Peredur and the *Valley of the Changing Sheep*

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Contents

Introduction

Ac o'r neill parth y'r afon y gwelei kadw o defied gwynnyon, ac o'r parth arall y gwelei kadw o defeit duon. Ac val y brefei vn o'r defeit gwynyon, y deuei vn o'r defeit duon drwod ac y bydei yn wen, ac val y brefei vn o'r defeit duon, y deuei cn o'r defeit gwynnyon drwod, ac y bydei du.[1]

(And on one side of the river he could see a herd of white sheep, and on the other side he could see a herd of black sheep. And as one of the white sheep would bleat, one of the black sheep would come across and be white. And as one of the black sheep would bleat, one of the white sheep would come across and would be black.)[2]

This seemingly miraculous episode is taken from the Middle-Welsh Arthurian tale *Peredur vab Efrawc* (c.1100).[3] On one of his quests the Arthurian knight Peredur passes a river and comes across this remarkable sight of sheep changing colour when crossing the physical boundary of the river. The sight is noted, after which Peredur continues his journey without making even the smallest remark about the event he has just witnessed. While this is not the only peculiar event in *Peredur,* the events he witnesses usually have a direct influence on him.[4] In the episode Peredur plays the role of the silent observer and has no interaction with what he sees before him, nor is the purpose of the episode otherwise explained. The episode is never referred to again and, as will be shown below, remains a mystery within the tale *Peredur vab Efrawc*.

Because the motif has received very little attention from scholars and, as I will show below, no satisfying explanation for the occurrence of this valley of changing sheep has been provided, the following paper will make a new attempt to discover the meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep.[5]

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[1] Glenys W. Goetinck, *Historia Peredur vab Efrawc* (Cardiff 1976) 47-48.

[2] Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford 2007) 89.

[3] Found in Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 7 (s.XIII-XIV); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 14 (s.XIV[1); Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 4: W*hite Book of Rhydderch* (s. XIV*med*); Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111: *Red Book of Hergest* (s.XIV/XV). Edited in Goetinck, *Historia Peredur vab Efrawc*; translated in Davies (tr.), *The Mabinogion*, 65-102. While Goetinck accepts the arguments for a date around 1100, she herself is more inclined to date the tale in its current composition around 1136. See: *Peredur,* 36.

[4] This will be illustrated in detail in chapter 1.

[5] I will use the definition of 'motif' as presented by John K Bollard in 'Theme and meaning in *Peredur*', *Arthuriana* 10 (2000) 73-92, 75: 'a surface incident that occurs usually more than once and that may serve to link passages and episodes [between different tales]'. These motifs may create explicit or implicit parallelisms and comparisons that interact with the meaning and relevance of the tale.

An important interpretation of the nature of the colour-changing sheep was provided by Glenys Goetinck in 1975.[6] In *Peredur: A Study of Welsh Tradition in the Grail Legend*, Goetinck presents an overall interpretation of *Peredur* based on the idea that the hero is constantly subjected to otherworldly influences. Most of the characters Peredur meets are considered either as otherworldly helpers or as otherworldly foes.[7] One of these helpers is a young squire whom Peredur meets after he leaves the Valley of the Changing Sheep.[8] Goetinck identifies this character as a herdsman, tending to the sheep and through his otherworldly nature the sheep acquire theirs.[9]

Rather than seeing the otherworldly shepherd as a character unique to *Peredur*, Goetinck considers this characters as one wider spread in Celtic culture. She identifies similar characters in the Welsh *Owain, y Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnawn* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*.[10] Moreover, the specific occurrence of this character in combination with colour-changing sheep is also present in the Old Irish *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*.[11] The relationship between the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur* and this last tale has been more closely examined by John Carey in 1982.[12]

The *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* is a sea-faring tale of which the composition is dated to the ninth century and the earliest manuscript to the twelfth.[13] The tale is divided in thirty-four episodes and, as Carey notes, events described in the twelfth episode are remarkably similar to the Valley of the Changing Sheep found in *Peredur*.[14] In this episode Mael Duín and his men sail past an island where they see two flocks of sheep, separated by a fence. On one side of the fence the sheep are white, on the other black, and when the sheep cross the fence they change colour. Because the sailors are afraid they might change colour themselves when they set foot on the island, they throw two rods onto the island to see what happens.[15] The rod that lands on the side of the white sheep

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[6] Glenys W. Goetinck, *Peredur: A Study of Welsh Tradition in the Grail Legends* (Cardiff 1975) 251-252.

[7] Goetinck, *Peredur*, 153.

[8] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.

[9] Goetinck, *Peredur,* 251-252. Goetincks hypothesis will be further discussed in chapter 1.

[10] Goetinck, *Peredur*, 252; *Owein, y Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnawn* is edited in R.L. Thompson, *Owein, y Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnawn* (Dublin 1986); *Culhwch ac Olwen* in Rachel Bromwich, *Culhwch ac Olwen* (Cardiff 1988). Both texts are translated in Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 116-138; 179-213.

[11] Edited and translated in Whitley Stokes, 'The Voyage of Mael Duin [part 1]', *Revue Celtique* 9 (1888) 447–495 and 'The Voyage of Mael Duin [part 2]', *Revue Celtique* 10 (1889) 50–95; and H.P.A. Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin: a study in early Irish voyage literature followed by an edition of Immram curaig Máele Dúin from the Yellow Book of Lecan in Trinity College, Dublin* (Groningen 1970).

[12] John Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 30 (1982) 277-280.

[13] Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin*, 43. The text has been preserved in four manuscripts: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 23 E 25: *Book of the Dun Cow* (s.XI/XII); Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1318 (*olim* H.2.16): *Yellow Book of Lecan* (s. XIV-XV); London, British Library, MS Harleian 5280 (s.XVI[1)]; London, British Library, MS Egerton 1782 (c.1516-1518).

[14] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 278.

[15] Stokes, 'The Voyage of Máel Dúin [part 1]', 481-482, episode XII; Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin,* 124-125, episode 12.

turns white, the rod that lands on the side of the black sheep turns black. After seeing this, the sailors decide to continue on their way.[16]

Carey considers the episodes in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and *Peredur* too similar to have been created independently.[17] He argues that since it is not uncommon in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* for islands to have specific characteristics that are bestowed on its visitors, the sheep in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* function within a context.[18] Because a context is lacking in the Welsh tale, Carey considers the Welsh motif to have been borrowed from an Irish text, possibly the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* itself.[19] Why the Valley of the Changing Sheep was borrowed for *Peredur* and what the motif's possible meaning would be, is not discussed.

Rather than a discussion on the meaning of the motif, Carey presents a possible source for the motif of the changing sheep. He proposes that the scene in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* is derived from the biblical episode found in Genesis 30.37-39. In these Bible verses a creation of multi-coloured sheep is described.

> *Tollens ergo Jacob virgas populeas virides, et amygdalinas, et ex platanis, ex parte decorticavit eas: detractisque corticibus, in his, quae spoliata fuerant, candor apparuit: illa vero quae integra fuerant, viridia permanserunt: atque in hunc modum color effectus est varius. Posuitque eas in canalibus, ubi effundebatur aqua: ut cum venissent greges ad bibendum, ante oculos haberent virgas, et in aspectu earum conciperent. Factumque est ut in ipso calore coitus, oves intuerentur virgas, et parerent maculosa, et varia, et diverso colore respersa.*[20]

(And Jacob took green rods of poplar and of almond and of plane trees, and pilled them in part, so when the bark was taken off, in the parts that were pilled, there appeared whiteness, but the parts that were whole remained green, and by this means the colour was divers. And he put them in the troughs, where the water was poured out: that when the flocks should come to drink, they might have the rods before their eyes, and in the sight of them might conceive. And it came to pass that in the very heat of coition, the sheep beheld the rods, and brought forth spotted, and of divers colours, and speckled.)[21]

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[16] Stokes, 'The Voyage of Máel Dúin [part 1]', 481-482, episode XII; Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin,* 124-125, episode 12.

[17] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 278.

[18] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 278, footnote 4.

[19] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 279.

[20] Biblia Sacra Vulgata, Genesis 30:37-39

[21] Douay-Rheims translation, edited in Swift Edgar (ed.), *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims translation* vol. 1: The Pentateuch (Cambridge 2010) Genesis 30:37-39, p.154-157.

While this passage does discuss the colour of sheep, there are some crucial differences between the biblical passage and the scenes in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and *Peredur* that leave me unconvinced of Carey's suggestion. Most importantly, in Genesis there is no actual change in colour taking place. Instead of sheep changing colour instantly, as it is in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and *Peredur*, the biblical scene describes a manipulation of the conception of lambs. The multi-coloured sheep only appear after the pregnancy has been completed and the lambs are born. Rather than changing in colour, a new colour is created. Moreover, the multi-coloured aspect of the biblical sheep is in no way represented in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and *Peredur* where the sheep are either completely white, or completely black. There is neither an intertwining of two colours taking place nor any other state of metamorphosis. Rather, the sheep are subject to an instant total switch from one colour to the other.

If the biblical episode did not function as the 'original', Carey's argument that 'the Irish tale resembles both the earlier biblical and the later Welsh account considerably more closely than either can be said to resemble the other'[22] can no longer be used as additional prove for his hypothesis that the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur* has an Irish origin.[23] Rather, the possibility arises that the composers of both texts were in possession of the same example. To strengthen the option for a common source, I would like to introduce another text in which the motif of the Valley of the Changing Sheep appears and which is not mentioned by Carey.

This occurrence of the motif is in the Middle Dutch *Roman van Walewein*, dated after 1230 and written by Penninc and Vostaert.[24] Instead of sheep, the animals changing colour are birds.[25] The episode itself is otherwise quite similar to the episode in *Peredur*. During his travels Walewein, an Arthurian knight equivalent to Chrétien de Troyes Gauvain, encounters a river where the crossing of the physical boundary of a bridge turns black birds white.[26] Contrary to *Peredur*, in the *Roman van Walewein* the episode is provided with an explanation within the tale. The birds supposedly represent souls: the black ones are said to be corrupt souls that are washed clean and thereby become white.[27]

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[22] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 280.
[23] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 280.
[24] Preserved in two manuscripts. Complete version: Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS LTK 195 (s.XIII *med*.); fragment: Gent, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS 1619 (s.XIV²). An edition and translation can be found in David F. Jonhson and Geert H.M. Claassens, *Dutch Romances I: Roman van Walewein* (Cambridge, 2000). Lines 11173 and 11177 identify the authors.
[25] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 5840-5845.
[26] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 5840-5852.
[27] *Roman van Walewein* ll. 5846-5855.

Even though the *Roman van Walewein* has been subject to extensive studies discussing its source materials, the colour-changing birds have received little attention of their own.[28] The focus of scholars for this episode lies in the bridge rather than the birds.[29] While the authors of the *Walewein* are thought to have based their bridge on an episode taken from Chrétien de Troyes *Lancelot, le Chevalier de la Charrette* (c.1180), their French example does not feature an equivalent to the birds in the *Roman van Walewein*.[30] Consequently the birds are left out of the equation and receive little individual attention. Because of this the birds seem to be interpreted as the authors' individual invention.[31] Since the episode of the colour-changing birds is so similar to the motif of the Valley of the Changing Sheep, this is unlikely. Instead the episode should be considered in line with many of the other elements in the *Walewein*, and interpreted as an episode which Pennic and Vostaert have borrowed and adapted from an earlier text.

The most likely source for such a scene would be Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal*.[32] This texts serves as a source for the *Roman van Walewein* and is also closely related to *Peredur*.[33] While the narratives of *Perceval* and *Peredur* are remarkably similar, the one should not be considered as an adaptation of the other. Rather, they are two individual narratives that have developed from the same source and which have influenced each other on several occasions in later stages of their composition.[34] If an episode equivalent to the Valley of the Changing Sheep is present in *Perceval*, its presence in both *Peredur* and *Walewein* is easily explained. However, Chrétien's text

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[28] For a study of the sources for the *Roman van Walewein* see A.A.M. Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen: Intertekstualiteit in drie Middelnederlandse Arturromans* (Hilversum 1993).

[29] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 61-65; Maartje Draak, *Onderzoekingen over de Roman van Walewein* (Groningen 1975) 174.

[30] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen*, 15, 61-65; an edition and modern French translation of *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* can be found in: Jean-Claude Aubailly (ed.), *Lancelot ou Le chevalier de la charrette par Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris 1991).

[31]Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 62-65; Draak, *Onderzoekingen over de Roman van Walewein,* 174.

[32] An edition of *Perceval* can be found in Ketih Busby (ed.), Le Roman de Perceval ou le Conte du graal, édition critique d'après tous les manuscrits (Tübingen 1993), a translation in W.W. Kibler and Robert Palmer (eds.), *Medieval Arthurian Epic and Romance: Eight New Translations* (Jefferson 2014). The text has been dated between 1180-1195 (see: Hinton (2012) 1).

[33] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen*, 61-65; K.L. Over, 'Transcultural change: romance to rhamant', in Medieval Celtic Literature and Society, ed. H. Fulton (Dublin 2005) 183-204;

[34] For studies on the relationship between *Peredur* and *Perceval* see: Over, 'Transcultural change: romance to rhamant' 183-204; for the general academic field of the *mabinogionfrage,* studying the relationship between Chrétien and three Welsh Arthurian texts (*Peredur ab Efrawc; Owein y Yarlles y Ffynawn; Gereint vab Erbin*) see: Tony Hunt, 'Some observations on the textual relationship of Li Chevaliers au Lion and Iarlles y Ffynnawn', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 33 (1974) 93–113; Goetinck, *Peredur*; Doris Edel, 'The "Mabinogionfrage": Arthurian literature between orality and literacy', in: H.C.L. Tristam (ed.), *(Re)Oralisierung* (Tübingen 1996) 311–33; Helen Fulton 'Individual and society in Owein/Yvain and Gereint/Erec', in: J.F. Nagy (ed.), *The Individual in Celtic Literatures,* CSANA Yearbook, 1 (2001) 15–50; and Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Migrating Narratives: Peredur, Owein and Gereint' in: Helen Fulton (ed.), *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Chichester 2009) 128-141.

is not in possession of such an episode and thus does not provide the missing link. While it would theoretically be possible that, as Carey suggested, a motif created in Ireland was transported to Wales,[35] and then from Wales to continental Europe to reach Flanders, this is unlikely. While a direct Celtic influence on the *Roman van Walewein* has been proposed in the past, this idea is generally no longer accepted by scholars.[36] The Celtic origin of the motif of the Valley of the Changing sheep proposed by Goetinck and Carey is thus not functional as interpretative framework to discover the motif's meaning. In order to discover the meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur,* a broader European perspective should be adopted.

Methodology

To discover the meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep I will take an intertextual approach. I will define 'intertextuality' in line with Simon Smith as 'relationships between texts that are deliberately added by the author, recognizable for the audience and traceable by the scholar'.[37] As discussed above, it is unlikely that the composer of *Peredur* invented the motif himself. He must therefore have been inspired by an earlier text from which he has adopted the motif. I will follow the idea of Michael Riffaterre who proposed that 'unreadable' elements in texts can often be attributed to the incapability of the reader to understand a reference to a different text rather than to the text itself.[38] Thus the lack of understanding of the Valley of the Changing Sheep is due to a missing piece of knowledge on the side of the modern reader. Through an intertextual approach this gap in knowledge can be filled so that a modern audience can too understand the underlying meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep.

The term 'intertextuality' was originally created by Julia Kristeva to denote relationships between texts.[39] She considers texts as a mosaic of citations and references and as objects that absorb and transform previous texts.[40] It should be remarked that rather than interpreting 'text' as a literary object, Kristeva used 'text' in the broadest sense as an overarching term to include almost

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[35] Carey, 'The Valley of the Changing Sheep', 278.

[36] Ad Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', in: Keith Busby (ed.), *Arthurian Literature XVII* (Cambridge 1999) 90; for a possible Celtic origin of the *Roman van Walewein* see Sjoerd Eringa, 'Walewein studies', *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal-en Letterunde* 44 (1925) 51-118.

[37] Simon Smith, `Intertekstualiteit in opmars', *Spektator* 24 (1995) 32-54, 32. Definition in Dutch *'bewust door de auteur(s) aangebrachte, voor het publiek herkenbare en voor de onderzoeker te traceren relaties tussen teksten'.*

[38] Michael Riffarterre, 'La trace de l'intertexte', *La Pensée* (1980) 215.

[39] J. Kristeva, *Semeiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris 1969) 143-173.

[40] Kristeva, *Semeiotikè,* 146.

every aspect of culture.[41] My definition of text will be in line with Mathilda Brucker, in a narrow, literary sense and relate to written texts only.[42]

Within the narrow sense of 'intertextuality', a further specification has been developed by P. Claes.[43] He divides intertextuality in two groups: generic intertextuality and specific intertextuality.[44] Generic intertextuality refers to intertextual relations on the level of genres.[45] Similarities on this level include the literary world of a tale, its main characters and the overall structure.[46] Specific intertextuality denotes relations between selected texts.[47] Since this paper studies a single motif, and the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* (a sea-faring tale), *Peredur* (a Welsh Arthurian tale), and *Walewein* (an Arthurian romance) all belong do different genres, only at specific intertextually will be taken into account.

Before starting the intertextual analysis, there are some limitations to this method that have to be addressed. As mentioned above the intertextual references are made by the author and should have been understood by an audience. This causes intertextual research to make assumptions on both the knowledge of an author and of the indented audience.[48] While this in itself is a challenge, it is further complicated by the fact that for many medieval texts the author and audience are unknown. This is no different for *Peredur* and the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin,* and even though the names of the authors of the *Roman van Walewein* are known, any other details about their identity are not.[49] Since neither the author or the audience is identified, I will not make a separation between their knowledge but consider for each text that author and audience had a similar cultural background.

The specific corpus of texts that I consider the author had access to will be based on manuscript evidence of the material that was available in Wales, Ireland and Flanders in general. Texts which have been preserved in either surviving manuscripts or medieval manuscript lists related to the three respective regions will be taken into account. It should be noted that for all three texts the dates of the manuscripts in which the texts are preserved do not correspond to the dates of composition of the texts. It cannot be said with certainty for any of them that the motif was already

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[41] Kristeva, *Semeiotikè,* 4.

[42] Mathila Tomeryn Bruckner, 'Intertextuality', in: Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby (eds.), *The legacy of Chrétien de Troyes: Volume 1* (1987) 224-266, 223.

[43] P. Claes,'Bijzondere en algemene intertextualiteitstheorie', *Spiegel der Letteren* 29 (1987) 7-15.

[44] Claes, 'Bijzondere en algemene intertextualiteitstheorie', 11.

[45] Claes, 'Bijzondere en algemene intertextualiteitstheorie', 11.

[46] Claes, 'Bijzondere en algemene intertextualiteitstheorie', 11; J.H. Winkelman, 'Intertekstualiteit als probleem', *Queeste* 1 (1994) 85-96, 87.

[47] Claes, 'Bijzonder en algemene intertextualiteitstheorie', 11; Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 17.

[48] Winkelman, 'Intertextualiteit als probleem', 86.

