticinations¹³⁸, he is the one who will come to Wales and will be triumphant over the enemy. But what was the actual purpose of these prophecies?

Prophecies had an important function in Medieval Wales. As Morgan Kay has pointed out: "Welsh history is the tale of one invasion after another – Saxon, Viking, Norman – and historians generally agree that Welsh prophetic literature, often focusing on a hero who will return to unite the island of Britain under Welsh rule, has been a source of hope in Wales

¹³⁴ Elissa R. Henken, *National Redeemer. Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff 1996) 8.

¹³⁵ Glanmore Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff 1979) 73.

¹³⁶ Henken, 1996: 9.

¹³⁷ Meic Stephens, *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford 1986) 612-3.

¹³⁸ Henken 1996: 21.

throughout history.”¹³⁹ Hope plays an important role in these prophecies. With foreign peoples raiding and invading Wales, the Welsh myth of the redeemer or deliverer coming to free the Welsh “embodied a messianic hope.”¹⁴⁰ This is not surprising since it is not hard to imagine the fear of the Welsh, knowing that a foreign enemy is coming to rule their land. As Williams justly has pointed out, “among the Welsh it was pressure first from Anglo-Saxon rulers and later from Norman kings and lords which naturally enough evoked such fears.”¹⁴¹

Closely connected to this myth is the Redeemer Hero, or the Prophesized Hero. Ellisa R. Henken has studied Owain Glyndŵr extensively in the role of the Redeemer Hero in her book *National Redeemer, Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh Tradition*. She describes the role of the Redeemer Hero as follows: “a national redeemer-hero [is] the hero whose coming (whether for the first time or after a long absence) is awaited so that he might restore the nation to its former glories.”¹⁴² She identifies eight heroes as Redeemer Heroes: “Hiriell, Cynan, Cadwaladr, Arthur, Owain, Owain, Lawgoch, Owain Glyndŵr and Henry Tudor”¹⁴³. According to Henken the pattern for the Redeemer Hero went through different stages, these stages are described with Owain Glyndŵr as a key figure. From these stages, the following basic pattern emerges¹⁴⁴:

- I. The Hero is awaited.
- II. The Hero will come either from across the sea, from Brittany, from the North or from the South.
- III. The Hero is a warrior, his military prowess will make things right.
- IV. The coming of the Hero precipitates violent battles.
- V. The purpose of the battle is to rid Wales from the Saxons or other peoples intruding Wales.
- VI. The Hero succeeds in doing so and restores peace, prosperity and justice to a united Welsh people.¹⁴⁵

Since Henken already discussed the role of Owain Glyndŵr as a Redeemer Hero extensively in her work, I will not go into the details on Owain’s role as a Redeemer Hero. Instead, I will

¹³⁹ Morgan Kay, ‘Prophecy in Welsh Manuscripts’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 26/27 (2006/2007) 77-8.

¹⁴⁰ Glanmore Williams, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff 1979) 75.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴² Henken, 1996: 2.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁴⁴ As Henken pointed out, the pattern of the Redeemer Hero varies slightly over time with some changes in the hero and “the expression of longing for him to fulfil the promise”. The basic pattern however remains the same throughout these stages, Henken 1996: 40-1.

¹⁴⁵ Henken 1996: 30-40.

try to establish whether Gruffudd ap Cynan himself is a Redeemer Hero and establish the differences, if there are any to be found, with Owain Glyndŵr.

In the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, a prophecy is made by Myrddin:

*“Ef a’e daroganvs Merdin ef ynni val hynn: Llyminauc lletfer a daroganer, Anaeth diarvor dygosel. Llegrur y enw, llycraut llawer.”*¹⁴⁶, “Myrddin prophesied to us about him in this way: A fierce attacker is prophesied who will come intent on onslaught from across the sea. Despoiler is his name, he will despoil many.”¹⁴⁷

This prophecy suggests that Gruffudd is (I) awaited. Not only are we told that Gruffudd is coming, it is also mentioned from where he is coming (II) ‘from across the sea’. The only other thing the prophecy states is that he is ‘a despoiler’. The other characteristics of the pattern of the Redeemer Hero therefore must be identified by examining events mentioned in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan.