[49] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen*, 173-175.

present during the time of composition. The period in which the supposed source material should have been available thus ranges from the date of composition, to the date of the earliest manuscript. This means that any of the proposed sources had to be available in Wales between 1100 and 1350 for Wales, in Ireland between the ninth and the beginning of the twelfth century, and in Flanders between 1230 and 1250.[50]

However, before a selection of proposed source material can be made, some more information about the motif itself must be acquired. This will be featured in the first chapter, where a comparison between *Peredur,* the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein* will be made. It will become clear that all three texts have hero's travelling through the world when they encounter the rivers which change the colour of sheep and birds. In *Peredur* and the *Roman van Walewein* the heroes are more specifically mentioned to travel towards the East. Moreover, an additional characteristic of the river in the *Roman van Walewein*, the ability to set objects on fire, is also found in a river described in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*. This set of characteristics, a river that has the ability to change colour, the presence of animals which change colour, and a river that sets objects on fire, will be explored further in the second chapter.

Chapter two will make a first attempt to combine the characteristics found in the first chapter and locate them in other sources. Both marvellous rivers are featured widely in Latin encyclopaedic sources. Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (c.77 CE), Solinus' *De mirabilibus mundi* (c.200), the *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville (s.VII), Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis* (c.1219) and the Middle Dutch bestiary *Der Nature Bloemen* by Jacob van Maerlant (c.1270) will be featured.[51] In their descriptions of both the river that changes the colour of sheep and the one that sets objects on fire, these rivers are said to be located in the eastern regions of the Mediterranean. While the oriental nature of these rivers is not explicitly mentioned in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* or the *Roman van Walewein*, the encyclopaedic sources suggest they were strongly associated with the East.

The third chapter will make an attempt at proving that the knowledge presented in the discussed encyclopaedic sources was actually available to the composer and audience of *Peredur*. While the presence of at least Isidore's *Etymologiae* in Ireland between the ninth and the twelfth century is not disputed, and there is a source in the same language and from the same region as the *Roman van Walewein* attesting to the availability of this knowledge to Pennic, Vostaert and their

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[50] Goetinck, *Peredur,* 36; Oskamp, *The Voyage of Máel Dúin*, 43; Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 38.

[51] H. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History* vol. I: Books 1-2, Loeb Classical Library 330 (Cambridge 1938) 23; T.H. Mommsen, *C.Iulii Solini: Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* (Berlin 1895); Stephen A. Bartney (e.a.), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge 2009) 11-13; Jessalynn Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry', 56; Maurits Gysseling and W.J.J. Pijnenburg (ed.), *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met 1500) reeks II: Literaire handschriften* vol.2 (The Hague 1981) 4.

audience, the availability of this encyclopaedic knowledge in Wales is more difficult to prove.[52] Chapter three will discuss the little manuscript evidence of Isidore's *Etymologiae* which has been preserved and take an additional look at the ways in which the knowledge about the East will have been spread through Wales in the period between 1100 and 1350.

Once the presence of this knowledge has been established the Valley of the Changing Sheep can be interpreted as a description of a marvel closely related with the East. As such is functions as a geographical location marker to show Peredur's transition into the Eastern regions of the world.

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Chapter 1

The three tales *Historia Peredur vab Efrawc, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein* all contain a very similar episode that concerns animals changing colour. In two of the tales, *Peredur* and the *Roman van Walewein*, they do so when they cross a bridge, but in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* the river takes the shape of a fence. Moreover, while the animals encountered by Peredur and Máel Dúin are sheep, the animals seen changing colour by Walewein are birds. However, while these episodes are not the identical, they are remarkably similar. These similarities are most likely caused by the episodes sharing a common example, rather than being individual inventions of three different composers. While their differences may be caused by changes implemented by their composers, their similarities will undoubtedly have been present in their common example. It is the information preserved in this common source that is necessary to understand why these episodes are included in their respective tales, which is the final goal of this paper.

This particular chapter will deal with the treatment of motif of the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein*. While a comparison between the three tales is the final objective, an anysis of each of the three tales will be presented first. For each narrative a short summary will be provided, followed by a description of the structure of the tale and the place in the narrative in which the motif occurs. In the discussion of *Peredur* some particular attention will be given to the way in which the motif functions different in the narrative compared to other episodes. It will be shown that throughout the rest of the tale, every comparable episode has a purpose. Descriptions of animals and specific locations are carefully thought out and as such indicate a specific purpose for the Valley of the Changing Sheep rather than being reduced to an oddity. Once the general use of animals and locations in *Peredur* is discussed, some attention will be given to the use of colour and the tendency to label certain colours in Welsh literature as 'otherworldly'. It will become clear that none of the colours in *Peredur* are actually otherworldly but perfectly ordinary and that the interpretation of the colour-changing sheep as otherworldly in nature is not that strong a claim either.

After the discussion of *Peredur*, a similar approach will be taken for the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein*. After a short summary of the tales, the motif will be discussed within its narrative context, after which some remarks about the possible uses the motif will be made. At the end the way the motif is presented in each tale will be compared.

Historia Peredur

Structure and Content (summary)

The Middle Welsh tale *Peredur vab Efrawc* described the adventures had by the knight Peredur from his birth until he is a knight thoroughly part of king Arthur's court. While the entire narrative surrounds the heroic deeds of Peredur, his separate adventures are difficult to connect. Rather than consisting out of one flowing narrative, the adventures of Peredur seem structured in four distinct groups, separated by episodes at Arthur's court. In the first Peredur seeks revenge on Cai,[53] in the second the affection of Angharad,[54] the third group is distinguished by Peredur's search for the Black Beast of the Cairn and the last one by the quest for the nature of the grail.[55] Even though the first two groups of adventures are generally taken together, the narrative is still left with three distinguished parts. In line with Brynley F. Roberts I will refer to these as parts A, B and C.[56]

Part A beings after the death of Efrawc, Peredur's father.[57] Efrwac and six of his sons have died during battle. To protect her youngest, and only living son, Peredur's mother raises Peredur away from society in the middle of a forest to prevent him from becoming a knight himself. Peredur has no knowledge about knights and courtly society. When one day three knights ride through the forest Peredur lives in, this becomes his first encounter with knighthood in general. Immediately after this confrontation Peredur sets out to the court of king Arthur to become a knight himself and thus start his adventures.[58] At Arthur's court Peredur is confronted with Cai, who not only insults Peredur himself but also a she-dwarf praising him. Peredur leaves Arthur's court with the promise that he will not return until he avenges this insult.[59] During his wondering Peredur meets two of his uncles, who teach him how to fight, encounters a severed head that seemingly takes the place of the Holy Grail described by Chrétien de Troyes, frees a maiden and her retinue when their castle is besieged, completes his training with a group of witches and finally faces Cai in a duel.[60] After Cai is defeated, Peredur returns with Arthur and his knights to court.

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[53] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 65-82.
[54] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 82-86.
[55] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 86-94, 94-102.
[56] Brynley F. Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc": a text in translation', *Arthuriana* 10 (2000) 57-72, 60.
[57] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 65.
[58] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 66.
[59] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 68-69.
[60] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 70-82.

In part B Peredur is at Arthur's court, where he meets Angharad Law Eurog.[61] He vows to her that he will not converse with any Christian until she loves him.[62] He sets out from court once again, encounters a community of giants, who conveniently have not yet been baptized, and kills a giant serpent before the Angharad professes her love for him.[63] Peredur returns to Arthur's court again, only to leave once more when he is told about the Black Beast of the Cairn.[64] While on his way to defeat this monster, Peredur meets a mysterious lady from India. She gives him a magical stone that will make him invisible.[65] She directs Peredur to search for her in the direction of India, and it is after this encounter that Peredur passes through the Valley of the Changing Sheep.[66] After having defeated the Black Beast of the Cairn Peredur continues on his way and in the end marries the empress of Constantinople.[67]

Part C begins once again at Arthur's court. No reference is given to the time Peredur spend in Constantinople. An ugly maiden enters the court and accuses Peredur of not having inquired after the nature of the events taking place at the castle of the second uncle, at which he saw the severed head.[68] Peredur vows to set out to discover this. The severed head is revealed as belonging to one of Peredur's cousins, who was killed by the witches who helped Peredur his training. Peredur, Arthur, and the rest of Arthur's retinue set out to kill these witches and thus ends the story. [69]

Each of these three segments starts with a conventional opening sentence (*Efrwac iarll bioed iarllaeth yn y Gogled* ['Earl Efrog held an Earldom in the North'][70], or *Arthur a oed Kaer Llion ar Wysc* ['Arthur was in Caerllion ar Wysg'][71]), indicating a new beginning and thus a break from what has happened previously. [72] The separation between these three segments is further confirmed in the manuscript tradition of *Peredur.* In two of the four manuscripts in which *Peredur* is preserved, the separate parts are visualized by introducing each segment with a large capital.[73] These capitals are only used to mark the beginning of these three sections and do not appear anywhere else in the narrative, indicating the importance of these breaking points. [74]

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[61] Trans. 'Angharad Golden Hand'.
[62] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 82.
[63] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 82-86.
[64] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 87.
[65] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 88-89.
[66] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.
[67] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89-94.
[68] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 94.
[69] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 102.
[70] Goetinck, *Historia Peredur*, 7; Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 65.
[71] Goetinck, *Historia Peredur,* 42, 65; Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 86, 94.
[72] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 67.
[73] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 60; manuscripts: White Book of Rhydderch and Red Book of Hergest
[74] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 60.

Roberts has convincingly argued that part C can be considered as a separate narrative that has in a later stage been added to the narrative of parts A and B.[75] While parts A and B are present in all four manuscripts in which *Peredur* is preserved, part C does not. MS Peniarth 7 can be considered a 'short redaction' of the text, ending with part B.[76] The closing lines of part B are *Ac yna y bu ef y gyda ar amerodres pedeir blyned ar dec. Ac yvelly y tervyna kynnyd paredur ap Efrawc* ('And there did he stay with the empress fourteen years. And thus ends the Progress of Peredur ab Efrawg'),[77] which can be considered as a typical closing formula that mentions the title or the major theme of the tale and which needs no further material to complete the narrative.[78]

The seemingly separate nature of parts A, B and C has led to various scholarly interpretations about the general theme or shared subject of the narrative. A short list of overarching interpretations include the 'Sovereignty Theory', defended by Goetinck and Lloyd-Morgan, a more thematic interpretation presented by Bollard, and the idea of revenge as the driving force behind Peredur's behaviour, as introduced by Loomis.[79] The largest problem for each of these interpretations to overcome is the lack of coherence between parts B and C. While they can both flow from the narrative of part A, they seemingly have no correlation to each other. This has lead Roberts to propose that part C may not have originally been part of the same narrative as parts A and B, but was originally a narrative of its own.[80]

Because there is no consensus about the overarching theme of *Peredur*, it is difficult to explain the meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep as part of an overarching theme. While the idea of colour-changing sheep is generally considered as odd, and thus in need of an explanation, it is worthwhile to examine how odd this episode actually is. After all, Peredur is also said to fight giants and unicorn-like creatures, so the magical element does not seem out of place.[81] Moreover, encountering a valley of sheep in general seems hardly suspicious but more of an expected sight during one's travels through Wales. However, as will be explained below, such idyllic travel descriptions do not occur in *Peredur*. Every description has a function.

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[75] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 60-71.
[76] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 60.
[77] Peniarth 7 col. 48, translation from S. Davies, 'Written texts as performance', in: Huw Pryce, *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge 1998) 144.
[78] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 67.
[79] Goetinck, *Peredur: A Study of Welsh Tradition in the Grail Legends* (Cardiff 1975); Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Migrating Narratives: Peredur, Owein and Gereint' in: Helen Fulton (ed.), A Companion to Arthurian Literature (Chichester 2009) 128-141; Bollard, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"'; L. Hibbard Loomis, 'The Sword Bridge of Crétien de Troyes and its Celtic Original', Romantic Review IV (1913) 166-190.
[80] Roberts, '"Peredur Son of Efrawc"', 67.
[81] Davies, *The Mabionogion,* 82-83, 100-101.

Animals

In total Peredur encounters fourteen different types of animal.[82] Of all these animals, horses are mentioned the most frequent, followed by dogs which too appear on several occasions.[83] Moreover Peredur encounters a few stags/deer, two serpents and on singular occasions birds, a duck, a goat, a hawk, a lion, a raven, a cave-monster and the two flocks of sheep inhabiting the Valley of the Changing Sheep.[84] Overall these animals can be separated into two categories: domestic and wild. The domestic animals are those owned by people. This group includes the horses, which are always used to ride on, and the dogs, which are in all cases mentioned in relation to a hunt.[85] These animals emphasize the character of their owner. When Peredur is still living in the forest he herds goats, when he becomes a knight he starts riding a horse as all knights and ladies do, and when he is at the court he participates in the noble sport of hunting, assisted by some greyhounds.[86]

The second category consists out of animals (monsters) that are fought or hunted by Peredur. This category of wild animals consists of the serpents, the stags, the deer, the lion and the cave-monster.[87] The purpose of these animals is for the hero to prove his strength and his capabilities by defeating them.

Some animals that are mentioned do not fit into these two categories. Twice an animal is used as part of a simile. Peredur is described to tie a group of men up like a roebuck, and one of the wild animals that Peredur fights is said to be swift as a bird.[88] The animals in these cases are used for stylistic purposes related to the language. They illustrate a point which reflects on the hero's prowess and strength: treating the men he defeats similar to the animals he would hunt in the first instance, and overcoming an animal which can run at abnormal speed in the second.

The hawk, raven and duck appearing at the end of part A do not fit in the above mentioned groups either. These particular animals are used to create a black-red-white image in the snow which reminds Peredur of the love of his life. The colours in these scene are crucial to its function. The

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[82] These fourteen animals and the (first) page on which they are mentioned in Davies' *The Mabinogion* include: numerous horses (p.65); goats (p.65); some deer (p.65); a hawk (p.79); a duck (p.79); a raven (p.79); a lion (p.82); two serpents (p.84); several dogs (p.86); a cave monster (p.88); two flocks of sheep (p.89); a mule (p.94); a one-horned stag (p.100); and fish (p.101).
[83] Horses appear throughout the tale, dogs can be found on Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 86, 89, 101.
[84] See above note 81.
[85] Sioned Davies, 'The Horse in the *Mabinogion',* in : Sioned Davies and Nerys Ann Jones, *The Horse in Celtic Culture: Medieval Welsh Perspectives* (Cardiff 1997) 121-140.
[86] For the goats see Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 65.
[87] The two serpents can be found on Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 84, 87, 88 and 91; the stags on 86, 100 and 101; the deer on page 89; the lion on pages 82 and 83; and the cave-monster is mentioned on pages 88 and 90.
[88] Goetinck, *Historia Peredur,* 54, 68; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 93, 100: '*Ef a barawd eu rwymaw rwy mat iwrch…'* (He tied them up like a roebuck…'), '*Karw yssyd, yno a chyebrwydet yw a'r edeinyawc kyntaf…*' (A stag, as swift as the swiftest bird….).

whiteness of the snow, combined with the blackness of the raven and redness of the duck's blood reminds him of the woman he loves whom has black hair, a white skin and red cheeks.[89] The animals are used to recreate this image and let Peredur fall into deep thought because of which he is unable to identify himself when confronted by Arthur's knights. He manages to unknowingly defeat Cai in battle and thereby complete the quest linking together part A of the narrative, namely not to return to Arthur's court without having confronted Cai.[90] While these animals cannot be described as part of the domestic or wild categories, they certainly have their purpose.

Overall, it becomes clear that all the animals mentioned in *Peredur* have their own function and that their presence is in all cases related to people. They have an effect on the human characters around them. The domestic animals illustrate the status of the character they belong to, the wild animals are used to increase the status of the hero who encounters them, and the hawk, raven and duck influence the situation in which the hero finds himself. The sheep seem the odd ones out. They are not owned by any of the characters, nor are they fought by Peredur, and they do not seem to influence the situation of the hero either. Yet, when compared with the other instances of the occurrence of animals this last option seems the most viable. However, before any such conclusions can be drawn, the other possible descriptive aspect of this motif should be taken into account: the location.

Locations

As with the animals, locations are described from a practical point of view as well. Once again it becomes clear that decorative descriptions are not included in *Peredur*. The valleys, forests and meadows that Peredur rides through are all directly linked with an event. The descriptions of environmental features can too be divided into two categories. The first category consists out of descriptions in which Peredur passes a forest, valley or mountain to find a civilised settlement on the other side. For example, when Peredur leaves the court of King Arthur in part A, he arrives at a great, desolate forest, *ac yn ystlys y coet y oed llyn, a'r tu arall y'r llyn ys oed llys vawr a chaer telediw yn y chylch* ('and at the edge of the forest was a lake, and on the other side of the lake was a large court and a fine fortress around it').[91] The fortress is placed on the other side of a lake, which is situated on the other side of a forest. Castles, forts, tents, huts and other civilized places of residence are always

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[89] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 79. It is worth mentioning that this particular scene is also presented in Chrétien de Troyes *Perceval*. The idea of black hair is generally not considered a Welsh female beauty ideal and may thus have another origin.

[90] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 79. The beginning of this plotline is described on page 70.

[91] Goetinck, *Historia Peredur*, 16; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 71.

located on the other side of a natural phenomenon. The fact that Peredur at the beginning of the story lives within a forest makes him an outsider to courtly society.[92] With the exception of the unbaptized giants, all other residences that Peredur encounters are described as on the (other) side of nature.

The second category of descriptions of environmental features consists of those related to events within nature, which are predominantly violent. Within this category one can find two sub-categories. Duels, tournaments and wars in which knights and thus civilised people are involved, take place in meadows, clearings and valleys.[93] Fights with less civilised creatures such as serpents, stags and the unbaptized giants are situated in forests and on mountains.[94]

As with the descriptions of animals mentioned above, all descriptions of environmental features are related to actions of the hero. Peredur either visits the castles on the margin of nature, or fights a battle within nature. Once again, the Valley of the Changing Sheep is an odd one out. If this episode were in line with the rest of the narrative, Peredur would be expected to fight the sheep. However, he does not. Neither is the valley home to a place of residence where Peredur can meet people. It seems neither a place for battle, nor a place for courtly culture.

While there is no settlement described within the valley, the colour-changing sheep are not the only living creatures occupying it the moment Peredur rides through it. Right before and after Peredur enters and exits the valley, he encounters two people sitting on a mound.