When examining the events in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan it is full of references to peoples, enemies, who are foreign. Examples of these are found throughout the text. Early on in the text, when Gruffudd hears about his patrimony we are told that, *“bot estravn genedloed en argluydi ar y dadaul deyrnas”*¹⁴⁸, “foreign peoples were lords over his paternal kingdom.”¹⁴⁹ There is reference that the French had come to Gwynedd as well at the time: *“ac a’r marchogyon ereill dywal o Freinc a dothoedent y diwed hvnnv y Loegyr”*¹⁵⁰, “the other fierce knights from France who had lately come to England, and had subsequently come to rule the confines of Gwynedd.”¹⁵¹ References are made to the Normans¹⁵² as well in the text, the text contains a separate section on the Normans: *“Y Normaniaid yn anrheithio Gwynedd”*¹⁵³, “The Normans ravage Gwynedd.”¹⁵⁴ It therefore seems that the prophecy in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan intends to fulfill the same purpose found in point (V), in a time of constant attacks from foreigners (the French, Normans and English) Gruffudd is prophesied to come and bring onslaught, thus bringing hope for the Welsh. In my opinion the most convincing evidence for this theory is found almost at the end of the text. It is stated that *“a’e*

¹⁴⁶ Simon Evans 1990: 27.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 58.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 62.

¹⁵² Gruffudd’s relation with the Normans is however slightly different, they were at times both his ally but also his enemy as has been pointed out by C.P. Lewis, *Gruffudd ap Cynan, a collaborative biography*, (Woodbridge 1996), 63.

¹⁵³ Simon Evans 1990: 34.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 65.

feibeon, etwa yn weisseon yefeink, a ossodes ar y kantrofoedd eithaf iddaw, y ragfeddu ag [...] y eu kynnal mal mur agkyffroedig yn erbyn estrawn genedloedd a rhei agkyfyeith, o darffei uddunt meddylyaw kyfodi o newydd yn y erbyn.“¹⁵⁵, “he set his sons, while they were still young men, over the cantrefs farthest away from him, to forestall occupation by others and to maintain them like an immovable wall against foreign people and those speaking another tongue, should they happen to contemplate rising up anew against him.”¹⁵⁶ This particular passage indicates that Gruffudd has freed Wales from the foreigners, thus restoring peace and prosperity.

(VI) Gruffudd succeeds his battle against his oppressors *and* “*gwedy hynny y gwledychws Gruffudd llawer o vulwyddynedd yn hyrw [...] ydd gywaethawg gan arafwch a heddwch.*”¹⁵⁷, “after that Gruffudd governed for many years successfully and powerfully with moderation and peace.”¹⁵⁸

From this analysis Gruffudd ap Cynan has the characteristics to be a Redeemer Hero. He however differs from Owain Glyndŵr in one important respect, his grave is known. In the case of Owain Glyndŵr, “he disappeared; there is no record of his end. The seers immediately claimed he had not died [...] people continued to look to him as their future deliverer.”¹⁵⁹ The unknown grave is found with Arthur as well: Arthur’s “[...] unknown grave [...] carries with it the suggestion that Arthur is not dead and thus a potential redeemer”.¹⁶⁰ There is a good reason for this motif of an unknown grave: “the unknown grave leaves open possibilities for the hero. If the grave cannot be found, perhaps the hero does not need one.”¹⁶¹

As has been seen before, Gruffudd did die. This is not only mentioned in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan but in the *Brut Y Tywysogion* as well. Gruffudd therefore differs from Owain Glyndŵr and Arthur but he nevertheless has many similarities with the Redeemer Hero and a *mab darogan*.

¹⁵⁵ Simon Evans 1990: 50.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 82.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 49

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹⁵⁹ Henken 1995: 25.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶¹ Henken 1996: 69.

The Saint

At first sight it is very interesting that the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan both has a Latin and a Welsh version. Throughout the twelfth century many Saints' Lives were written in Latin¹⁶² later Welsh versions of these Lives are present as well. Saints' Lives, or *Vitae*, "became a political tool both for use against the Normans and in the struggle for archiepiscopal primacy."¹⁶³ This political motive is very interesting, since the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan seems to have a political motive as well, as we will see in the next section of this thesis. The Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan is longer than the Welsh Life, and there are minor differences between the passages as Paul Russell has pointed out in his research.¹⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, the Latin life of St. David is longer than the Welsh life of St. David as well. Since Gruffudd's Latin life is longer as well, and may have a political motive it will be useful to compare the Life of Gruffudd with the Saints' Lives. In order to determine if there are similarities between Saints' Lives and the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan it is necessary to first look at the themes and motifs within the text.