Before he enters the valley, Peredur meets a mysterious maiden who offers Peredur a magical stone which will make him invisible to the cave-monster which he will encounter on his way to defeat the Black Beast of the Cairn.[95] Before he continues on his way, Peredur asks he maiden where he can find her, to which she replies *Pan geissych ti viui, keis parth a'r India* ('When you search for me, look towards India').[96] Peredur seemingly follows this advice since, at the end of part B, he meets and marries the Empress of Constantinople.[97] However, it is never specified that this is in Constantinople itself. He meets the Empress in a valley filled with mills, rather than a court.[98] Still, this part of the story is concluded with the phrase *Ac y gweledychwys Peredur gyt a'r amherodres pedeir blyned ar dec, megys y dyweit yr ystorya* ('And Peredur ruled with the empress for fourteen

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[92] For more on the division between nature and society see: Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Narrative Structure in *Peredur', Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 38 (1981) 187-231; and Christine Ferlampin-Acher, 'The Natural World', in: Leah Tether and Johnny McFayden, *Handbook of Arthurian Romance: King Arthur's Court in Medieval European Literature* (Berlin 2017) 239-258.
[93] For example Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 65, 68, 69, 73.
[94] For example Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 65, 66, 70, 75.
[95] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.
[96] Goetinck, *Historia Peredur*, 47; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.
[97] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 94.
[98] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 92.

years, according to the story').[99] Regardless of having met the Empress in Constantinople, Peredur ruled by her side for fourteen years and thus becomes an active participant in Eastern culture. The maiden's advice to travel towards India seem to have been taken into account. The sheep could possibly be a first step in Peredur's Oriental travels.

While exiting the valley Peredur comes across a squire. The squire has two greyhounds with him, with which he can presumably take part in the hunt which is taking place around them.[100] The squire describes to Peredur the best and bravest greyhounds hunting deer and urges him to take part in the hunt, or travel towards his castle to spend the night there rather than to continue to fight the cave monster and after that the Black Serpent.[101] In line with what been described above, the squire's house is said be beyond the valley, on the other side of the forest. Peredur declines the squire's offer and proceeds towards the Black Beast of the Cairn.

It is this squire-character Glenys Goetinck has presented as an otherworldly herdsman which she considers similar to the character of the Wild Man in *Owein, y Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnawn* ('Owain, or the Story of the Lady of the Fountain').[102] She considers the hounds to be part of the shepherd –like nature of the squire, who she in general considers to be a representation of an otherworldly god having taken up the part to serve as Peredur's supernatural helper.[103] Because of the otherworldliness of the shepherd, the sheep become otherworldly in nature as well. Moreover, the fact that the sheep change from black to white perfectly alights with the idea that otherworldly animals in Welsh literature are often described as black-and-white in colour. However, as will be shown below, this character is nothing like a shepherd and can as such not be considered the rightful owner of the sheep. His status, otherworldly or not, does not influence the nature of the sheep.

Otherworldly Colours

It is a common idea that black-and-white coloured animals are related to the otherworld.[104] The fact that greyhounds owned by the squire are described as white-breasted thus gives an extra dimension

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[99] Goetinck, *Historia Peredur*, 56; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.

[100] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.

[101] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.

[102] Goetinck, *Peredur*, 252. The text of *Owein* can, among others, be found in the manuscripts Aberystwth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 4 (*The White Book of Rhydderch* – c.1350); Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111 (*The Red Book of Hergest* –s.XIV/VI); and Oxford, Jesus College, MS 20 (s.XIV/XV). A translation can be found in Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 116-138.

[103] Goetinck, *Peredur*, 252.

[104] J. Hemming, '*Bos primigenius* in England: Or, Why Do Fairy Cows have Red Ears?', *Folklore* 113 (2002) 71-82, 72; John Carey, 'The Three Sails, the Twelve Winds, and the Question of Early Irish Colour Theory', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 72 (2009) 221-232; J. Hemming, 'Red, White, and Black in Symbolic Thought: The Tricolour Folk Motif, Colour Naming, and Trichromatic Vision', *Folklore* 123 (2012) 310-329.

to the idea that they are otherworldly in nature too. Yet, grey or black with a white breast is the natural appearance of a greyhound. Rather than otherworldly, their colours are simply realistic.

The same realism in use of colour can be seen in the other parts of *Peredur*. When colours are used to describe people, they refer to red, blonde, brown, black or white hair.[105] All natural hair colours. These colours are once again practical in nature. Rather than giving characters a name, in many instances they are defined by the colour of their hair. References to a *morwyn wineu* ('auburn-haired maiden'), *weisson cochyon* ('red-headed lads'), or a *gwr llwyt* ('grey-haired man') are no exceptions.[106]

While hair-colour is seemingly a general method to describe a new character, physical traits such as the colour of a maidens eyes or skin are only mentioned on two occasions. The first instance describes a maiden of extreme beauty, the other of extreme ugliness. The beautiful maiden is described with black hair, white skin and red cheeks, the ugly maiden with black hair, yellow teeth and green eyes.[107] Both of these maidens have been interpreted as otherworldly characters and considered extraordinary.[108] While their physical features in itself can be perfectly normal, their elaborate descriptions emphasize the exceptionality of the characters, otherworldly or not.

The colours used to describe animals are of an equally ordinary nature. There is the *geffyl brychwelw* ('dapple-grey nag') belonging to Peredur before he becomes a knight,[109] the *march coch* ('red horse') belonging to a knight named Edlym Gleddyf Goch (Edlym of the Red Sword),[110] who also has red amour, a *mul melyn* ('yellow mule') on which the hideous maiden is riding,[111] and a *palfrey gloywdu* ('black palfrey) owned by the knight met by Gwalchmei.[112] All these horses are described in relation to their riders, and thus emphasize the character of their owners. Peredur's horse is used to emphasize his uneducated state of knighthood, Edlym's horse to give an extra notion the nature of his name, and the maiden's mule is as ugly as she is herself. *Palfrei* is a French loanword used to denote a horse ideally used for hunting and leisure activities.[113] Together with the blackness of the horse the exotic, knightly nature of this specific horse and his rider are underlined.[114]

It is in this emphasizing context that the greyhounds of the squire should be understood. The colour of the dogs emphasizes their status, which in turn reflects on the status of their owner. This is

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[105] For example Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 72, 74, 83, 93.
[106] Respectively Goetinck, *Peredur,* 10, 23, 37 and Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 67, 75, 83.
[107] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 75, 94.
[108] Goetinck, *Peredur*, 153-155.
[109] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 66, 68.
[110] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 90.
[111] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 94.
[112] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 95.
[113] Sioned Davies, 'The Horse in the *Mabinogion',* in : Sioned Davies and Nerys Ann Jones, *The Horse in Celtic Culture: Medieval Welsh Perspectives* (Cardiff 1997) 121-140, 125.
[114] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 249.

illustrated at the moment when Peredur proclaims that *diheu oed ganthaw na welsei eiroet maccwy kyteyrneidet ac ef* ('he was certain that he had never seen such a royal-looking squire').[115] The squire is no way resembles a mere shepherd and the greyhounds that accompany him further emphasize his status. Rather than being used for herding the sheep, the hounds are meant for the noble activity of hunting. [116]

Now that she squire is eliminated as the sheep's owner, the sheep are left without one. Their colours do not influence anyone else. Their black and white nature is more similar to the blackness of the raven, the red blood of the duck and the whiteness of the snow used to recreate the image of a beautiful maiden. The colours need to be mentioned to emphasize the events taking place in the scene: black-red-white to show the relation of the scene with the physical features of the maiden, the black and white of the sheep to show they are going through a change. The difference between the episodes lies in the fact that Peredur is directly influenced by the vision of the maiden whereas he is seemingly unaffected by the changing sheep. In fact, this is an overall problem with the Valley of the Changing Sheep. All comparable episodes, featuring either animals, locations or descriptions of colour have a direct influence on any of the characters but the Valley of the Changing Sheep seemingly has none. Further analysis is needed to discover what the function of the motif might be. A first step will be taken by looking at the motif in the Middle Dutch *Roman van Walewein*.

Roman van Walewein

Structure and Content (summary)

The Middle Dutch *Roman van Walewein* is an Arthurian romance of which the structure is similar to the folktale identified as AT 550 (The Golden Bird). [117] In this folktale the hero is partaking in a quest for a golden bird, which he can only achieve by completing two additional tasks.[118] During these tasks he gets help from a magical helper in the shape of a fox. Both the threefold structure of this narrative and the magical helper can be seen in *Walewein*. [119]

Walewein's main quest is for a magical chessboard. The romance begins at the court of King Arthur where the king and his knights have gathered for dinner. Suddenly, a magic chessboard flies in

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[115] Goetinck, *Peredur,* 48; Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 89.
[116] Davies, *The Mabinogion,* 89.
[117] Maartje Draak, *Onderzoekingen over de Roman van Walewein* (Groningen 1975) 62
[118] Maartje Draak, *Onderzoekingen over de Roman van Walewein*, 62.
[119] Draak, *Onderzoekingen over de Roman van Walewein,* 62.

through the window.[120] For a short while it hangs still in the middle of the room before it flies back out. Arthur wishes to own the chessboard, and Walewein volunteers to go and get it.[121] While in pursuit of the board he travels to the castle of King Wonder, who is the owner of the chessboard.[122] King Wonder is willing to trade the chessboard for the magical Sword with the Two Rings, owned by King Amoraen.[123] Walewein thus sets out on the second part of his quest. During his journey towards Amoraen, he watches a tournament at the castle of King Amadijs.[124] After the tournament Walewein continues to the castle of King Amoraen, who promises to give Walewein the Sword with the Two Rings in exchange for the love of his life Ysabele, daughter of King Assentijn.[125] King Assentijn is told to live in Endi (India), in a castle protected by twelve gates, and which has a beautiful garden with a mechanical tree in it which has golden birds that sing when wind is blown through pipes within the tree. Underneath the tree is a magical fountain that returns youth to whomever drinks the water.[126] Walewein sets out to the castle of King Assentijn to complete the third part of the threefold quest. When Walewein has finally found this castle, he is prevented from coming close to is due to the perilous river to the Liver Sea.[127] It is at this moment that Walewein encounters the colour-changing birds, so similar in nature to the colour-changing sheep found in *Peredur*.[128] Walewein proves unable to cross the river. Instead he is guided by his magical helper Roges, a prince turned into a fox, to a tunnel underneath the river through which he manages to reach the castle of King Assentijn.[129] After having fought his way inside, crossing twelve moats and twelve gates, Walewein meets Ysabele, and the two fall in love.[130] When Assentijn discovers their relationship, he throws Walewein in his dungeon.[131] Walewein and Ysabele escape and flee the castle. After a difficult journey, Walewein, Ysabele and Roges arrive at the castle of King Amoraen (who is now called Amorijs).[132] Fortunately for the two lovers, the king has died, and they can stay together.[133] Walewein still gets the Sword with the Two Rings because he has kept his promise. They then travel back to the court of King

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[120] *Roman van Walewein*, l. 48.
[121] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 128-135.
[122] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 811-815.
[123] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 1286-1289.
[124] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 1891-2239.
[125] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 3376-3453.
[126] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 3455-3592.
[127] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 5824-5831; 5942-5955.
[128] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 5840-5855.
[129] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 6045-6112.
[130] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 7965-7967.
[131] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 8282-8285.
[132] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 9543-9545.
[133] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 9557-9559.

Wonder, where Roges is turned back into his human form.[134] Walewein trades the Sword for the chessboard and brings that to King Arthur to finish the quest he set out for.[135]

The Perilous River

The river that changes the colour of bird is given much more attention than the sheep-changing river in *Peredur*. The colour-changing nature of the birds is even provided with an explanation.

> *"…Siedi gone swarte vogele vlieghen*
> *Die int water vallen tot over thovet?*
> *Hoe ghedaen comen si weder uut?"*
> *Der Walewein sprac over luut:*
> *"Vele wittre dan die snee."*
> *"Besietse wel no min no mee*
> *Here: dat sijn zieelen alle gader.*
> *Sulc et tkint, sulc es die vader.*
> *Die swarte vogele sijn gebonden*
> *Ende besmet met vulen sonden* (ll.5840-5850)[136]

('"… Do you see those black birds flying yonder, that now dive head first into the water? Behold, that you may believe. How do they appear as they emerge?" Sir Walewein spoke clearly, "Much whiter than snow." "Look carefully, my lord; those are all living souls, that one of a child, the other of a father. Those black birds are bound and tainted with foul sins.')

Instead of being regular birds, these birds are presented as the souls of sinners, which have been turned black and need to be washed clean by the river. This description is completely in line with the other characteristics of the river, which is said to be connected to Hell on one end, and to the Liver Sea on the other (ll.5946-5955). The change of colour from black to white affect the nature of the birds, but is quite specifically not caused by the birds themselves. It is the water of the river that is in possession of colour-changing powers.

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[134] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 10924-10960.
[135] *Roman van* Walewein, ll. 11052-11110.
[136] All citations and translations from the *Roman van Walewein* will be taken from David F Johnson and Geert H.M. Claassens, *Dutch Romances I: Roman van Walewein* (Cambridge, 2000).

Making birds change colour is not the only power held by the river. As Walewein attempts to cross it, a second characteristic of the river shows its face. Before jumping in the water, the hero decides to test the depth of the water. When he lowers the shaft of his spear inside the water, it spontaneously bursts into flames.

> *Hi mochte cume een wort spreken*
> *So sach hi zinen scacht ontsteken:*
> *Waer so hem twater yet ghenaect*
> *So verbernt hi ende verblaect*
> *Algader tere couder cole.* (ll.4987-4991)

('He could hardly utter a word before he saw his lance burst into flames: wheresoever anything touched the water it was burned and reduced entirely to cold ash.')

Not only does the river have the power to change the colour of birds, it also sets objects spontaneously on fire. This capability goes completely against any of the normal qualities water is supposed to have, namely to put out fire rather than create it. Because of this fiery nature of the water, Walewein it not able to swim across it. While there is a bridge running over the river, this bridge appears to be razor sharp.

> *… Hen was noit scers*
> *Ghesmet van ysere no van stale*
> *Aslo scarp – dat weet ic wale –*
> *Alse die brugghe was upden cant*
> *Die deer Walewein vor hem vant;*
> *Dies haddi int herte rouwe.* (ll.4958-4963)

('Never was there a razor wrought from iron or steel so sharp – this I know for certain – as the edge of that bridge which Sir Walewein found before him; this upset him greatly.')

The bridge is so sharp that Walewein cannot use it to cross to the other side of the river, where he sees the castle of King Assentijn. The previous time when Walewein found himself unable to use a bridge to cross a river, his horse jumped in and swam across (ll.3735-3742). Because of the burning nature of the river, this solution is this time not an option. The river proves to be nearly impossible to cross and Walewein is reliant on the help of Roges to reach the other side.

While rivers are in general presented as a challenge to the hero, this is only time he fails to cross it. Even the twelve rivers that surround the castle of Assentijn on the other side of the river prove no problem for Walewein to cross while this is described as nearly impossible. As Roges points out,

> Al wilden si ju in hulpe staen
> Alle die in die werelt sijn
> -Al suls es dat ghelove mijn-
> So en mochti niet ghewinnen
> Die ene porte, noch daer binnen
> Comen, here, des sijt ghewes –
> Al sulc alser daer .xij. es!
> Si sijn van copre ende van metale,
> Gebonden met ysere ende met stale;
> Onder elke porte loept ene riviere;
> Ende also menich muer starc ende diere
> Gewrocht van grauwen marberstene. (ll.5978-5989)

(Even if all the men of the world were to lend you their aid – at least as I see it – you still could not win the first gate, nor enter in there, my lord, of that you may be sure – and there are twelve of them! They are made with of copper and bronze and bound with iron and with steel; beneath each gate there runs a moat; and there are many strong and splendid walls wrought of grey marble.)

The twelve moats surrounding the castle of King Assentijn are separated from each other with strong marble walls and big iron gates. This model of power and splendour should have prevented anyone to enter the castle without permission. While it is supposedly able to withstand 'all the men in the wold', Walewein proves to be the strongest most heroic man alive when he manages to complete this task seemingly without effort.[137]

The rivers in *Walewein* constantly present the hero with additional complications, yet he is always able to overcome these.[138] The only time when Walewein has to admit defeat in crossing a river, is in the case of the burning river leading to the Liver Sea. It is this hellish connotation and thus

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[137] *Roman van Walewein*, ll.7620-7641.
[138] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen*, 81-83.

the religious nature of the river that is marked by Bart Bescamusca as the only obstacle that Walewein has an actual problem with.[139]

As an exceptional knight, worldly obstacles such as defended castles prove no problem for the hero. As the most heroic man alive, the only challenges which are difficult to overcome are those created by a higher power. The only man that Walewein has trouble defeating, is the Devil. Examples of this are the serpents that Walewein fights on his way towards the castle of King Wonder. The serpents are hellish creatures: '*Dit nes gheen dier; het is die duvel uter hellen die hier comt ende wille mi quellen ende hevet mi desen anxt ghedaen!*' ('This is no earthly creature; it is the devil from hell who has come to torment me and who has wrought such tortures upon me!' – ll.552-555). Walewein manages to defeat these incarnations of the Devil with the help of God.[140] Besamusca considers that being unable to cross the bridge across the perilous river caused Walewein to be confronted with the limitations of his knighthood.[141]

Ad Putter takes a different approach to this episode.[142] Rather than interpreting the river and the bridge in relation to Walewein, Putter interprets the river in relation to the castle of King Assentijn. Assentijn's castle is situated in *Endi*, India. Putter has pointed out that many of the descriptions of the castle can be traced back to the image of India presented in the *Letter of Prester John*.[143] He notices that the burning and bird-changing river is not the only marvel associated with King Assentijn's castle. When the castle of King Assentijn is described by King Amoraen, Amoraen tells of miraculous fountain present in its gardens.

> '… *Ene fonteyne staet daer claer*
> *Scone onder enen oliviere,*
> *Diie herde rike es ende diere.*
> … *Al ware en man out .V^c. jaer,*
> *ende nutte hi vanden borne een traen,*
> *sonder twifel ende waen*
> *hi worde alse staerc ende also jonc*
> *als hi was upten selven spronc*
> *als hi was doe te waren*
> *doe hi out was van .xxx. jaren!*' (ll.3550-3552 … 3586-3592)

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[139] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 63.
[140] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 82.
[141] Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen,* 63.
[142] Ad Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', in: Keith Busby (ed.), *Arthurian Literature XVII* (Cambridge 1999) 79-100.
[143] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 93.

('There is also a clear, sparkling fountain beneath a most costly and splendid olive-tree. … Though a man were five hundred years old, if he were to taste but a drop from the fountain, he would surely and without a doubt at that very moment become as strong and young as he was when he was thirty years old!')

Whoever drinks of the fountain standing in the garden of King Assentijn regains his youth. Putter remarks that according to Prester John, fountains of eternal youth can be found in the East and having their source in the earthly paradise.[144] He also remarks that the twelve moats and twelve gates that defend Assentijn's castle, resemble the twelve gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem.[145] Moreover, with relation to the river to the Liver Sea, Putter points out that in the Middle Ages the Earthly Paradise was thought to be situated in India.[146] Since it is said that Hell, is situated on the one side of the river, Putter considers it inevitable that Paradise must be situated on the other.[147] Perhaps unsurprisingly it is on the side of Paradise that the castle of King Assentijn, which so closely resembles the Heavenly Jerusalem, can be found. Putter hypothesises that the authors of *Walewein* did not seek to describe a fantastical land, but attempted to make a description of India as one that was be geographically correct.[148] The perilous river in this case acquires the function of a boarder: crossing the river becomes similar to crossing the border to the East. The function of the river thus becomes to show the hero's transgression from one place to another.