Some of the themes and motifs in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan are reminiscent of the Saints' Lives. Alwyn D. Rees has compared the lives of a number of saints in his article 'The divine Hero in Celtic hagiology'. The results of this comparative study show that the Saints' Lives all follow a similar pattern with some minor differences. In addition, Elissa R. Henken has studied the patterns within the Lives of Welsh Saints extensively in her book '*The Welsh Saints. A Study in Patterned Lives*'. Based on these extensive studies a pattern within the Saints' Lives has been identified, Alwyn D. Rees describes the pattern as follows:

1. The birth of a saint is foretold by an angel, an omen, or a miracle.
2. His mother is of royal descent, and if she is not the wife or daughter of a king, an elaborate genealogy traces her ancestry to royalty. In a large number of cases the saint is her first child, but there are exceptions to this rule.
3. His father is invariably a king or noble.
4. As in the case of many other heroes, some saints are born of incest, but this is not a very persistent feature. In some Irish lives it is not the saint himself who has an incestuous origin but one of his ancestors.
5. The circumstances of the saint's conception are frequently unusual.
6. The divine nature of the child is often represented symbolically.

¹⁶² Simon Evans 1990: 6.

¹⁶³ Elissa R. Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Cambridge 1987) 5.

¹⁶⁴ Paul Russell 2005: 126-169.

7. As a rule, a miracle occurs at the time of the birth of the holy child.
8. An attempt is sometimes made on the life of the infant saint, but he is saved by divine providence.
9. The child is seldom reared at the home where it is born.
10. On reaching manhood the saint performs a miracle which seems to serve as a sign that he has reached spiritual maturity.
11. He then immediately sets out on his missionary career, and
12. He gains victory over a chieftain, a wizard and/or a dragon.
13. After this victory the saint becomes the supreme power in the land. The secular rulers retain their positions, but their powers are strictly limited by the saint's magic.
14. For the remainder of his life the holy man founds churches and administers to the spiritual and material needs of the people, protecting them from evil and ensuring prosperity in all spheres of life.
15. The saint knows the time of his death beforehand.
16. The death of the saint:
 - (a) The Welsh and Irish saints are seldom martyrs. In many cases their death occurs inside their favorite church and in the presence of their disciples.
17. The death is accompanied by angelic visitations and a great brilliance of supernatural light.
18. The body often retains a miraculous element after death.
19. The saints have one or more holy sepulchers which become centres of pilgrimages.¹⁶⁵

As Rees points out “[...] in some lives this mythological pattern is distorted by the inclusion of incidents which may be truly historical, or legendary events of a distinct complex.”¹⁶⁶ This may well apply to the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan.

When we look at the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan some of the abovementioned points are present in the story, however the majority of these points are absent. Points 2, 3, 9, 12, and 14 are somewhat present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. As we have seen before, his mother is of royal descent, his father is a king. The child seems to be reared away from his mother, however the text is not consistent on this matter. First the author of the text states that Gruffudd was born “*en Ywerdon, en dinas Dulyn; ac yg kymvt Colomcell y magwyt, y lle a elwir yg Gwydelec Svrth Colomcell. A tri militir yv henne y urth y lle yd oed y vam a’e*

¹⁶⁵ Alwyn D.Rees, ‘The Divine Hero in Celtic Hagiology’, *Folklore*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Mar., 1936) 31-35.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

vamvaeth.”¹⁶⁷, “in Ireland, in the city of Dublin; and in the commote of Columcille was he reared, the place called in Irish Sword Choluim Chille, which lies three miles from the place where lived his mother and foster mother”. This suggests that Gruffudd grew up separated from his mother, a foster-mother is also mentioned. Later in the text the author states that “*ytoed Gruffud [...] en vab da y deuodeu a drythyll y vakyat, ac yn esgynnv ar vlwydyned y yeuengtít en ty e vam*”¹⁶⁸, “Gruffudd was [...] a lad of good manners and sumptuous upbringing, ascending the years of his youth in his mother’s home”¹⁶⁹ which suggests that Gruffudd did grow up with his mother and was reared in her house. Whether Gruffudd at a time was fostered elsewhere is not clear from the text but since fosterage of a child was common in this time Gruffudd may well have been reared by a foster family.¹⁷⁰