It is possible that this function is present in *Peredur* as well. While it is not specifically mentioned that Peredur arrives in Constantinople, he does meet the empress of Constantinople and is specifically directed towards the East by the maiden he meets right before entering the Valley of the Changing Sheep.[149] While neither the religious connotation nor the fiery nature of the river found in *Walewein* is present in *Peredur*, it is remarkable that the journey to India is. What is even more remarkable, is the presence of the fiery element of the perilous river in a river in the Old Irish *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*. While India itself is not represented in this tale, the marvellous is present in abundance.

Immram Curaig Máel Dúin

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[144] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 93.
[145] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 98.
[146] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 97.
[147] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 99.
[148] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 97.
[149] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89, 92-94.

Structure and Content (summary)

The ninth century seafaring tale *Immram Maél Dúin* starts before the hero Máel Dúin is born. As with a typical heroic narrative, seen in also in *Peredur*, the conception, birth and upbringing of the hero is discussed first.[150] In the prologue, Máel Dúin's father Ailill Ochair Agha (Ailill of the Edge of Battle), a knight, is described to rape a young nun who becomes pregnant. After giving birth, the nun gives the child to her friend, the queen, and Máel Dúin is raised as a prince. He exceeds the other princes in games such as throwing balls, running and horse racing.

> *Bá forggaine for 'cách a cluiche, etir imarchor liathráite 7 rith 7 leim 7 cur liac 7 imrim*
> *ech. Bá leis, trá, búaid cech cluchi díb-sin.*[151]

(In his play he outwent all his comrades, both in throwing balls, and running, and leaping, and putting stones, and racing horses. He has, in sooth, the victory in each of those games.)

Because of his great skills, the other young men at court envy Máel Dúin and call him names. One of the knights accuses Maél Dúin of not being the true son of the king and queen.[152] After Máel Dúin hears the queen confirm this, he further requires after his true origin and travels to the land of his father. After arriving there, Máel Dúin hears his father has been murdered by men from Leix, and swears to avenge his death. Máel Dúin was warned to set out on his journey for revenge with no more or less than seventeen or sixty men.[153] This restriction is ignored when three of Máel Dúin's foster brothers force Máel Dúin to take them with him.[154] While the group manages to find Ailill's murderers, right after doing so a sudden storm rises and drifts the boat Máel Dúin and his men travel on to the middle of the ocean.[155] Now lost at sea, the true seafaring tale begins and describes the journey back to Ireland. It is during this journey, at the twelfth island the seafarers encounter that they see the colour-changing sheep. At the very end of the tale, Máel Dúin and his men arrive back in

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[150] For the structure of an heroic biography see: Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: a psychological exploration of myth,* translated by Gregory C. Richter and E. James Lieberman (Baltimore 2004); Dean A. Miller, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore 2000).

[151] As mentioned above, all citations and translations of the *Immram Máel Dúin* will be taken from Whitley Stokes, The Voyage of Mael Duin [part 1]', *Revue Celtique* 9 (1888) 447–495 and 'The Voyage of Mael Duin [part 2]', *Revue Celtique* 10 (1889) 50–95. This particular quotation is part of the Prologue.

[152] *Immram Máel Dúin*, Prologue.

[153] *Immram Máel Dúin*, Prologue. Both numbers are mentioned in the manuscripts. Most likely a conflicting tradition has lead scribes to include both options in their texts rather than to choose one over the other.

[154] *Immram Máel Dúin*, Prologue.

[155] *Immram Máel Dúin,* episode I.

Ireland where Máel Dúin forgives the murderers of his father.[156] From beginning to end, nothing much has changed and it is thus the journey itself rather than the results which the journey brings that is the focus of the tale.[157] This is contrary to earlier examples of seafaring-tales where the outcome of the journey and the changes the sailors undergo are more important.[158]

Marvellous Islands

The entire tale of *Immram Máel Dúín* is described in thirty-four episodes, with each episode describing a new miraculous phenomenon on a new Island. Instead of having sporadic references to marvellous sights, every single events described in the *Immram Máel Dúín* has a marvellous nature. While in some cases, as in episodes XX and XXXIII these miracles are provided through divine intervention, in many cases they do not have a religious nature at all. Sometimes events appear to be normal, but then even the ordinary turns out to be extraordinary. For example, in chapter XXIV, Máel Dúin and his men reach an island with ordinary people, owning cattle and riding horses. This island seems completely normal, but the moment the inhabitants notice the seafarers, they start to shout at them and throw rocks in order for the seafarers to go away. The island seemed normal in the beginning, but turns abnormal as the seafarers get closer to it.

A similar situation occurs when Máel Dúin and his men reach the island described in chapter XII. While on their ship, they see an island with two herds of sheep, separated by a fence. This sight is hardly surprising. As Oskamp phrases it, 'an Island with large herds of sheep is hardly exceptional, even in present day Ireland'.[159] However, these sheep turn out to reside in very special circumstances.

> *Matan och tres-lái iarsin atchíat insi n-aili 7 sonnach umaide tara medón*
> *ros-rand in n-insi in dé, 7 atchiat tréta móra di chairib inti .i. trét dub fri*
> *sonnach adíu 7 tret gel fri sonnach denall. Ocus conaccatár fer már oc*
> *etirglem na cáerech. An focherded cáirig find tar sonnach desíu cósna duba*
> *bá dub fóchetóir. An docured dano cairig nduib tarsin sonnach ille bá find*
> *fóchétóir.*[160]

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[156] *Immram Máel Dúin,* episode XXXIV.
[157] H.P.A. Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin: a study in early Irish voyage literature followed by an edition of Immram curaig Máele Dúin from the Yellow Book of Lecan in Trinity College, Dublin* (Groningen 1970) 43.
[158] Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin,* 43.
[159] Oskamp, *The voyage of Máel Dúin,* 68.
[160] *Immram Máel Dúin,* chapter XII.

(Early on the morning of the third day after that they espy another island, with a brazen palisade over de midst of it which divided the island in two, and they espy great flocks of sheep therein, even a black flock on this side of the fence and a white flock on the far side. And they saw a big man separating the flocks. And when he used to fling a white sheep over the fence from this side to the black sheep it became black at once. So, when he used to cast a black sheep over the fence to the far side, it became white at once.)

When the sheep cross the fence separating the two flocks, they change colour. As with the sheep in *Peredur*, the black sheep crossing towards the flock of white sheep turn white, and the white sheep moving towards the flock of black sheep turn black. What is interesting through, is that it are not only sheep that change colour when they move to either side of the fence. When the sailors throw pieces of wood on the islands, the wood changes into the same colour as the colour of the sheep.[161] It becomes very clear that similar to the birds in the *Roman van Walewein*, the change of colour is not due to the nature of the animals. The animals change colour due to external factors. In *Walewein* this was the river, in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*, this is the Island. Without the island the sheep would have been ordinary sheep.

This is not the only time that an island has the power to change the nature of its inhabitants. In episode XV a very similar episode is described, be it with only one colour. The people living on the island in episode XV are described as *Hit é dubá etir churpu 7 etach* (Black were these, both in bodies and raiment).[162] It becomes clear that the dark skin of the people is caused by the island they live on when one of Máel Dúin's men sets foot on the island and immediatly takes over the colour and the behaviour of the people already inhabiting it. Similar to the sheep, this episode presents yet another marvel encountered by the seafarers.

Because of the island-hopping nature of the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*, every single event that is witnessed occurs on an island. The fact that the colour-changing sheep appear on an island says more about the way the tale itself is structured than the way in which the sheep were viewed. Overall, more specific descriptions of environmental features on the islands are scarce. In only ten of the thirty-four episodes additional features of the island are described. While this general lack of natural features may explain why the river which causes the sheep to change in *Peredur* takes the shape of a fence in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*, it is peculiar that the places in which sources of sweet-water are mentioned, they always possess extraordinary powers.[163] It seems strange that the composer of the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* would have changed the river into a fence if he believed

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[161] *Immram Máel Dúin,* chapter XII.
[162] *Immram Máel Dúin,* chapter XV.
[163] Episodes featuring these sweet-water events are XIII, XX, XXV and XXX.

that the water was essential for the changing-nature of the sheep. While the fact that the colour-changing power is held by the water is clear in the *Roman van Walewein*, this is less obvious in *Peredur*. If the composer of the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* encountered a similar source as the composer of *Peredur*, or perhaps even a version of *Peredur* itself, the colour-changing power can easily be attributed to the land rather than the river, and the river thus easily replaced with a fence.

Regardless of this specific change of a river to a fence, there is an obvious similarity between the motif presented in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and *Peredur*. When the marvels associated with sweet water are given some attention, it turns out that there is also an undeniable similarity between events presented in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the Middle Dutch *Roman van Walewein*.

Immediately after Máel Dúin and his men have left the Island of the Changing Sheep in episode XII, in episode XIII the men land on an island with a great mountain on it which the men attempt to climb.

Al-lotár iarum Díurán Leccerd 7 Germán do ascnam in tslébi arrecat abaind lethain
nád bo domain aracind. Tummis German irlund a gai issin n-abaind, 7 immán-díbdai
dó fóchétóir amal bid tene nod-loscat, 7 ni lotár ní bad sire.[164]

(Now when Diuran Leccerd and German went to visit the mountain they find before them a broad river which was not deep. Into this river German dipped the handle of his spear, and at once it was consumed as if fire had burnt it.)

Exactly as in the *Roman van Walewein,* the heroes attempt to test the depth of the water of an innocent looking river by lowering their spears into the water, only to find the spears spontaneously bursting into flames. Contrary to *Walewein* though, this river is in no way associated with the burning rage of Hell. While the river in *Walewein* is intimidating and scary, the burning river in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* is simply another curiosity. While the burning nature prevents the seafarers to cross to the other side, the river is otherwise quite harmless.

Another interesting source of sweet water to look at is the phenomenon described on the island in episode XXV. The water here is best described as similar to a river, but not quite like one.

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[164] *Immram Máel Dúin,* chapter XIII.

> *Gabsat in n-insi n- aile hi tárfás dóib rét n-ingnad .i. con-uargaib sruth mór a tracht na*
>
> *hinsi súas co téged amal tuáig nime tarsin n-insi uli, co ndiburned iin tracht n- aile na*
>
> *hinsi dond leith aile di. Ocus tictis-seom fói annis cen fliuchad.*[165]

(They gat them to another island, wherein a strange thing was shown to them, to wit, a great stream rose up out of the strand of the island and went, like a rainbow, over the whole island and descended into the other strand of the island on the other side thereof. And they were going under it (the stream) below without being wet.)

The river described above is said to run over the island, springing into the air on one side only to land back to the ground again on the other side. Walking underneath the 'river' does not make any of the men wet, indicating the water keeps hanging in the air. This at first sight miraculous phenomenon has been explained as an early description of a geyser based on the tales of sailors towards Iceland.[166] However, Oskamp is quick to add the description does not seem entirely fitting of a geyser because the absence of its most defining characteristic, the heat.[167] It should be noted that a geyser is not the only natural phenomenon that causes water to be blown into the air. A very similar sight can be cause by a blowhole, also known as a marine geyser. In this phenomenon sea water is pushed upwards through a vertical hole that connects an underwater cave with the land above sea level. Cold seawater is thus blown over the land in a form similar to that of a geyser.[168] Similar to geysers, blowholes can also be found on Iceland and can thus still be taken from seafarer tales.[169]

The rainbow-like river in episode XXV thus seems to be based on actual descriptions of marvels to be seen outside of Ireland. This episode has thus presented its reader with potentially realistic information rather than fantastical. It does not seem unlikely that the composer of the *Immram Máel Dúin* has relied on other sources that claim marvellous sights in other parts of the world too. Rather than simply presenting his audience with fantastical ideas, at least some of the episodes may have been taken from geographical descriptions. While the journey of Máel Dúin is not described as heading in any particular direction, he could well encounter marvels connected with several parts of the world. Considering the colour-changing sheep and the fiery river as geographically accurate descriptions of the orient, similar to the river in the *Roman van Walwein*, would easily fit the narrative of the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*.

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[165] *Immram Máel Dúin*, chapter XXV.
[166] Oskamp, *The Voyage of Máel Dúin,* 63.
[167] Oskamp, *The Voyage of Máel Dúin*, 63.
[168] David Hopley (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Modern Coral Reefs* (Dordrecht 2011), lemma *Blowholes.*
[169] For example the blowholes of Arnarstapi.

Conclusion

After having looked at all three tales, some remarkable similarities come to light. While of the three tales *Peredur* and the *Roman van Walewein* seem to have something in common considering that they both feature a hero who is a knight at King Arthur's court, a seafaring tale *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* seems to be very different. Yet, they have several things in common, including but not limited to the colour-changing sheep and birds.

A first similarity is that the heroes of each of the three tales all travel around the world and that it is during these travels that they encounter the colour-changing sheep or birds. The similarities between these motifs might thus not only lie in what is described, but also on where it is said to be. In *Walewein* the location of the river is very clear. The castle lying on the other side of the river is located in India, and as such the river is either present on the border between the East and the West, or already present in the East. Due to the extreme difficulty with which the river in *Walewein* can be crossed, it would seem that by crossing the river a bigger boundary is crossed than simply the water. The hero has in fact travelled to India by leaving the river behind him. While the journey of Peredur is not so well defined, of this hero we know for sure that he at least at the end of the tale arrives in Constantinople, India, and that he has passed the colour-changing sheep before he reaches it.

In *immram Curaig Máel Dúin* the route undertaken by the seafarers is not specified nor is the exact timeframe in which the journey takes places. However, the high number of different Islands the men visit, 34, seems to indicate a journey reaching far beyond the vicinity of Ireland. The sight of the colour-changing sheep can be anywhere in the world, as long as it is not in Ireland. This is the same for the fiery river the seafarers encounter immediately after they have seen the colour-changing sheep. It is this fiery river that presents a second similarity between the tales. It is interesting to see that while these powers are united in the same river by the authors of the *Walewein,* in the *Immram Máel Dúin* they are separate in nature.

While a fiery river is not featured in *Peredur*, the descriptions of the rivers in *Walewein* and the *Immram Curiag Máel Dúin* are almost identical. In both tales the heroes attempt to test the depth of the water by lowering their spears into the normal looking water. However, at the moment the spear shafts touch the water, they spontaneously burst into flames. A difference between these rivers is that while the fiery river in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* seems to be merely a curiosity, the fiery river in *Walewein* is destructive and intimidating in nature. Moreover, the river in *Walewein* is described as one which springs from Hell. The colour-changing of the birds which is presented as the cleansing of sinning souls is presented as part of this same association of the river with Hell and Purgatory. Altogether the hellish components of the fiery river form part of Ad Putter's argument

that the authors of the *Walewein*, Pennic and Vostaert, attempted to present an accurate image of India.[170] Since the East was considered as the place where one could find the Earthly Paradise, and that Paradise quite literally forms the opposite of Hell, placing the castle of King Assentijn next to such a hellish river seems a logical choice. [171]

This additional interpretation as a river flowing from hell is lacking from the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*. Because it seems unlikely that the composer of the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* would eliminate such a description from his text, which does not shy away from descriptions of divine intervention on other occasions, it seems more likely that the elements of Hell and Purgatory were absent in his source. The authors of the *Walewein* may either have used a different source in which they were already present, or added the hellish nature themselves. As a next step is then also not strange to assume that the source used by the composer of the *Immram Máel Dúin* did not combine the colour-changing river with the fiery one but listed them as separate. If the hellish nature can be considered an invention of Pennic and Vostaert, the combination of these rivers should be considered their invention as well.

This raises the possibility that if Putter is right in assuming that the way in which the castle of King Assentijn is presented rests on information which is considered to be geographically correct, the colour-changing river in itself is part of this accurate description. In this case both the colour-changing river and the fiery river should be considered as geographical features associated with the East.

The idea of the colour-changing river as associated with the East would be a description fitting for the episode in *Peredur*. Considering the Valley of the Changing Sheep as a vivid description of the border area between the West and the East, would provide the missing link in Peredur's journey towards the East. Right before Peredur enters the valley of the changing sheep he meets a maiden who sends him towards India, indicating that at that moment in the story he is still in the West. While it is seemingly unclear when Peredur reaches the East, he is said to spend part of his life ruling Constantinople afterwards, thus making it likely that he succeeded in this journey.[172] If there is a border which he crosses, the Valley of the Changing Sheep might very well present it. Not only would this fill a gap in the narrative, it would also provide the episode with a nature that, in line with the other episodes in *Peredur*, has a direct effect on the hero.

After comparing the motif of the Valley of the Changing Sheep in the three tales of *Historia Peredur vab Efrawc, Roman van Walewein* and *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin,* and interpretation of the colour-changing in association with India seems unavoidable. To further explore this idea, the

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[170] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 97.
[171] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 97, 99.
[172] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 94.

following chapter will make an attempt to see what has been said about geographical features in encyclopaedic sources to which the composers of these tales may have had access.

Chapter 2: Encyclopaedic sources

The comparison between the three tales: *Historia Peredur, Roman van Walewein* and *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* in the previous chapter has brought to light some interesting results. Other than the inclusion of a variant of the Valley of the Changing Sheep, two of the three tales (*Roman van Walewein* and *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*) also include a description of a river in which objects spontaneously burst into flames. Moreover, in both *Peredur* and the *Roman van Walewein* the heroes are described to travel towards the East. While Peredur seemingly arrives in India without any physical problems and at an undefined moment, he is simply there, Walewein crosses a physical boundary before he reaches the afore mentioned castle of King Assentijn and manages to find Ysabele. This physical boundary is the burning, bird-changing river. Both elements are directly related to his journey to India which, considering the fact that in *Peredur* and the *Roman van Walewein* it is used to refer to the area's around Constantinople and Jerusalem, should be explained as India Minor and thus refer to the region around Turkey rather than the country in South-East Asia.[173] While no such location is mentioned in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*, the travelling nature of the tale makes it likely that Máel Dúin too arrived at regions of the world far away from Ireland.

While these three elements are rare in heroic literature, ideas about burning and sheep-changing rivers are abundant in encyclopaedic literature. Encyclopaedias, bestiaries and geographical texts do not shy away from descriptions of rivers with seemingly magical capabilities. The following chapter will explore these scientific ideas.

Encyclopaedic knowledge can be considered a rather conservative field. Rather than presenting new ideas, authors of medieval encyclopaedias based their work directly on that of their predecessors.[174] The most famous medieval encyclopaedist, Isidore of Seville, based his work on that of Solinus and Pliny, Solinus in his turn based his work on that of Pliny and Varro, and Pliny refers back to Varro on several occasions.[175] That these encyclopaedias are directly based on previous works does not necessarily mean that the information presented in them is identical. It also does not mean that all the references presented by medieval authors to their predecessors are correct. Including references to authorities gives a certain amount of reliability to a work, which can be called upon without actually having used the source. However, because at least the appearance is created that these texts are based on each other, this chapter will look at these sources in a chronological

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[173] As discussed above, Peredur is directed towards India and marries the Empress of Constantinople, and the castle of King Assentijn, located in India, closely resembles the Heavenly Jerusalem.

[174] Stephen A. Bartney (e.a.), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge 2009) 10.

[175] Kai Brodersen, 'Mapping Pliny's World: The Achievement of Solinus', *Bulletin of the Institute for Classical Studies* 54 (2011) 63-88, 70; Bartney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 11-13.

perspective. First, Pliny, Solinus and Isidore of Seville will all three be discussed. Knowledge in Europe about streams, fountains and rivers was mostly transported through the writings of Pliny, Solinus and Isidore of Seville.[176]

In Ireland and Wales during the time between the composition and writing down of the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and *Peredur,* Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* were most likely known.[177]

Isidore of Seville was well known in Ireland from the 7th century onwards. The manuscript evidence for the spread of Isidore's texts in Ireland is presented in surviving manuscripts of Isidore in possession of Irish owners and Hiberno-Latin manuscripts that incorporate citations from Isidore's work. Seventh century fragments of Isidore's texts with an Irish origin have been found in the library of St. Gall.[178] Another example of would be ms. Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 14456.[179] This ninth-century manuscript contains Latin computistic texts that have used Isidore's *Etymologiae* as source material.[180] Isidore's work is quoted on several occasions. While this manuscript is currently kept in Munich, Irish-style Easter tables, Irish glosses and the incorporation of Old Irish words within the main body of the text implicate an Irish origin of the manuscript and Irish familiarity with the works of Isidore of Seville. [181] Isidore was no stranger in Ireland in the time in which *Immram Máel Dúin* was composed.

An example closer in language and context to the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*, is a reference to Isidore's work within *Do fallsigud Tána Bó Cualnge* (The revealing of the *Taín Bó Cuailnge*).[182] This text can be found in the Book of Leinster (formerly known as *Lebar na Núachongbála*), a manuscript in which a version of *Immram Máel Dúin* has also been included. *The Revealing of the Taín Bó Cuailnge* describes an anecdote in which a group of Irish bards, led by Senchán Torpéist (s.VI-VII),[183] had come together to recreate the *Taín Bó Cuailnge*. Since each bard only knew a part of the tale, the story could not be completed. On folio 245v it says that *Asbert iarum Senchán ria daltu dús cia díb no*

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[176] Louise B. Morgan, 'The Source of the Fountain-Story in the "Ywain"', *Modern Philology* 6 (1909) 331-341, 333.

[177] Bartney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, Sven Meeder, *The Irish Scholarly Presence at St. Gall: Networks of Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages* (London 2018) 60; Patrick Simms-Williams, 'The uses of writing in early medieval Wales', in: Huw Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge 1998) 15-38, 24. For an edition and translation of the text, see below.

[178] Sven Meeder, *The Irish Scholarly Presence at St. Gall: Networks of Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages* (London 2018) 60.

[179] For an edition and study of this manuscript see Immo Warntjes, *The Munich Computus: Text and Translation – Irish computistics between Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede and its reception in Carolingian times* (Stuttgart 2010).

[180] Warntjes, *The Munich Computus*, LI-LII, CXLIII, 390.

[181] Warntjes, *The Munich Computus*, XVII-XIX.

[182] An edition of this text can be found in R.I. Best and M.A. O'Brien (eds.), The Book of Leinster vol. 5 (Dublin 1967) 1119; a literary translation in Louis Le Brocquy and Thomas Kinsella, *The Táin: From the Irish Epic Taín Bó Cuailnge'* (Oxford 1970). For more on the *Táin* see: Ann Dooley, *Playing the Hero: Reading the Táin Bo Cuailnge* (Toronto 2005).

[183] Brocquy and Kinsella, *The Táin*, 255 n.1.

ragad ara bennacht i tíre Letha do foglaim na Tana berta in suí sair dar éis in chulmeinn ('Then Senchan said to his pupils which of them would go, in return for his blessing, into the land of Letha to learn the *Táin* which the wise man carried east in exchange for the *Cuilmenn*').[184] *Cuilmenn* is the name used in Ireland to refer to Isidore's *Etymologiae* and thus further proves the Irish knowledge of this work in the cultural context in which *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* circulated.

References to Isidore's work in medieval Welsh literature are less evident, but none the less present. While only a short excerpt of Isidore's *Etymologiae* has been preserved in the Welsh manuscript Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514. Patrick Simms-Williams considers it likely that more manuscripts have existed at one point and should be considered as having been lost over time.[185] Knowledge of Isidore in eleventh till fourteenth century Wales can for the most part be derived from indirect references to his works. Examples of this can be found in the Book of Taliesin, poetry written by the Gogynfeirdd poets, some of the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (Triads of the Island of Britain), the works of Gerald of Wales and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*.[186] A more detailed discussion of Welsh knowledge about the Orient will be presented in chapter three.

Encyclopaedic texts discussing marvellous fountains in the East known in thirteenth century Flanders are the *Historia Orientalis* by Jaques de Vitry and Jacob van Maerlant's *Der Nature Bloemen*.[187] These two sources present more recent variations of the information already presented by Pliny, Solinus and Isidore.

Because the previous chapter has revealed the presence of not one but two marvellous rivers, this chapter will be divided in two parts. The first part will concern itself with the way the five separate authors treat sheep-changing rivers, similar to the river found in the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur*. These rivers are found in an altered form in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein*. These last two text also contain a river which sets objects on fire and which is described in such a similar manner that this too shares an example. The second part of this chapter will look at the same five authors discussed in the first part, but focus on river of a fiery nature.

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[184] Best and O'Brien, *The Book of Leinster* vol. 5, 1119; Brocquy and Kinsella, *The Táin,* 1.
[185] Patrick Simms-Williams, 'The uses of writing in early medieval Wales', in: Huw Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge 1998) 15-38, 24; Julia Crick, 'The Power and the Glory: Conquests and Cosmology in Edwardian Wales (Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514), in: Orietta Da Rold and Elaine Treharne (eds.), *Textual Cultures: Cultural texts* (Cambridge 2010) 21-42, 26, 37.
[186] Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth 2007) 13; Ceri Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff 1995) 39-40; Natalia Petrovskaia, *Middle Welsh Perceptions of the Orient* (Turnhout 2015) 17; Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge 1998) 215.
[187] Jessalynn Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry: Visual and Written Commentaries as Evidence of a Text's Audience, Reception and Utilization', *Essays In Medieval Studies* (2003) 56-74, 56.

Sheep-changing rivers

An early source for descriptions of a river that changes the colour of sheep is Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.[188] This text, dated c.77 CE is divided into thirty-seven books, each with its own subject matter. The first time Pliny talks about the colour-changing rivers is in Book II, chapter cvi:

> *in Boeotia amnis Melas oves nigras, Cephisus ex eodem lacu profluens albas, rursus nigras Peneus, rufasque iuxta Ilium Xanthus, unde et nomen amni.*[189]

(The [river Melas] in Boeotia makes sheep black, the Cephisus flowing from the same lake makes them white, the Peneus again makes them black, and the river Xanthus at Ilium red, which gives the river its name.)[190]

Rather than one river turning sheep both black and white, in this passage Pliny describes three rivers, at least two of which flow from the same lake. One of them turns sheep white, the other two turn sheep black. It is interesting to see that the names of both the rivers and the region where the rivers are located, do not correspond to the information given the second time Pliny discusses similar rivers. Book XXXI, chapter ix informs the reader that

> *Eudicus in Hestiaeotide fontes duos tradit esse, Ceronam ex quo bibentes oves nigras fieri, Nelea ex quo albas, ex utroque varias, Theophrastus Thuriis Crathim candorem facere, Sybarim nigritiam bubus ac pecori.*[191]

(Eudicus tells us that in Hestiaeotis are two springs: Cerona, which makes black the sheep that drink of it, and Neleus, which makes them white, while they are mottled if they drink of each. Theophrastus says that at Thurii the Crathis makes oxen and sheep white, and the Sybaris makes them black.)[192]

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[188] Loeb Classical Library published a ten-volume edition and translation of the text, published between 1938 and 1963, edited and translated by H. Rackham, W.H.S. Jones and D.E. Eichholz.

[189] H. Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History* vol. I: Books 1-2, Loeb Classical Library 330 (Cambridge 1938) 356-357.

[190] Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History*, 356-357. Rackham translates *amnis Melas* as 'the Black stream'. However, since Melas is used as the name of the river, which is derived from its power to turn sheep black, I prefer to leave *Melas* untranslated.

[191] W.H.S. Jones, *Pliny: Natural History* vol. VIII: Books 28-32, Loeb Classical Library 418 (Cambridge 1963) 386-387.

[192] Jones, *Pliny: Natural History*, 386-387.

The entry in Book II presents to separate locations for its rivers. Boeotia for the first two rivers (Melas and Peneus), and Ilium for the third river (Xanthus). Boeotia is a region in Greece, but Ilium is the city that was presumably build on top of the legendary city of Troy and thus located in located in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. [193] The entry in book XXXI places its rivers at different locations all together. The first two rivers (Cerona and Neleus) that are mentioned are said to be in Hestiaeotis. According to the Oxford Classical Dictionary, Hestiaeotis was a district in western Thessaly. Like Boeotica this is a region in Greece. While this specific regions are not the same, the general idea appears to be that these rivers are located in Eastern Greece. Both Thessaly and Boeotia border on the Aegean sea.

The second set of rivers mentioned in book XXXI of the *Naturalis Historia*, are the rivers Crathis (currently known as Crati) and Sybaris are located at Thurii. Thurii was a Greek colony in southern Italy, founded in 443 BCE located at the mouth of the river Crati, and thus a third possible location for these sheep- (and oxen, in the case of the Crati) changing rivers. [194] It is interesting to note that while Sybaris is seemingly referred to as a river, it is also the name of another Greek colony in Southern Italy located near the Crati river.[195] Rather than discussing two rivers, Pliny might have referred to two sections of the same river, one near Thurii and one near Sybaris.

The difference in location and names of the rivers might be due to different sources. While the entry in book II does not refer back to any used sources, the entry in book XXXI claims to have taken the information from Eudicus and Theophrastus. Presumably Pliny will too have used a source for the information in book II. Rather than focussing on the fact that the presented information is inconsistent, I would like to emphasize that Pliny has encountered at least four versions of the same phenomenon, making the existence of rivers that can change the colour of the sheep that drink its waters a relatively common idea.

The idea of the sheep-changing rivers lost little if any of its popularity in the years to follow. In the beginning of the third century, Gaius Julii Solinus wrote *De Mirabilibus Mundi.*[196] The work is dated slightly after 200, and uses Pliny as a source.[197] Similar to Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, Solinus too refers to the sheep-changing rivers on two separate occasions. The first description of the rivers is in chapter VII.27.

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[193] Oxford Classical Dictionary, lemma *Troy*.
[194] Oxford Classical Dictionary, lemma *Thurii*.
[195] Oxford Classical Dictionary, lemma *Sybaris*.
[196] An edition of this text can be found in T.H. Mommsen, *C.Iulii Solini: Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* (Berlin 1895), a translation in Arthur Golding, *The excellent and pleasant worke (Collectana rerum memorabilium) of Caius Julius Solinus* (1587), reproduced in a facsimile edition by George Kish (Gainesville 1955).
[197] Brodersen, 'Mapping Pliny's World', 70.

Varro opinatur duo in Boeotia esse flumina, natura licet separi, miraculo tamen non discrepante: quorum alterum si ouillum pecus debibat, pullum fieri coloris quod induerit, alterius haustu quaecumque uellerum fusca sint in candidum uerti.[198]

(Varro supposes that there are two Rivers in Boeotia, though in nature unlike, yet differing nothing in wonderfulness. If sheep drink of the one, their fleeces change into a Russet colour. If they drink of the other: as many of their fleeces as were of a brown colour, become white.)[199]

In this reference, Solinus names Varro (c.116-27 BCE) as the authority on which he bases this information.[200] Of this scholar is known that he, together with Cicero, was student of Lucius Aelius Stilo Praeconinus (c.154–74 BCE).[201] Following the example of his master, Varro continued writing etymologies, most of which are only known through secondary references with the original work having been lost in time.[202] What work of Varro Solinus is referring to here, is therefore unknown. The information presented in it, is very similar to what has been described by Pliny: two rivers located in Boeotia, each river causes its own particular change. These sheep, however, do not differ between black and white, but between white and brown. Since both colours are naturally occurring colours for sheep, this change does not seem significant for the nature of the rivers. An alteration to the idea is presented in chapter XXXIII.1.

Ultra Pelusiacum ostium Arabia est, ad Rubrum pertinens mare, quod Erythraeum ab Erythra rege Persei et Andromedae filio, non solum a colore appellatum Varro dicit. qui affirmat in litore maris istius fontem esse, quem si oues biberint, mutent uellerum qualitatem, et antea candidae amittant quod fuerint usque ad haustum ac furvo postmodum nigrescant colore.[203]

(Beyond Pelusiacum is Arabia stretching to the Red sea, which Varro affirms to be called Erythraeum, of King Erythrus the son of Perseus & Andromeda, and not only red of the colour, thereof. The said Author vouched also that on the shore of this Sea is a Fountain, whereof if sheep drink, they change

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[198] Mommsen, *C.Iulii Solini*, 60.
[199] Translation taken from Golding (1587). For the sake of uniformity I have modernised the spelling.
[200] Burkhart Cardauns, *Marcus Terentius Varro: Einführung in sein Werk* (Heidelberg 2001) 9.
[201] Burkhart Cardauns, *Marcus Terentius Varro: Einführung in sein Werk* (Heidelberg 2001) 9.
[202] Burkhart Cardauns, *Marcus Terentius Varro: Einführung in sein Werk* (Heidelberg 2001) 11-13.
[203] Mommsen, *C.Iulii Solini*, 147-148.

the colour of their fleeces: and whereas they were white before, they lose that which they had until they drunk, and afterward become a deep black colour.)[204]

The water in the second entry is described as being close to the Red Sea, beyond Pelusium, which is located in the Nile delta. This presents a fourth possible location for the sheep-changing rivers, this time in Africa, on the border of the Red Sea, rather than the Mediterranean region. The Greek name for Red Sea is Erythra Thassala, which is transformed by Solinus to Erythaeum. Solinus refers to the double origin of the name Red Sea in both the colour red (*erythra)*, and the legendary King Erythrus. Rather than two rivers, the second entry in Solinus' *De Mirabilibus Mundi* describes only one source of water which turns sheep from white to black. Moreover, the water in this episode is no longer contained in a river, *flumina*, but rather in a fountain, *fontem*, and Solinus speaks of only one source. Instead of two rivers, one turning sheep black or brown, and another turning sheep white, this particular fountain only has one source of water.

It is interesting to see that Solinus in both entries refers to Varro. Varro is also presented by Pliny as an authority for his ideas, yet not with regard to his sheep-changing rivers.[205] Because no manuscripts of the work of Varro from which these citations are supposedly taken have been preserved, it is impossible to check if Solinus is accurate in his references. If he is, Pliny purposely chose to present a different variant of the sheep-changing rivers. Regardless of the presence of these rivers in Varro, Solinus presents at least one more variant of the marvellous river, namely one located near the Red Sea.

In the seventh century, Pliny and Solinus served as sources for Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (c.620-636).[206] This work has been described as 'arguably the most influential book, after the Bible, in the learned world of the Latin West for nearly a thousand years'.[207] In book XIII.xiii.5 (*De Mundo et partibus: De diversitate aquarum* 5), Isidore says *In Thessalia duo sunt flumina: ex uno bibentes oves nigras fieri, ex altero albas, ex utroque varias* ('In Thessaly there are two rivers; sheep drinking from one of them become black, those drinking from the other white, and those drinking from both have

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[204] Translation taken from Golding (1587). For the sake of uniformity I have modernised the spelling.

[205] For example, in *Naturlis Historia* book XXXI, chapter xii Pliny says: *In Cilicia apud oppidum Cescum rivus fluit Nuus, ex quo bibentium subtiliores sensus fieri M. Varro tradit, at in Cea insula fontem esse quo hebetes fiant, Zamae in Africa ex quo canorae voces* ('In Cilicia near the town Cescum flows the river Nuus. Those that drink of it become, says Marcus Varro, of keener perception, but on the island of Cea there is a spring that makes men dull, and at Zama in Africa is one that gives the drinkers a tuneful voice'). See: Jones, *Pliny: Natural History* vol. VIII, 386-387.

[206] Stephen A. Bartney (e.a.), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge 2009) 11-13. An edition of this text can be found in W.M. Lindsay (ed.), *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX* (Oxford 1911), a translation in Bartney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville.*

[207] Bartney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 3.

mixed colors')[208]. Contrary to Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* and Solinus' *De Mirabilibus Mundi*, Isidore only describes these rivers once. The only reference to the sheep-changing rivers mentions them to be located in Thessaly. As in Pliny's reference, they are considered to be in Greece. What Isidore does not mention is the names Pliny attributes to the rivers, the Cerone makes sheep black, the Neleus white. Since Isidore names many of the other rivers he describes, this does not seem to be out of personal preference but a lack of information. Rather than encountering the names of the rivers and leaving them out, the source Isidore had for these rivers presumably did not mention them by name. While this can either mean that Isidore encountered a different source than Pliny and Solinus altogether, or that he used a version of their texts altered when compared to the information presented above, in both cases this shows interactions with the phenomenon that have not been documented in preserved manuscript evidence. The idea of the sheep-changing rivers seems to have been spread on a large scale, in various different shapes and forms.

The idea of sheep-changing rivers did not cease to exist after the seventh century. Still in the thirteenth century, the sheep-changing rivers were included in bestiaries and geographical descriptions.[209] The knowledge described above was widely available through Europe in the times the *Immram Máel Dúin* and *Peredur fab Efrawc* were composed and written down. It is likely that their authors and later scribes were familiar with some of the knowledge presented above, most likely through the works of Isidore, but possibly too through Pliny, Solinus and others who presented the same subjects. For the *Roman van Walwein*, two more sources can be taken into account. The first is the *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, during the fifth crusade (1217-1221), Jacques de Vitry started writing the *Historia Hierosolimitanae* (c.1219). This work on the history of Jerusalem was scheduled to have a three-part structure. The first past is titled *Historia Occidentalis* and concerns itself with the history of the catholic church in the west and the changes Jacques hoped would be brought forth by the Fourth Lateran Council held in 1215.[210] The second part is named *Historia Orientalis* and contains descriptions of the Holy Land.[211] The third part was proposed, but has

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[208] Lidsay, *Isodori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum*; Bartney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 276.
[209] As discussed below these descriptions are included in the work of Jacques de Vitry, but they can also be found in Alexander Neckham's *De Naturis Rerum* and the still in the sixteenth century *History of of four-footed beasts and serpents* by Edward Topsell. Editions of these texts can be found in Thomas Wright (ed.), *De naturis rerum, libri duo: With the Poem of the Same Author, De laudibus divinae sapientiae* (Cambridge 2012); and Edward Topsell, *History of four-footed beasts and serpents* (London 1967).
[210] An edition can be found in John Frederick Hinnebusch, *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry: A Critical Edition* (Fribourg 1972), a translation into French in F. Guizot, *Collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France depuis la foundation de la monarchie francaise jusqu'au XIIIe siècle* vol. 22 (Paris 1825).
[211] An edition can be found in F. Moschus, *Iacobi de Vitriaco: Libri duo, quorum prior Orientalis sive Hierosolymitanae, alter Occidentalis historiae nomine inscribitur* (Duaci 1579), a translation in Guizot (1972).

never been written by Jacques himself.[212] The second book has proved by far the most popular. 'His second book's impressive popularity was ensured by its descriptions of the East's geography, holy sites, peoples, and natural wonders, teamed with a history of the crusades and an appeal for the reform of its inhabitants. It survives in over one hundred manuscripts and was translated into French and Spanish'.[213] There is evidence for the existence of early copies of the text circulating Flanders-Brabant, the region where Jacques worked as a preacher, and coincidently also the region where the *Roman van Walewein* was written.[214] It has been argued before that Pennic, Vostaert and their audience knew the French language, and considering the fact that the *Historia Orientalis* has been translated into French soon after its creation makes it a source accessible for the authors and audience of the *Roman van Walewein*.[215]

When Jacques de Vitry describes the sheep-changing rivers, he places these them somewhere in the Orient without further specifying their location. In a very short statement he claims that *In partibur Orientis (…) Sunt flumina ex quibus bibentes oues nigrescunt, ex aliis autem velut nix albe fiunt* ('In parts of the Orient (…) there are rivers where the sheep that drink their waters become black, just as others are made white as snow').[216] Contrary to the descriptions presented above, Jacques de Vitry hardly specifies where these rivers can be found. Perhaps he or one of his predecessors was conflicted about the various locations presented for the marvellous rivers and attempted to unite them under the heading 'Orient'.