Interestingly, the pedigree of Gruffudd shows some similarities with the pedigree of, for instance, St. David. As Henken has pointed out “the saint’s privileged position is demonstrated by a close relationship to Jesus through descent either from Anna, cousin of the Virgin Mary, or from Mary’s sister.”¹⁷¹ This descent from Mary’s relatives [...] is also occasionally claimed for secular heroes.”¹⁷²

When examining the pedigree of St. David we learn that “David was the son of Sant, Sant son of Cheritic, Cheretic son of Cuneda, Cuneda son of Etern [...] Éudolen son of Eugen, Eugen son of Mary’s sister.”¹⁷³

The pedigree of Gruffudd ap Cynan shows a similar pattern, the pedigree on his father’s side is traced back to Adam, son of God: “*Canys mab oed Gruffudd y Gynan vrenhin, m. Yago, m. Idwal, m. Elisedd [...] m. Noe Hen, m. Lamech, m. Mathussalem, m. Enoc, m. Iaret, m. Malaleel, m. Cainan, m. Enos, m. Seth, m. Adaf, m. Duw.*”¹⁷⁴, “For Gruffudd was son of king Cynan, son of Iago, son of Idawl, son of Elisedd [...] son of old Noah, son of Lamech, son of Methuselah, son of Enoch, son of Jaret, son of Matalaleel, son of Cainan, son of Enos, son of Seth, son of Adam, son of God.”¹⁷⁵

This divine pedigree also applies to Gruffudd himself, it is explicitly stated in the section on ‘His pedigree in relation to God’: “*Chui yu y dwyweu a meibion y goruchelaf yu pawb. Urth*

¹⁶⁷ Simon Evans 1990: 23.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷⁰ For more information on fosterage see for instance Dáibhí Ó Cróinín 1995: 132, B. Ní Chonail, ‘Fosterage: child-rearing in medieval Ireland’, *History Ireland*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1997) 28-31 and Katharine Anderson, ‘Urth Noe e Tat. The Question of Fosterage in High Medieval Wales’, *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Vol. 4, No 1 (2004) 1-11.

¹⁷¹ Elissa R. Henken, *The Welsh Saints. A Study in Patterned Lives* (Cambridge 1991) 23.

¹⁷² Ibid., 23, quoted from: Bartrum, P.C., *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Wales 1966) 9.

¹⁷³ A.W. Wade-Evans, *Life of St. David* (London, 1923) 33.

¹⁷⁴ Simon Evans 1990: 23-4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 53-4.

henne Gruffud oed vab y Gynan, m. Adaf, m. Duw."¹⁷⁶ , "Ye are gods, and sons of the Most High are ye all.' Therefore, Gruffudd was son of Cynan son of Adam, son of God."¹⁷⁷

Although Gruffudd ap Cynan is not said to be a descendant of Mary or Mary's sister, the pedigree does state that both his father king Cynan and his son Gruffudd are sons of Adam, son of God. Since Henken has pointed out that this royal descent from Mary or Mary's sister is found with the secular heroes as well, I would therefore argue that this probably isn't a coincidence.

As I have argued before the victory over a chieftain, a wizard and/or a dragon is, symbolically, present in the Life through the victory over his enemies. It is stated in the text that "*Gruffudd ynteu a wnaeth eglwysseu mawr yn y llysoedd pennaf idaw e hun [...]. Pa beth hefyd, echtywynygu a wnei Wynedd yna o eglwysseu kalcheit, fal y ffurfafen o'r syr*"¹⁷⁸ , "Gruffudd also built large churches in his own major courts [...]. Furthermore, Gwynedd glittered then with lime-washed churches, like the firmament with the stars."¹⁷⁹ The text mentions prosperity for his people and administering to the spiritual and material needs for the people as well in the same passage.¹⁸⁰

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan therefore contains a few of the elements that are present in the pattern of the Saints' Lives, but the elements that are characteristic for a Saint's Life are absent in my opinion. Obviously, miracles and magic are absent in the Life. This is however not surprising, for as I argued before the main character in the Life is a Welsh king, not a mythological figure. Mythological motifs and patterns are therefore absent in the Life.

Although the presence of a Latin and a Welsh version seems to suggest that there is a resemblance with a Saint's Life, themes and motifs that are characteristic for a Saint's Life are absent. The motifs and themes in the text that do show similarities with the patterns in Saints' Lives may well be historical fact, though this is of course debatable. Having a foreign princess mother, a kingly father, being reared elsewhere and defeating one's enemies are elements that are not necessarily heroic or saintly in my opinion. However, the fact that the pedigree of Gruffudd and that of Saints' Lives, the Life of St. David in particular, resemble each other cannot be discarded. One might argue that if his royal descent was added only to substantiate and support Gruffudd's actions to conquer Gwynedd, adding a 'godly' descent seems a bit unnecessary.