The second book of Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Hierosolymitanae* is one of the most important sources for Jacob van Maerlants bestiary, *Der Nature Bloemen*.[217] This medieval bestiary is dated to c.1270, and thereby slightly later than the composition of the *Roman van Walewein* (after 1230). While it cannot be proven that either Pennic or Vostaert (the two authors of the *Roman van Walewein*) had encountered for example the work of Jaques de Vitry, the fact that one of their contemporaries from the same region writing for a similar audience did, makes it a lot more likely.

Van Maerlant is very thorough in the listening of the source material that he has used. In the introduction to his work he provides a long list of authors on whose authority he bases his own work, among which he names Pliny, Solinus, Isidore and Jacques de Vitry (ll.25-30; 39-46). While there is no definite way to tell whether he actually used all the sources that he lists, or whether he simply copied

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[212] Jessalynn Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry', 56.
[213] Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry', 56.
[214] Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry', 57.
[215] Bart Besamusca, *Walewein, Moriaen en de Ridder metter mouwen: Intertekstualiteit in drie Middelnederlandse Arthurromans* (Hilversum 1993) 19.
[216] Moschus, *Iacobi de Vitriaco*, 169. I would like to thank Loni Verweij for her knowledge of Latin and willingness to translate into English this and further citations taken from Jaques the Vitry.
[217] An edition of the text can be found in: Maurits Gysseling and W.J.J. Pijnenburg (ed.), *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met 1500) reeks II: Literaire handschriften* vol.2 (The Hague 1981). All quotations from the text are taken from this edition.

the list of sources from the texts that he did use, the second part of this chapter will show that his references to Jacques de Vitry are spot on. While Jacob van Maerlant was definitely familiar with Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis*, he described a variant of the sheep-changing rivers more similar to the version presented in Isidore's *Etymologiae*.

> *oec segti mede dat in cessale*
>
> *flumen lopen tenen dale*
>
> *watermen scaep in deene*
>
> *si warden swart alle ghemene*
>
> *ende in dandre nv merket dit*
>
> *werden alle scape wit*
>
> *watermense nv hier nv dar*
>
> *si werden al bont ghear* (ll.14960-14967)

(He also says that in Thessaly rivers flow through a valley, if one lets sheep drink from the one, they [the sheep] become black, and from the other, you will notice, all sheep become white. If one lets the sheep drink now from the one, then from the other, they become multi-coloured.)[218]

The river is once again located in Thessaly, Greece rather than the more general 'Orient' seen in the description of Jacques de Vitry. While Jacob van Maerlant was familiar with Jacques de Vitry's work and thus his version of the sheep-changing rivers, he described a different version indicating that he encountered at least two sources which included these rivers. Still at the end of the thirteenth century multiple versions of descriptions of sheep-changing rivers were available.

What becomes clear after this short analysis of sheep-changing rivers is that there many different versions of the phenomenon are in circulation. The locations of the rivers range from Italy and Greece, to Turkey and the region around the Red Sea. The description of Jacques de Vitry might be the best summarised version of this idea: the sheep-changing river can be found somewhere in the East, in the Orient and thus somewhere in the vicinity of India Minor.

It is also clear from the placement of these descriptions amongst other descriptions of marvellous fountains, that all of these authors consider the colour-changing nature part of the rivers, rather than of the sheep. The sheep are ordinary. The idea presented in the previous chapter that the sheep themselves, with their otherworldly nature, are responsible for the change of colour is by

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[218] My translation.

no means applicable to the situations described in Pliny, Solinus, Isidore, Jacques de Vitry and Jacob van Maerlant.

One big difference between these sheep and the sheep found in the three literary sources discussed in the previous chapter should be pointed out. The literary sheep jump across the river, whereas these non-fiction sheep drink the water. While the sheep-changing rivers described by Pliny, Solinus, Isidore, Jaques de Vitry are very similar to the scenes in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein*, they are not identical. Instead of arguing that any of the above presented examples served as the direct sources for any of the literary texts, they should be considered representations of a widespread idea that sheep-changing rivers were present in the East.

Another alteration to the motif in the case of the *Roman van Walewein*, is that the animals changing colour when they cross a river are birds rather than sheep. Presumably the nature of the animal could fluctuate. Pliny and Solinus both mention similar rivers for oxen, that undergo a change in colour depending on the river from which they drink.[219] Moreover, becasue in *Walewein* a more religious nature is given to the episode of the colour-changing river, choosing birds does not seem an unlikely choice. After all, one only has to think about representations of the Holy Spirit as a dove to realise that using birds to represent souls is not an uncommon idea, and neither is the idea that sins can turn souls black.[220]

Fiery Rivers

Other than the sheep-changing rivers, the *Roman van Walewein* and *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* speak of a river which spontaneously bursts into flames, and alight objects that come in contact with the water. In the *Roman van Walewein* this river is the same river as the river which changes the colour of the birds. While the burning river in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* is a separate one, it appears in the episode following the Valley of the Changing Sheep, still suggesting a connection.[221] The burning rivers are thus closely related to the colour-changing animals within these narratives and should be examined as well. References to the fiery rivers can too be found in the sources discussed above, be it in varying detail. Like the sheep-changing rivers, these burning rivers too are situated in the East.

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[219] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, Book XXXI, chapter ix. Even men who drink of these rivers are effected by its powers (chapter x), 'those who drink of the Sybaris are darker and more hardy, and with curly hair, while those who drink of the Crathis are fair, softer and with straight hair.' See: Jones, *Pliny: Natural History* vol. VIII, 386-387.

[220] Ad Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', in: Keith Busby, *Arthurian Literature XVII* (Cambridge 1999) 79-100, 90; M. Swanton (ed.), *The Dream of the Rood* (Manchester 1987) 20.

[221] *Immram Máel Dúin,* chapter XIII; *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 4987-4991.

In book II, chapter cvi of the *Naturalis Historia* Pliny describes a fountain in Dodona that has the power to light torches that are put into it. He says that *in Dodone Iovis fons cum sit gelidus et inmersas faces extinguat, si extinctae admoveantur accendit* ('he Fountain of Jupiter at Dodona, though it is cold and puts out torches dipped in it, sets them alight if they are brought near to it when they are out').[222] Donona is located in Epirus, Greece and is particularly known for its Oracle of Zeus, known by Pliny by the name Jupiter.

In Solinus and Isidore of Seville we find descriptions of very similar fountains, located in Epirus. In *De Mirabilibus Mundi* Solinus describes this fountain in chapter VII.2: *In Epiro fons est sacer, frigidus ultra omnes aquas et spectatae diuersitatis, nam ardentem si in eo demergas facem, extinguit: si procul ac sine igne ammoueas, suopte ingenio inflammat* (In Epirus is a holy well, colder than all other waters, and of regarded diversity. For if you dip a burning brand therein, it extinguishes: and if you hold it in without any fire on it, of its own nature it alights).[223] Similar to the reference in Pliny, the fountain described by Solinus is remarkably cold, but still has the power to set objects on fire. This cold nature of the fountain can no longer be found in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. In Book XII,xiii.10 (*De mundi et partibus: De diversitate aquarum* 10) we read that *In Epiro esse fontem in quo faces extinguntur accensae et accenduntur extinctae* ('They say there is a spring in Epirus in which lit torches are extinguished and extinguished torches are lit').[224]

All of the presented references are short, to the point, and do not include many details. While much room is left for interpretation, the basic idea is clear: rather than extinguishing fire as normal water would do, the water from these fountains creates fire. A very similar reference is once again found in Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis*. In chapter 85 he writes that *In Epiro autem est fons mirabilis in quo faces accése extinguuntur, et extinteiterum accenduntur* ('In Épire there is an miraculous stream, in which lit torches are extinguished, and when they are extinguished they light again').[225] Similar to the description in Isidore, the cold nature of the fountain found in Pliny and Solinus has been left out.

A more interesting description of a burning river can be found a few lines after the previous description. In the same chapter of the *Historia Orientalis*, Jacques de Vitry describes the following:

> *Est fons quidam in partibur Orientis, ex cuius aquis ignis Grecus efficitur quibusdam*
> *aliis admixtis, qui postquam vehementer fuetit accensus, vix aut nunquam potest*

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[222] Rackham, *Pliny: Natural History* vol. I, 354-355.
[223] Mommsen, *C.Iulii Solini*, 55; Translation taken from Golding (1587). For the sake of uniformity I have modernised the spelling.
[224] Lidsay, *Isodori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum*; Bartney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 276.
[225] Moschus, *Iacobi de Vitriaco*, 168; translation by Loni Verweij.

> *extinguinisi aceto et hominum urina, et fabulo. Praedicati autem fontis aquas magno*
>
> *pretio comparant Saraceni.*[226]

(In parts of the Orient there is also a spring from which the water, mixed with other substances, is used to make Greek Fire, which, when set on fire, cannot be put out except with great pain, and only by vinegar, man's urine and sand. The above-mentioned Saracens pay a high price for the water of this spring.)[227]

In this passage Jacques de Vitry presents his reader with the origin of Greek Fire. This is a reference that cannot be found in Pliny, Solinus or Isidore. While the information presented here is completely new, the fiery nature of the water resembles the fountains discussed above. They all spontaneously ignite and are associated by Jacques de Vitry with the East in general, and with Greece in particular by Pliny, Solinus and Isidore.

It is with this passage that the connection between *Der Naturen Bloeme* and the *Historia Orientalis* becomes undeniably clear. Jacob van Maerlant translates the description of the Greek-fire river almost word by word.

> *Jacob van vitri die kent*
> *Dat .i. borne van orient*
> *Dar men griex vier of can maken*
> *Sonder minghen andre saken*
> *Ende alst wert ontsteken iet*
> *Canment gheblusscen niet*
> *Ensi met sande of met aisine*
> *Of met des menscen orine* (ll.14934-14941)

(Jacques de Vitry knows a source in the Oriënt from which one can make Greek fire, without many other materials. And if it is lighted, one cannot put it out but with sand or vinegar or with human urine.)[228]

Just as Jacques de Vitry, Jacob van Maerlant describes a river from which one can make Greek Fire and from which the waters once burning can only be extinguished with the help of sand,

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[226] Moschuz, *Iacobi de Vitriaco*, 168.
[227] Translation by Loni Verweij.
[228] My translation.

vinegar and man's urine. An important factor in relationship to the *Roman van Walewein* in the descriptions presented by Jacob van Maerlant and Jaqcues de Vitry is that rather than simply lighting Walewein's lance on fire, the river itself seems to be burning too. This burning nature is found in the Greek Fire rivers of Jacob van Maerlant and Jaques de Vitry, but absent in Pliny, Solinus and Isidore. *Der Nature Bloemen* and *Historia Orientalis* provided an additional characteristic for the river in the Walewein. The fact that the river is associated with Greek Fire rather than regular fire gives the river an emphasized destructive nature which corresponds with the images of terror and destruction surrounding the burning river in *Walewein*. The burning river in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* is more of a curiosity than an intimidating obstacle.

Overall there are fewer variations amongst the descriptions of rivers that set objects on fire than there were for the sheep-changing rivers. The fiery rivers are quite unanimously located in Epirus, Greece. The only different locations are presented by Jacques de Vitry and Jacob van Maerlant, who present an additional river with a more destructive but equally fiery nature said to be situated in the Orient. The eastern nature of all rivers, both the sheep-changing and the fiery ones, is what binds them together and what thus becomes an emphasized feature.

Conclusions

The various examples presented above of rivers that change the colour of sheep, and rivers that spontaneously set objects on fire show the overwhelming presence of such marvellous rivers in literature with an encyclopaedic nature. Especially in the case of the sheep-changing rivers the large amount of varieties shows that rather than being a story that is copied over and over again from the same source, ideas and descriptions of these sheep-changing rivers circulated and were adapted and changed over the course of time. The source material presented above is only a fragment of what must have been written and told about sheep-changing rivers.

The differences that exist between the rivers described by Pliny, Solinus, Isidore, Jacques de Vitry and Jacob van Maerlant are caused by the widespread nature of these ideas. They could be adapted and spread in different formats and continued to do so before they reached the composers of *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein*. All three tales have a shared alteration in the way they describe their sheep-changing rivers when compared with the encyclopaedic sources presented above: instead of changing colour because of drinking the water of the river, the animals in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein* change colour because they cross a barrier of either a river or a fence. Because of this common alteration the source-text shared by the composers of these three tales most likely already included this alteration.

The marvellous rivers discussed above should thus not be considered as the direct sources for either the sheep-changing or the fiery rivers in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein,* but rather as indirect ones. They take the role of prototype.

Even though the sources presented above cannot be regarded as the direct source for either of the rivers presented in *Peredur*, *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* or the *Roman van Walewein*, they are part of a larger corpus of texts containing similar descriptions. While they are not identical, the rivers described by Pliny, Solinus, Isidore and Jacques de Vitry are similar enough for a reader to recognize different depictions of the same idea. It is through their similarities rather than their differences that the key features of these rivers can be identified.

The sheep-changing rivers presented by Pliny, Solinus, Isidore and Jacques the Vitry have five elements in common: the sheep; the presence of the river; the drinking of the water; the change of colour; and their location. While the exact location can be varied on, differing between Greece, Italy, Turkey and the region around the Red Sea, all these locations are centred around the east of the Mediterranean and are all part of or neighbouring to the region identified as Asia Minor. Jacques de Vitry may thus have provided the best summary of all these locations when he simply located this river in the Orient.

The rivers in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein* are slightly varying on these five elements, but are still very similar. As mentioned above, the drinking of the water has been replaced with the crossing of a barrier. While in *Peredur* and the *Roman van Walewein* this barrier still takes the shape of a river, in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* the river has additionally been replaced with a fence. Moreover, in the *Roman van Walewein* the sheep have been replaced with birds. However, the other factors have remained the same.

A similar changing process can be deduced for the fiery rivers. The key factors of these rivers, as presented by the encyclopaedic sources, are the capability of instantly setting wooden objects on fire and once again their location in the Orient. While the fiery river has been eliminated in *Peredur*, the descriptions in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein* have preserved them quite accurately.

The descriptions of the sheep-changing and fiery rivers presented in the encyclopaedic sources emphasize the oriental natures of these phenomena, and these are easily connected to the travels of the heroes Peredur and Walewein towards the East. While the bird-changing and fiery river in *Roman van Walewein* are presented quite directly as a border between the West and the East, these encyclopaedic sources emphasize the eastern nature of the river. The same nature can then be found for the sheep-changing river in *Peredur*. Peredur's journey to the East proceeds seemingly unnoticeable, he simply arrived at Constantinople without any previous references. At least, so it

would seem. The eastern nature of the sheep-changing rivers has the potential to add an entirely new layer of storytelling to Peredur's adventures.

However, before an hypothesis on the actual meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur* can be presented, it is important to take a closer look at the knowledge had in Wales on oriental rivers that have the power to change the colour of sheep and set objects on fire.

Chapter 3: How did Wales know about the East?

In the previous chapter encyclopaedic sources containing descriptions of marvellous rivers located in the Orient have been discussed. The nature of the sheep-changing rivers presented by Pliny, Solinus and Isidore seem in line with the river presented in the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur*. However, before a claim can be made that the rivers presented in these sources have been used as the inspiration for the river in *Peredur*, a closer look should be taken to see if this information was actually available in Wales.

What knowledge was available in Wales is best proved through manuscript evidence. After all, either the production of a manuscript in wales or remarks of welsh scholars in the margins of a manuscript show that the contents of it were available in Wales. The surviving Welsh manuscript material for any of the encyclopaedic sources discussed before is scarce. An excerpt of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* is the only surviving text. This excerpt can be found in manuscript Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514 (s.XIII-XIV) which was partially produced in Wales.[229] On page 53 of this manuscript an OT map of the world is drawn, with the text of Isidore's *Etymologiae* book XXXIII.xi.2-22 around it.[230] This section of his book contains a tract on the winds and is clearly directly related to the map. The winds described by Isidore in this segment of the *Etymologiae* (the *Subsolanus* in the east, the *Auster* in the south, *Favonius* in the west and *Septentrio* in the north) are depicted on the most outer circle of the map, also naming two more winds associated with the four main ones. Clearly, text and image cannot be separated. Schematic images in medieval manuscripts are used to clarify the text, and the text in its turn clarified the image.[231]

The fact that the section taken from Isidore's *Etymologiae* consists of the entire chapter, rather than a fragment makes it a closed unit taken from the text, which could circulate on its own. The text and image can travel separately to the rest of the *Etymologiae* without losing its meaning. While it is possible that the creators of MS Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514 took this image from a complete version of Isidore's *Etymologiae*, they could have easily encountered this image and excerpt already separated from the additional books and chapters of the text. That this specific fragment has been preserved thus presents no conclusive evidence that the section in which the marvellous rivers were preserved also travelled to Wales.

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[229] Julia Crick, 'The Power and the Glory: Conquests and Cosmology in Edwardian Wales (Exeter, Cathedral Library, 3514), in: Orietta Da Rold and Elaine Treharne (eds.), *Textual Cultures: Cultural texts* (Cambridge 2010) 21-42, 33.
[230] Crick, 'The Power and Glory', 26.
[231] C. De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Oxford, 1986) 98, 101.