Based on Henken's argument that this royal descent is not only found in the Lives of

¹⁷⁶ Simon Evans 1990: 27.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷⁹ Simon Evans 1990: 81-2.

¹⁸⁰ Goetinck 1985/6: 81.

Saints but with secular heroes as well I would therefore argue that Gruffudd's royal and godly descent may deliberately have been added to the story. The element contributes to the way in which Gruffudd ap Cynan is portrayed, both as a hero and to emphasize his royal descent and pedigree.

Gruffudd ap Cynan the Hero

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan follows the patterns within the framework of Jan De Vries, in my opinion Gruffudd ap Cynan is definitely portrayed as a Hero.

One motif that is standing out is the recurring theme of treachery within the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Gruffudd ap Cynan therefore may well be a Blessed Hero. Gruffudd may well be given the epitaph *bendigaid* since he was buried in a tomb in Bangor, he is however not described directly as such in the text. Furthermore, the fact that Gruffudd is buried in Bangor and not in London is an important difference between Gruffudd ap Cynan and a Blessed Hero. London is an important motif that is lacking in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, tales about the Blessed Heroes all contain the motif of not only burying the hero in London, but the hero is said to wear the crown of London as well. Though the theme of treachery is definitely present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan, the lacking of most of the motifs found with the Blessed Hero therefore seems to suggest that Gruffudd is not a Blessed Hero.

The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan does however contain many motifs and themes that are found with the Redeemer Hero as well. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains a very prophecy, his coming is prophesied by Myrddin which in my opinion gives him the epitaph *mab daragon*. Moreover, the prophecy states that Gruffudd will come from the sea bringing onslaught, a motif that is found with the Redeemer as well. Throughout the text many references are made to foreign people, the French, Normans and English, that are invading Wales. Gruffudd ap Cynan fights these foreigners and being victorious, ultimately even installs his sons at strategic positions throughout Wales to be sure that foreign oppressors are kept out of Wales. Gruffudd therefore succeeds in getting rid of the oppressors and peace, prosperity and justice are restored. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan therefore contains all the motifs and themes that are characteristic for a Redeemer Hero. Gruffudd however does differ from the Redeemer Heroes mentioned by Henken, whose graves are unknown, since we do know how and at what age Gruffudd died.

The only similarity that the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan show with a Saint's Life is the pedigree. Gruffudd is said to be the son of Adam and therefore the son of God. Likewise, saints descent either from Anna, Cousin of Virgin Mary or from Mary's sister. Though the fact that the Latin version of the Life of Gruffudd is longer than the Welsh, and St. David's Latin version is longer as well, the differences seem to outweigh the similarities. There certainly are similarities, but these can be explained since the framework is a variant on the framework of De Vries. Certain motifs and themes are therefore recurring. I would therefore argue that Gruffudd ap Cynan is portrayed as a Redeemer Hero, though certain themes and

motives that are found with the Blessed Hero are present as well in the Life and Gruffudd's pedigree shows similarities with that of a saint. In order to explain these similarities it is useful to look at the author's motive. Why did he write this Life?

The author's motive

Gruffudd was a Welsh king, a real person of flesh and blood, and not a mythological hero such as Cú Chulainn, so one might ask the question: why would the author bother to interlace so many motifs and themes instead of merely writing an account of his Life? In order to answer this question it is necessary to first determine why the Life was written. As Evans pointed out earlier, “it is clear that [the Life] was written with a political motive and was intended to enhance the power and prestige of Gwynedd under Gruffudd’s son, Owain. [...] Events which do not redound to the glory of Gruffudd are studiously shunned, as it was clearly the author’s intention to portray him solely as a man of prowess, honour and diplomatic acumen, whose progress was nevertheless bedevilled by constant ill-luck and treachery.”¹⁸¹ As Evans has suggested, the episode of Gruffudd’s imprisonment for instance may well have been added to remove Gruffudd from the scene since several sources suggest that “Gruffudd lived the life of a pirate”¹⁸² at that moment. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan was written to set out Gruffudd’s pedigree, thus justifying his claim to the throne, and to enhance Gruffudd’s appearance, portraying him as a rightful and just king. It was therefore a piece of propaganda.¹⁸³

K.L. Maund suggests on the other hand that “...Gruffudd might have been too far removed in generational terms from a kingly ancestor, but his son Owain Gwynedd was not and would need no such defence.”¹⁸⁴ Maund suggests that it was not Owain who needed a justification but instead, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth who “...too was the grandson, but not the son, of a king [...] Like Gruffudd he was raised away from Gwynedd, and faced rivals there who had excluded his father from a share of the patrimony.”¹⁸⁵ Rhys Jones too has argued that “...the main aim of the text was to legitimize the rule of one of Gruffudd’s successors and progeny, possibly Owain Gwynedd or Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.”¹⁸⁶ Whoever benefitted from the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan therefore remains a question and more research is necessary in order to answer the question why and for whom the Life was written.

Nevertheless, the purpose of the text seems to have been to “...highlight and justify the regality of his subject”¹⁸⁷ and the author of the text intentionally glorified Gruffudd ap Cynan

¹⁸¹ Simon Evans 1990: 18.

¹⁸² Ibid., 14.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 18.

¹⁸⁴ Maund 1996: 115.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 115.

¹⁸⁶ Rhys Jones, ‘Medieval biographies and the geography of power: the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 30 (Wales 2004) 426.

¹⁸⁷ Maund 1996: 110.

in doing so. What better way to portray Gruffudd as a hero than to use all your knowledge of the tales about the heroes and the lives of saints? As has been pointed out by G.H. Doble in 'Hagiography and Folklore', this was a common custom for hagiographers who were given the task to write a Life: "[...]the author borrows phrases, and perhaps longer passages, from the Life of S. Martin and other books which are in the cathedral library or which he has heard read at matins. He inserts suitable texts from Holy Scripture. He appropriates for his hero stories which he and his readers consider edifying stories, which are common property in his time, told of a score of other saints. He introduces into his narrative the patron saints of neighboring churches and chapels, and makes them companions of the one whose Life he is writing[...]."¹⁸⁸ It is therefore not unimaginable that the author of the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan relied on his knowledge of tales of heroes, blessed heroes and redeemer heroes in particular, and saints and used motifs and themes from these tales and Lives to eulogize and glorify Gruffudd ap Cynan. Since "...the life histories, stories and legends that were incorporated into these biographies could only convey authority and status onto a secular or ecclesiastical leader if the messages and themes within them were conveyed to a wider audience"¹⁸⁹ this may well have been the case. Goetinck justly pointed out that the motive of the authors of the tales on the Blessed Heroes may well have been the same: "the nation had need of heroes who could be emulated by a Christian people and whose failure could be rationalized. It is possible that it was at this time that the idea of the Blessed Hero was conceived within the Church by writers who could draw on hagiography, the Scriptures, the chronicles, traditional literature, hero tales, and their own imagination."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ G. H. Doble., 'Hagiography and Folklore', *Folklore*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Sep., 1943) 324.

¹⁸⁹ Rhys Jones 2004: 465.

¹⁹⁰ Goetinck 1985: 104, quoted from: Alberston, *Anglo-Saxon Saints and Heroes* (Fordham 1967) 25.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have used the framework of De Vries and applied it to the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan in order to establish the motifs and themes within. The patterns, motifs and themes that are present in the tales on the Blessed Heroes, Redeemer Heroes and the Saints' Lives were examined thoroughly and compared to the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan follows the pattern of De Vries, which indicates that Gruffudd is portrayed as a hero. Mythological elements within the patterns are lacking, but this isn't surprising since Gruffudd is an historical person, a king of Gwynedd, and not a mythological or literal character. Not all points in the framework of De Vries however have to be met in order for Gruffudd to be a hero.

The elements in the tales on the Blessed Hero are somewhat present in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan. Though Gruffudd is not described as *bendigaid* in the text, his burial in a tomb in a church however may indicate that he was *bendigaid*. Gruffudd however does not wear the crown of London, which is also a motif in the tales on the Blessed Heroes. The theme of treachery in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan however, is present throughout the tale and cannot be discarded. This is an important motif in the tales on Blessed Heroes as well.