A second way in which can be analysed whether or not the encyclopaedic knowledge discussed in Chapter 2 was present in Wales is through references to these works in other Welsh texts. Here too, Pliny and Solinus are absent in direct references, but some references to Isidore's *Etymologiae* do exist. They can be found in the Book of Taliesin, the works of Gerald of Wales and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*.[232] While this seems plenty of evidence to assume the works of Isidore of Seville were known in Wales, it is less strong than it appears. Rather than being direct references to Isidore's *Etymologiae,* the references in the Book of Taliesin are taken from passages quoted by Geoffrey of Monmouth and thus show knowledge of Isidore's work themselves.[233] For the poetry of the Gogynfeirdd poets and the Triads, it is remarked that 'no evidence exists to prove that prior the fourteenth century the Welsh bard, in general, had more than a superficial knowledge of Latin and its literature'.[234] Their knowledge of Latin literature in general, and Isidore in specific, seems to have reached no further than 'the use of names of heroes who belonged to the ancient world'.[235] Neither of these works show an actual familiarity with Isidore's work.

While Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales were acquainted with the work on a larger scale, they are not representative for the general ideas circulating in Wales. While both men were originally born in Wales, they both left Wales to pursue their careers in England. Geoffrey moved to Oxford between 1125 and 1129 and remained there until 1151.[236] It is during this period that he wrote his influential *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1138) and the *Vita Merlini* (1148-1150).[237] Gerald was educated in Paris and after his return from the Continent in 1174 he moved to Canterbury.[238] Neither of these men can be considered a typical Welsh audience. They both travelled outside Wales in ecclesiastical circles early in their lives, making it statistically more likely that they encountered the *Etymologiae* outside Wales than within. Their familiarity with the work of Isidore of Seville can thus not be considered as prove that the work of Isidore of Seville was known in Wales.

While Isidore's work is considered as widespread through Europe, and very likely to have been present in any monastic library, this does not confirm that Isidore was known outside of these monasteries. *Peredur* was most likely written for a secular audience and would thus be presented to a group of people without direct access to a monastic library. Moreover, it should be taken into account that the language in which the source material presented in Chapter 2 is all written in Latin,

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[232] Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth 2007) 13; Ceri Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff 1995) 39-40; Natalia Petrovskaia, *Middle Welsh Perceptions of the Orient* (Turnhout 2015) 17; Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge 1998) 215.
[233] Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, 13.
[234] Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition*, 40.
[235] Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition*, 40.
[236] Laura Cooner Lambdin and Robert Thomas Lambdin (eds.), *Arthurian Writers: a biographical encyclopaedia* (Westport 2008) 31.
[237] Lambdin and Lambdin, *Arthurian Writers*, 30-31.
[238] Huw Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', *Journal of Welsh Ecclesiastical History* 6 (1989) 17-34, 19-20.

while *Peredur* itself is written in Welsh. Georgia Henley has argued that Wales knew a vibrant culture of Latin writing and that the knowledge of Latin must have been extensive.[239] However, her argument is solely based on texts of a (pseudo-)historic nature which are likely to have circulated in a monastic context.[240]

The following chapter will concern itself with a possible wider spread of ideas about sheep-changing rivers in the East. While Isidore presents this idea, the version of the sheep-changing river found in *Peredur* is not identical to his version. While Isidore cannot be taken as the direct source for the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur,* his work will be used as a graspable case-study to see how widespread the general idea of sheep-changing rivers could have been. While monastic communities, as centres of knowledge and book production, will be featured below, the general aim of this chapter is to show that encyclopaedic knowledge about the East presented by Latin authors such as Isidore was spread with the help of the clergy to a broader audience without direct access to Latin manuscripts.

Important events that helped spark an interest in the East were the crusades taking place all through twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[241] The participation of the Welsh in the crusades did not only increase the amount of travellers to the Orient, events taking place in the East during the crusades were reported back to Wales and increased the flow of information about the East to the West.[242] A particular event that was responsible for the spread of ideas about the crusade and very likely also of descriptions of the Orient was the recruitment tour of Archbishop Baldwin in 1188.[243] A second important element in the spread of ideas about the East in specific and Latin knowledge in general is something described by Kathryn Hurlock as a 'monastic communication network' among Cistercian monasteries.[244] Through this network information was shared between monasteries all over Europe. A specific Cistercian monastery whose knowledge about the East will be discussed below is the abbey of Strata Florida. This abbey is considered to have played an important part in the production of the White Book of Rhydderch, one of the earliest manuscripts containing *Peredur*. While the recruitment tour of Archbishop Baldwin is relatively early after the composition of *Peredur*

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[239] Georgia Henley, 'From "The Matter of Britain" to "The Matter of Rome": Latin Literary Culture and the Reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Wales', in: Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson, *Arthurian Literature XXXIII* (Cambridge 2016) 1-28, 16.

[240] Henley, 'From "The Matter of Britain" to "The Matter of Rome"', 20.

[241] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16.

[242] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16; Petrovskaia, *Medieval Welsh Perceptions of the Orient*, 74.

[243] For more on this tour see: Michael Richter, *Giraldus Cambrensis: The Growth of the Welsh Nation* (Aberystwyth 1972); Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales'; and Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Gloucestershire 2006).

[244] Kathryn Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades: c.1095-1291* (Cardiff 2011) 33, see also Karen Stöber, 'The social networks of late medieval Welsh monasteries', in: Janet Burton and Karen Stöber (eds.), *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 2008) 11-24.

around 1100, a study of Strata Florida is connected to the period in which *Peredur* was first written down in its current form. Because it is unknown at which stage in the life of *Peredur* the Valley of the Changing Sheep was added, both stages need to be examined.

The Crusades and the recruitment tour of Archbishop Baldwin

Almost the entire period between the composition of *Peredur* and its first written version, 1100-1350, corresponds to what has been referred to by Hurlock as 'the golden age of crusades'.[245] This period runs from the beginning of the First Crusade in 1095, to the fall of Acre to the Egyptian Mamluks in 1291.[246] Over the course of nearly two hundred years, catholic Europe had been involved in nine separate crusades to the Holy Land.[247] Numerous soldiers travelled from Europe towards the East and brought back knowledge and stories about this region of the world. Wales was not excluded from these journeys. According to Kathryn Hurlock, Wales and the Welsh were included in 'every aspect of these crusades' and were as such no strangers to the Orient.[248]

While there are few definite references to Welsh crusaders in the accounts of the crusades, it seems probable that Welshmen participated in them, in the least as part of the mercenary army of the English kings in which they began to feature between 1154-1189.[249] Outside of a mercenary context, the Welsh are likely to have considered crusaders as a type of pilgrims. That pilgrimages were undertaken already before the start of the crusades can for example be seen in two entries in the *Annales Cambriae*, the Welsh annals, in which King Cadwaladwr and King Hywel went on pilgrimage to Rome, the former in 688, the latter in 929.[250] Later crusaders are described by using terminology equally used for pilgrims. During the beginning of the crusade period, no distinction was made between terminology referring to pilgrimages, and terminology referring to crusades.[251] Both pilgrims and crusaders were referred to as *pereinyon*, *pererinion*, or *peregrini*.[252]

When it comes to participating in the crusades themselves, the Third and the Fifth Crusade seem to have drawn the most attention. Little information can be found in Welsh documentation about the proceedings of the First and the Second crusade.[253] The Fourth crusade is not mentioned in any of the chronicles, presumably due to a very low level of participation of Welsh, Scottish and

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[245] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 1.
[246] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades,* 1.
[247] H.E. Mayer, *The Crusades* (Oxford 1988).
[248] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 2.
[249] Petrovskaia, *Middle Welsh Perceptions of the Orient*, 49.
[250] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 3.
[251] Petrovskaia, *Middle Welsh Perceptions of the Orient*, 49.
[252] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 19.
[253] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 20-21.

English crusaders.[254] The Third and Fifth Crusade on the other hand, running from 1187-1192 and 1217-1221, were by far the most popular.[255]

Some important sources from which information about the Welsh participation in the crusades can be distilled, are the chronicles *Brut y Tywysogyon, Brenhinedd y Saesson,* the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Cronica de Wallia*.[256] All these chronicles are preserved in manuscripts dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[257] The two chronicles in Welsh, *Brut y Tywysogyon* and *Brenhinedd y Saeson* are supposedly translations of the lost Latin work *Cronica Principum Walliae*, written as a continuation to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*.[258] The translation of the *Brut y Tywysogion* is considered to have been made at the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida, the same monastery which was also responsible for the composition of the second part of the *Annales Cambriae*.[259] The other chronicles were too created in a monastic context, the *Brenhinedd y Saesson* and *Cronica Wallia* in Cistercian abbeys of the same branch of that order, respectively the abbeys of Valle Crucis and Whitland.[260]

These chronicles demonstrate 'an awareness both of ideas of crusading and of events in the Latin East.'[261] While they were all produced in a monastic context, the difference between the information presented in the annals suggest several sources of information for each of the annals, differing amongst each other.[262] The most likely way through which this information was acquired was through a network of Cistercians monasteries in Wales which was linked to a wider international monastic network. [263] This network kept its orders informed of the events taking place in the crusading movement. That the Cistercians were 'by far the most popular order in Wales' makes the spread of information particular easy, considering the fact that is where the Cistercians in general who played a prominent role all over Europe to spread information about the crusades.[264] This

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[254] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades,* 23, 106.
[255] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 23; Mayer, *The Crusades*, 137, 214.
[256] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 18.
[257] The two main manuscripts of the *Brut y Tywysogion* are Oxford, Jesus College, 111 and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 20; *Brenhinedd y Saeson* can be found in London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra B.v; for the first part of the *Annales Cambriae* see London, British Library, Harleian MS 3859; for the second London, The National Archives, E.164/1; and for the third London, British Library, Cotton Dominitian A.i; the *Cronica de Wallia* is preserved in Exeter Cathedral Library Ms 3514. For the dates of their production see Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth 2000) 58-61.
[258] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16.
[259] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts,* 53; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16-17.
[260] Other than the manuscripts produced or translated at Strata Florida, *Brenhinedd y Saesson* was probably produced at the abbey of Valle Crucis, the *Cronica de Wallia* at Whitland, and the third part of the *Annales Cambriae* at St. David's. See: Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts,* 52-53; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16-18.
[261] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades,* 30.
[262] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 32.
[263] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16, 33.
[264] Petrovskaia, *Medieval Welsh Perceptions of the Orient*, 74; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 38.

spread of information continued outside of the monastery, and Hurlock would go as far as to assume that 'the information contained in the chronicles would have been common knowledge where monk and Welshman met and exchanged conversation.'[265]

The information presented in the annals is not very abundant. Entries are short and not every event taking place in the crusades is documented in these chronicles. However, this does not mean that the information available in general was scare and very selective. The annals are known to exclude information as well. For example, the last chronicle entry that refers to Welsh involvement in the crusades is from 1144, while we know from other sources that there were still Welshmen setting out on crusade in later years.[266] Moreover, the most popular crusades, the Third and the Fifth, were still to come. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that there was more information about the crusades and the East in general circulating throughout Wales than is preserved in the chronicles.

A very direct way through which this knowledge would have reached the people outside of the Cistercian monasteries, was through the tour taken through Wales by Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1188. The main aim of this tour was to recruit participants for the Third Crusade.[267] While this tour is mentioned in the annals, this is only sporadically. The main source of information of this tour is written by Gerald of Wales, who was participating in it himself. During the tour Gerald wrote his *Itinerarium Cambriae,* 'Journey through Wales'.[268] In this work, and in his later *De Rebus a se Gestis,* the eight-week long tour is described. While the main audience that Baldwin wanted to reach were the marcher and princely families of Wales, the tour attempted to reach as large an audience as possible.[269] The main preaching locations were important towns and villages 'where people were accustomed to collect for fairs and markets'.[270] This would not only make the sermons easily accessible, merchant towns also included a part of the population with enough financial means to be able to afford the journey East.

Gerald was not only a passive participant to the 1188 tour, simply responsible for documenting it, he played an active part too. On several occasions Gerald himself partook in the

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[265] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 38.
[266] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 20.
[267] Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 23.
[268] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 59. The text is preserved in manuscripts London, British Library, Royal MS 13 B VIII (c.1196-1223); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 188; and Cambridge, University Library, Ff I 27. A translation of the text can be found in Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. L. Thorpe (London 1978).
[269] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 66. *De Rebus a se Gestis* is preserved in the manuscript London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B xiii. This only existing manuscript is considered incomplete, containing only 18 of the supposed 236 chapters. An edition of the text can be found in J.S. Brewer and James F. Dimock and George F. Warner, *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera* I: *De rebus a se gestis, libri iii, Invectionum libellus, Symbolum electorum* (Cambridge 2012) 3-122.
[270] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 68.

preaching.[271] While there is no evidence of what has been said in these sermons, it may not be too farfetched to speculate that some descriptions of Jerusalem and its surroundings were included in them.[272] During the sermons delivered by Gerald himself the audience may even have been told about the marvellous fountain in the Orient. As mentioned above, Gerald was familiar with Isidore's *Etymologiae* and thus the sheep-changing rivers mentioned in it. While there is no definitive way to prove that Gerald had any interest in these rivers, the fact that he himself includes descriptions of marvellous rivers and fountains from Ireland, France, Britain and Germany in his earlier *Topografia Hibernica* suggest that he was.[273] In *Topographia Hibernica* distinction II, chapter VII is titled *De mirandis fontium naturis* ('On the wonderful natures of some fountains'), and VIII *De duobus, Britanniaei scilicet Armoricae, et Sciciliae, fontibus admirandis* ('Of two extraordinary fountains, one in Britany, the other in Sicily'), heading two chapters specifically dedicated to descriptions of marvellous fountains.[274]

There is one problem which Gerald's knowledge of Isidore and his connection to Wales, and that is the fact that Gerald did not speak any Welsh.[275] While he spoke Latin and French, Welsh was not one of the languages he mastered well enough to speak in it. His sermons were accordingly in either French or Latin. While there were undoubtedly members of the audience who knew these languages well enough to understand the sermons regardless of their un-welsh nature, this may have been a problem for a less educated audience. For the audience unfamiliar with Latin, the main language used during these sermons, in some case a translator was used to convey the contents of the sermon in Welsh.[276] In this way Latin knowledge was made available to a Welsh audience.

Moreover, to make the conveyed message more approachable in general, Welsh speakers were invited on several occasions. Cistercian monks were a group of such supporters on Baldwin's tour.[277] For example, Abbot Seisyll of the Strata Florida Abbey spoke during the tour's visit to Lampeter.[278] Seisyll was a Welshman. While he appears not to have preached in Welsh himself, he was definitely capable of transmitting Latin knowledge of the East to a Welsh audience.

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[271] Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 27; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 60, 61.

[272] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades,* 61.

[273] *Topografia Hibernica* is preserved in the manuscripts London, British Library, Harleian 4003; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 720; and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Lat. 4126. An edition can be found in J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and George F. Warner, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* V: *Topographia Hibernica et Expugnatio Hibernica* (Cambridge 2012), a translation in Thomas Forester and Thomas Wright, *Giraldus Cambrensis: The Topography of Ireland* (Cambridge 2000).

[274] Brewer, Dimock and Warner, *Giraldi Cambrensis,* 84, 89; Forester and Wright, *Giraldus Cambrensis*, 38-39.

[275] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 73.

[276] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 75-76.

[277] Pryce, 'Geralds Journey through Wales', 26-29.

[278] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 72.

While it is unclear how many Welshmen actually went on crusade, the tour of Baldwin shows that 'there was genuine interest in the crusade in Wales', and thereby in the East.[279] According to the descriptions of this tour of 1188 by Gerald of Wales, three thousand men signed up for the Third Crusade.[280] These are numbers that cannot be proven, but the claim does underline that at least Gerald himself considered the tour a success. Considering the overall interest of the Welsh in the Second Crusade and the fact that in 1236 a similar tour was undertaken by Friar Anian, this idea of success was probably held by others as well.[281]

Regardless of the effective results, Baldwin and his travel companions managed to reach a significant audience.[282] Due to the sermons being not only in Latin but also in French and when there was translator present occasionally also in Welsh, a wide range of people could be reached.[283] The language barrier between knowledge preserved in Latin texts and a Welsh-speaking audience is crossed. Moreover, the written-down nature of this knowledge, preserved in manuscripts, is also defied by the oral transmission of knowledge that has undoubtedly occurred during Archbishop Baldwin's tour of 1188. Of all the speakers involved in the tour, Gerald is known to have been familiar with the work of Isidore and have discussed marvellous fountains in his own *Topografia Hibernica*. What the other participants of the tour will have known about the geographical features of the East, will be treated next.

The Cistercian information network

All throughout the 1188 tour of Archbishop Baldwin the Cistercian influence can be noted.[284] Since the Cistercian order was closely involved in recruitment for the crusades all over Europe and at the same time was the most well-established monastic order in Wales, this may not be surprising.[285] Involving the Cistercians further in the tour can be considered practical considering the fact that the order was popular in native Welsh areas.[286]

The Cistercian influence begins with Archbishop Baldwin himself. Before he became Archbishop of Canterbury he had been a monk in and later the abbot of the Cistercian abbey of

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[279] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 91.
[280] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 21-22.
[281] Like the tour of Archbishop Baldwin, the tour of Friar Anian too is documented in the *Annales Cambriae* where the entry for 1236 mentions '*Frater Anianus praedicavit de Cruce in West Wallia*'. See John Williams ab Ithel (ed.), *Annales* Cambriae (Cambridge 2012) 82.
[282] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 67.
[283] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 74; Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 28.
[284] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 63; Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 27.
[285] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 63.
[286] Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 27; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 63.

Forde, Devon. [287] During his tour through Wales he often sought the company of Cistercian monks, presumably to make his message more approachable and attractive for the Welsh audience.[288] While Baldwin himself did most of the preaching during the tour, he frequently involved other speakers. One of such, Abbot Seisyll of Strata Florida, has already been mentioned above. Another example of such a speaker is Abbot John of the monastery at Whitland, also a Cistercian abbey.[289]

Other than religious figures, lay involvement too can be traced back to a Cistercian sphere of influence. The ruling prince of Deheubarth, Rhys ap Gruffydd (1132-1197), had left his own mark on the 1188 tour. According to Hurlock he 'had done so much in the south to help the mission and promote enthusiasm among the Welsh princes'.[290] While Lord Rhys never actually left for Jerusalem, Gerald of Wales tells us that Rhys was so impressed with what Baldwin had to say that after hearing him preach for the first time at Radnor, he decided to take the Cross himself.[291] Lord Rhys continued to travel with Archbishop Baldwin while Baldwin was preaching in the regions of Wales ruled by Rhys. Rather than simply travelling along, Hurlock considers Lord Rhys to actually have had an influence in promoting the crusade.[292] As such, Lord Rhys can be expected to have done some talking about the crusades and the East himself. At this point, it is important to mention that Lord Rhys can be considered the 'effective founder of Strata Florida' and was also responsible for the founding of Talley Abbey between 1184-1189.[293] While this does not mean that Rhys was thus in possession of the same information held by the monks of Strata Florida, Lord Rhys might be the primary example of a Welshman who shared in Cistercian information through direct conversation with them.[294] In general, the Welsh Cistercian monks were inclined to interact more with lay people than their rule advised them to do.[295] More specifically, the Cistercians at Strata Florida were known to regularly 'play host to their patrons and benefactors' up to 1280.[296]

Because the influence of Cistercian ideas on the crusades were prominently present in Wales in 1188 through Archbishop Baldwin's tour featuring several Cistercian speakers and allied parties, it is worthwhile to attempt to reconstruct the particular knowledge about the east held by Welsh

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[287] Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 20.
[288] Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 27.
[289] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 72.
[290] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 70.
[291] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 87.
[292] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 70.
[293] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 216; Karen Stöber, 'The social networks of late medieval Welsh monasteries', 11.
[294] Stöber, 'The social networks of late medieval Welsh monasteries', 12.
[295] Stöber, 'The social networks of late medieval Welsh monasteries', 24; James France, 'The Cistercian community', in: Mette Birkedal Bruun (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order* (Cambridge 2012) 80-86, 83. The Cistercian rule preached a remote spiritual existence away from society. In theory, the monks would find everything they needed in their everyday life within the walls of the monastery.
[296] Stöber, 'The social networks of late medieval Welsh monasteries', 17.