Gruffudd ap Cynan is highly reminiscent of a Redeemer Hero. The Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan contains a prophecy which states that Gruffudd will come from over the sea, bringing despoil. The many passages in the rest of the text relating to foreigners, more precisely the Normans, French and English, indicate that Gruffudd is a *mab darogon*, a son of prophecy who will come to Wales to free the Welsh from their oppressors. He is however different from the Redeemer Heroes Owain Glyndŵr and Arthur, their graves are unknown thus indicating that they might not be dead. This isn't the case for Gruffudd, his death is mentioned in the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan and recorded in the *Brut Y Tywysogion*.

The Latin and Welsh Lives of Gruffudd are connected to the Latin and Welsh Lives of St. David, not only do they show similarities when looking at the length of the texts, more importantly their pedigrees show many similarities and trace their ancestry all the way back to either Mary or Mary's sister or Adam, son of God. Although the Life of Gruffudd shows some similarities with a Saint's Life, most of these motifs and themes are present in De Vries's framework as well. As Alwyn D. Rees pointed out this is not surprising since "...they follow a pattern which corresponds in many respects with that found in the careers of other traditional heroes."¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Rees 1936: 30.

The Life was a piece of propaganda, justifying Gruffudd's or his successor's claim to the throne. In order to achieve this goal the author of the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan used motifs and themes that were known to the public. He used his knowledge of the heroic tales, the tales of the Blessed heroes, the Redeemer heroes and Saints, to eulogize and glorify Gruffudd.

In my opinion, the Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan therefore is a fusion of motifs and themes that were well-known to the public, taken from heroic tales. Gruffudd character is a hero, with characteristics of a Blessed Hero and he has the same pedigree as the saints. He is however most reminiscent of the Redeemer Hero, Gruffudd was a *mab darogan*, he came from across the sea to Wales to drive the foreign oppressors out of Wales, bringing peace and prosperity.

Bibliography

Davies, John, *A History of Wales* (London 2007).

Doble, G. H., 'Hagiography and Folklore', *Folklore*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Sep., 1943) 321-333.

Goetinck, G., 'The Blessed Heroes', in *Studia Celtica* 20/21 red. J. E. Caerwyn Williams (Oxford 1985/1986) 87-109.

Henken, Elissa R., *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (Cambridge 1987).

Henken, Elissa R., *The Welsh Saints. A Study in Patterned Lives* (Cambridge 1991).

Henken, Elissa, R., 'Three Forms of a Hero: Arthur, Owain Lawgoch, and Owain Glyndŵr', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 15 (1995) 22-31.

Henken, Elissa R., *National Redeemer. Owain Glyndŵr in Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff 1996).

Jones, Arthur, *The history of Gruffydd ap Cynan: the Welsh text with translation, introduction and notes* (Manchester 1910).

Jones, Rhys, 'Medieval biographies and the geography of power: the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan*', *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 30 (Wales 2004) 459-469.

Kay, Morgan, 'Prophecy in Welsh Manuscripts', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, Vol. 26/27 (2006/2007) 73-108.

Kinsella, Thomas, *The Tain* (Oxford 1969) 76-92.

Koch, John T. , *Celtic Culture: A Historic Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara 2006).

Lewis, C.P., 'Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Reality and Representation of Exile', *Exile in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laura Napran, Elisabeth van Houts (Turnhout 2004) 39-51.

Maund, K.L., *Gruffudd ap Cynan, a collaborative biography* (Woodbridge 1996).

McCone, Kim, 'Pagan past and Christian present in early Irish literature'
(Maynooth 2000) 179-202.

Miller, Dean, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore 2000).

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin 1977).

Ó Cróinín. Dáibhí, *Early medieval Ireland, 400-1200* (Longman 1995).

Patch, Howard Rollin, 'Some Elements in Mediaeval Descriptions of the Otherworld', *PMLA*,
Vol. 33. No. 4 (1918) 601-643.

Rees, Alwyn D., 'The Divine Hero in Celtic Hagiology', *Folklore*, Vol. 47, No. 1
(Mar., 1936) 30-41.

Russell, Paul, *Vita Griffini Filii Conani : the medieval Latin life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*
(Cardiff 2005).

Simon Evans, D., *A mediaeval prince of Wales : the life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*
(Llanerch 1990).

Stephens, Meic, *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Oxford 1986).

Vries, Jan de, *Heldenlied en Heldensage* (Utrecht 1959).

Wade-Evans, A.W., *Life of St. David* (London, 1923).

Williams, John, *Brut Y Tywysogion* (London 1860).

Williams, Glanmore, *Religion, Language, and Nationality in Wales* (Cardiff 1979).