Cistercian monks. A valid way to reconstruct this set of knowledge would be to look at the manuscripts that were part of the libraries of the Welsh Cistercian abbeys. Unfortunately very little evidence of this remains. Daniel Huws considers the dissolution of monasteries by King Henry VIII as the primary reason that so little manuscript evidence of the Welsh monasteries is still in existence.[297] He considers it likely that of the Latin manuscripts originally present in Wales, less that one in a hundred has been preserved.[298] Moreover, not only the manuscripts themselves have been lost over time, documentation discussing the contents of the monastic libraries has also been lost. Only of the library of the Augustinian priory Llantony Prima in Monmouthshire a catalogue is still available, and this is an indirect one. Rather than maintaining the library at its own priory, the manuscript collection of Llantony Prima was incorporated in the manuscript collection of its sister priory, Llantory Secunda in Gloucestershire.[299] Of this library a manuscript catalogue has been preserved.

Folia 3r-11v of manuscript London, British Library, Harley MS 460 (c.1355) contain a list of 486 manuscripts belonging to the library of Llantony Secunda.[300] Manuscript 473 is listed as '*Isydorus Ethimologiarum, magna vol*'. The *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville with the entry on sheep-changing rivers was known in the priory of Llantony Secunda at least in 1355. It is unknown when this manuscript was added to the library of Llantony Secunda and if it was originally part of the collection of Llantony Prima. It should be remarked that manuscripts remained in active use of a medieval library for several centuries and that since the *Etymologiae* was originally composed in the seventh century, it is likely that the manuscript was already in possession of one of the two priories before 1355.[301] Even if the manuscript was not originally part of the collection of Llantony Prima, the same connection on which was called upon when the manuscripts were exchanged would have been used to exchange information. We should assume that this exchange of information could have occurred either by the lending of manuscripts by one monastery to another, the travelling of monks to study manuscripts at another priory, or by information being transferred through interaction between monks of both priories.[302] One way or another, it is likely that the monks of Llantony Prima were aware of Isidore's *Etymolgiae*.

Because there is no such evidence for communication between the monks of the Llantony Prima priory and the lay inhabitants of Wales, nor between them and any of the Cistercian

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[297] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 3; Stöber, 'The social networks of late medieval Welsh monasteries', 13.
[298] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 3.
[299] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 3.
[300] An edition of this catalogue can be found in H. Omont, 'Anciens Catalogues de Bibliothèques anglaises', *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 9 (1892) 201-22; and Teresa Webber and Andrew G Watson, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 6 (London 1998).
[301] M. Johnston and M. van Dussen, 'Introduction: manuscripts and cultural history', in: M. Johnston and M. van Dussen eds., *The Medieval manuscript book. Cultural approaches* (Cambridge 2015) 1-16, 7.
[302] Johnston and Van Dussen, 'Introduction: manuscripts and cultural history', 7-9.

monasteries, this familiarity with Isidore's *Etymologiae* cannot be considered representative for the knowledge in Wales in general. While there is no longer any documentation in existence which provides any information about the contents of the Cistercian monastic libraries in Wales, libraries of Cistercian monasteries in England can provide a useful link. Rather than tracing the contents of the Welsh monastic libraries, the libraries of the monasteries with which they formed a communication network will be studied.[303] After all, if information about the contents of Isidore's *Etymologiae* or Solinus' *De mirabilibus mundi* reached Wales through this Cistercian communication network, this knowledge has to be present somewhere within this network.

In *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratenians* (1992) David Bell has collected catalogue entries for a total of twenty-five Cistercian abbeys in England.[304] For only three of these abbeys catalogues of the manuscripts have survived.[305] For the other twenty-two libraries Bell uses documents such as donation letters, describing a set of manuscripts donated to the monastic library.[306] Because the information present in donation letters provides more information about the collection of the former owner that that of the receiver, these listings will not be discussed below. After all, while these manuscripts were donated to the monasteries and nunneries, there is no way of confirming that the monasteries actually kept the manuscripts they were send.[307]

The three monasteries for which catalogues have been preserved are Flaxley, Gloucestershire; Meaux, Yorkshire; and Rievaulx, Yorkshire.[308] The catalogue of Flaxley abbey was created in the early thirteenth century and is contained in manuscript London, British Library, Add. MS 49996 (*olim* Phillipps MS 241800 – c.1250).[309] The total of eighty manuscripts listed on this list should not be considered as a complete inventory of the manuscripts in possession of Flaxley abbey. Manuscripts with a liturgical content are suspiciously absent on this list and therefore Bell proposes that the list in Add. MS 49996 should be considered as a list of the manuscripts kept in the abbey book-room. [310] The liturgical manuscripts were presumably kept in the abbey church and documented on a separate list.[311] Of these eighty manuscripts, manuscript 41 is listed as '*Isidorus ethimologiarum'*, an entry of Isidore's *Etymologiae*.[312] This contents of this work were thus known in Flaxely abbey.

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[303] For the communication network of Cistercian monasteries see Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 33.
[304] David N. Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratenians*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 3 (London 1992).
[305] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians,* 15.
[306] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians,* 15.
[307] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians,* 15.
[308] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 15.
[309] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 16-17. This catalogue is listed in Bell as Z7.
[310] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians,* 15.
[311] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 15.
[312] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 21.

The catalogue of the abbey of Meaux is significantly larger than the catalogue of Flaxley. Rather than eighty, the catalogue of Meaux contains 363 manuscripts.[313] The catalogue can be found on folia 242v-246r of manuscript London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C vi (s.XV). While the catalogue is said to be created in 1396, it is likely that most of the manuscripts listed were acquired by the fourth abbot of the abbey, Alexander (1197-1210).[314] This large manuscript collection contained not just one, but three different manuscripts of Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Manuscripts 242, 243 and 244 are all listed as '*Isidorus ethimologiarum'*.[315] That Isidore was a popular read at Meaux is also seen in the fact that there are seven more works of the author presented in the catalogue.[316] Since Isidore is known to have written sixteen works during his life, a library that has eight of these in its collection has been well informed on the writings of this author.[317]

An additional manuscript in possession of Meaux abbey is Solinus' *De Mirabilibus mundi*. Ms 309 is listed as '*Solinus de mirabilibus mundi'*.[318] This is the only reference to a text of Solinus' work in either of the manuscript catalogues discussed here. Neither in Llantory, Flaxley or Rieveaulx manuscripts of Solinus are listed in the catalogues.

The catalogue of Rievaulx is in possession of several manuscripts containing texts written by Isidore. For Rievaulx not one but two manuscript lists are preserved, both of them in manuscript Cambridge, Jesus College, 34 (s.XIII). The first list appears on folia 1r-5v, the second on folia 5v-6r. While the second list at first sight seems a shortened version of the first list, Bell argues that they should actually be seen as two separate lists. [319] Together they present 225 manuscripts in possession of Rievaulx abbey at the end of the twelfth century.[320] Of these manuscripts, two manuscripts contain Isidore's *Etymoligiae: Ysidori ethimologiarum*. Rather than two copies, the work is spit in two volumes and spread out over mss. 77 and 78.[321]

As in the manuscript collection of Meaux, the *Etymologiae* is not the only work of Isidore in possession of the abbey. They owned four more texts of the author.[322] It becomes clear that while there are no definitive records of the presence of manuscripts of the *Etymologiae* in Wales, the monasteries Welsh monasteries were in contact with definitely knew about it. If the communication

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[313] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 34. This catalogue is refered to as Z14.

[314] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 34.

[315] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*¸ 66.

[316] The other texts of Isidore in this library are *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum* (ms.240); *In Libros Veteris ac Noui Testamenti prooemia* (ms.241); *De uiris illustribus* (ms.241); *De nominibus legis et euangelii* (ms.241); *De ortu et obitu patrum*(mss.241 and 288); *Sententiarum liber* (ms.245); and *De Exlesiasticis officiis* (ms.280).

[317] Stephen A Barney e.a. (eds.), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge 2006) 8.

[318] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 77.

[319] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians*, 87-88. Bell lists the list at ff.1r-5v as Z19, and the list at ff.5v-6r as Z20.

[320] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians,* 87-88.

[321] Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians,* 90.

[322] *De Nomimibus legetis et euangelii* (ms. 78); *Synonyma de lamentation animae peccatricis* (ms.78); *Sententiarum liber* (ms.79); and *De uiris illustribus* (ms.178).

network established among Cistercian monasteries worked, it is very likely that knowledge of Isidore's *Etymologiae* will have reached Wales and that at least the monastic circles had access to Isidore's description of sheep-changing rivers located in the East. Because the Cistercian monks were in such close contact with the lay inhabitants of Wales this knowledge can have travelled from monastic communities and spread out to reach a wider audience. The tour held by Archbishop Baldwin in 1188 presented an opportunity for this spread of knowledge on a large scale.

The evidence presented above mainly concerns itself with encyclopaedic knowledge about the East present in Wales at the end of the twelfth century. Since *Peredur* was composed around 1100 and written down around 1350, and the episode of the valley of the changing sheep could be added to the text at any moment during this time, only looking at the end of the twelfth century is rather restrictive. After all, the episode could easily have been added in a later period. Moreover, the question still stands whether or not the episode was still understood halfway through the fourteenth century. The last part of this chapter will take a closer look at the circumstances in which one of the earliest manuscripts of *Peredur*, the White Book of Rhydderch, was produced.

Strata Florida Abbey

The production of the White Book of Rhydderch, one of the earliest manuscripts in which *Peredur* is documented, is closely related to the abbey of Strata Florida. While it is not certain if the White Book was actually created at Strata Florida, Huws does claim that Strata Florida played a vital role in the production of this manuscript.[323]

The abbey was found in 1164 by Rhys ab Gruffydd.[324] After Abbot David, the first abbot of Strata Florida died in 1185, Abbot Seisyll followed as the second abbot of the abbey.[325] Together Seisyll and Lord Rhys were closely involved in Archbishop Balwdin's tour through Wales in 1188. While the church of the abbey was under construction until 1201, Baldwin visited the abbey and spread word of the Third Crusade in the vicinity of Strata Florida.[326]

Through the tour of Archbishop Baldwin and information transferred through the Cistercian communication network, the monks at Strata Florida acquired plenty of knowledge about the crusades and the East. This knowledge becomes visible in some of the Welsh Chronicles. As mentioned above, both the *Brut y Tywysogion* and the second part of the *Annales Cambriae* were

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[323] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 253.
[324] S.W. Williams, *The Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida* (London 1889) 22.
[325] Williams, *The Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida*, 69.
[326] Williams, *The Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida*, 69; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 85.

supposedly made and kept in Strata Florida.[327] Both of these chronicles derived much of their crusade-related content from information spread through communication with other Cistercian monasteries.

Other information that may have been shared through the Cistercian communication network is the content of Isidore's *Etymologiae* and, although these chances are much slimmer, that of Solinus' *De mirabilibus mundi*. It should be remarked that Strata Florida had experience translating Latin sources into Welsh. Rather than composing the *Brut y Tywysogion* from the start, they translated a Latin source for this chronicle: *Cronica Principum Walliae.*[328] Presumably they would be equally well capable of communicating the Latin of Isidore and perhaps Solinus to a Welsh audience.

Because of the fact that once manuscripts were incorporated in a manuscript collection they tended to be in use for centuries, any knowledge put on paper at the end of the twelfth century would still have been available and relevant around 1350.[329] Manuscripts possessed by the abbey of Strata Florida in the twelfth century did not just disappear by 1350. The same counts for documents contained within private manuscript collections, of which the one held by Rhys ab Gryffydd would have been one.[330]

It is very likely that the collection owned Rhys ab Gruffydd was kept in possession of his family and would have been accessible for his descendants centuries later. One of these descendants is Ieuan Llwyd (flourished 1332-1343).[331] While Ieuan Llwyd was no longer a ruling prince of Deheubarth nor a patron of Strata Florida, he still lived in the vicinity of the abbey and can be considered to maintain close connection with the abbey.[332] It is thus not surprising that when commissioning a manuscript, Ieuan Llwyd would turn to the scriptorium of Strata Florida. A manuscript he most likely ordered from Strata Florida is the Hendregadredd manuscript.[333] Production of this manuscript was mostly likely done in three stages, starting around the end of the thirteenth- or beginning of the fourteenth century, and ending in the middle of the fourteenth century.[334] As mentioned above, the Hendregadredd manuscript contains the Gogynfeirdd poetry which make references to Isidore's *Etymologiae*. This means that references to Isidore's *Etymologiae*

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[327] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts,* 53; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16-17.

[328] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts,* 53; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16-17.

[329] Johnston and Van Dussen, 'Introduction: manuscripts and cultural history', 7.

[330] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 217.

[331] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 216-217.

[332] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 216-217.

[333] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts,* 48, 216.

[334] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 215-218.

were still produced, and probably understood, in manuscripts at Strata Florida around the time the White Book of Rhydderch was created.[335]

The possession of the Hendregadredd manuscript by Ieuan Gruffydd also means that the owners of the White Book of Rhydderch were familiar with at least one other manuscript that referred to the works of Isidore. The White Book of Rhydderch was, as the name suggests, part of the collection of 'Rhydderch'. This Rhydderch has been identified as Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyed, Ieuan Llwyed's son.[336] Rhydderch was almost certainly still in possession of the manuscripts commissioned by his father.[337] The version of *Peredur* contained in the White Book of Rhydderch thus circulated in a context in which Isidore's *Etymologiae* was known. While the episode of the valley of the changing sheep in *Peredur* is not identical to the variant described in the *Etymologiae*, it is similar enough to have been recognised by the readers of *Peredur* as the same thing.

Conclusions

All in all it is very likely that knowledge of the East, and in particular marvellous fountains as described by Isidore, was circulating through Wales in the period between 1100-1350. The crusades held during this period sparked an interest in the East which not only led to more travellers heading out towards the East, but also more information being brought back.

Information about events taking place during the crusades was transmitted to Wales in abundance through a European network of Cistercian monasteries. This monastic order had served as an important supporter of the crusades all over Europe and their ideas were particularly present in Wales. The Cistercian monastic order was by far the most popular and successful monastic order in Wales, also in the native-Welsh areas. Moreover, while the rule of the Cistercian order promoted the monks to stay within the walls of their monasteries as much as possible and limit their contact with the outside world, Cistercian monks in Wales were known for their intensive interactions with lay people. Not only were they considered to do this on a small scale in personal conversations, as active participants in the tour taken by Archbishop Baldwin through Wales in 1188 to recruit participants for the Third Crusade their knowledge will have reached a far larger audience.

During eight weeks Archbishop Baldwin travelled through Wales to preach the crusades and convince the native inhabitants of Wales to take the Cross. While the success of his tour can be

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[335] Ceri Davies, *Welsh Literature and the Classical Tradition* (Cardiff 1995) 39-40; Huws dates the Hendregadredd manuscript, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, NLW 6680 in three parts. Part I: s.XIII/XIV; part II: s.XIV[1]; an part III: s.XIV*med*.
[336] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 249.
[337] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 251.

debated, it is without doubt that during the eight weeks Baldwin managed to reach out to a large part of the Welsh population. While Baldwin preached in Latin, Welsh translators will have made his message accessible for a Welsh audience. Even though the contents of Baldwin's sermons have not been documented, it seems likely that while promoting the crusades, ideas about the natural features of the Holy Land will have been transmitted.

The Cistercian character of Baldwin's travel party indicates that many speakers during the tour will have been subject to information spread through the Cistercian communication network. While there is no direct evidence left of the knowledge in possession of the Welsh monasteries, manuscript catalogues of Cistercian monasteries in England show that Isidore's *Etymologiae* was a popular text in their abbeys. If the Welsh abbeys themselves were not in possession of the work of Isidore, the knowledge was available through books could being given on loan to one library by another and monks travelling between monasteries to study other manuscript collections.[338]

Even at the stage of its life when *Peredur* was written down, it was still subject to a Cistercian context. The White Book of Rhydderch was presumably created in the abbey of Strata Florida, a monastic community known to have been closely involved in the preaching of the crusades and thus the spread of information about the East.[339] Moreover, the first owner and commissioner of the manuscript, Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd, inherited the manuscript library and thus the knowledge owned by his father. Not only is Ieuan Llwyd considered to have maintained close connections with the Strata Florida abbey, he commissioned from them the Hendregaderdd manuscript, which in itself contains texts that show familiarity with the work of Isidore of Seville. *Peredur* thus circulated in a context in which ideas from Isidore's *Etymologiae* were known and through which the existence of sheep-changing rivers in the East was confirmed.

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[338] Johnston and Van Dussen, 'Introduction: manuscripts and cultural history' 7-9.
[339] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 253; Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 70.

Conclusion

After a discussion of the three texts in which variants of the Valley of the Changing Sheep appear and a closer look at the possible sources it seems unavoidable to conclude anything else than that the Valley of the Changing Sheep has a direct relation with descriptions of the Orient.

In Chapter 1 it has become clear that the episode of the Valley of the Changing Sheep should have a direct influence on one of the characters in *Peredur*. All the other episodes in the tale featuring animals or specific descriptions of the characters' surroundings have an impact on either the growth of a character or the development of the narrative. While the Valley of the Changing Sheep seemingly has neither, its influence should be sought in the location of the river.

When compared with the Middle Dutch *Roman van Walewein* and the Old Irish *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* the importance of the location of the marvellous river becomes clear. In the *Roman van Walewein* the location across the river that has the power to change the colour of birds and set objects on fire is specifically mentioned as India.[340] Moreover, Ad Putter has convincingly argued that the description of the in India residing castle of King Assentijn should be considered as an attempt by the authors do make accurate geographical description of the Orient rather than a collection of marvels.[341] While in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* it is never specified that the seafarers travel towards India, the length of the journey creates the possibility for a journey stretching to all parts of the world and an inclusion of marvels from varying regions, including India.

Marvels with the same characteristics as the perilous river in the *Roman van Walewein* are described in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin*.[342] However, in this tale the two marvellous characteristics are divided over two rivers rather than combined into one. The seafarers come across a valley with changing sheep in episode XII, and in episode XIII they encounter a river which, similar to the one in *Roman van Walewein,* instantly set objects on fire. While these rivers are seemingly unrelated in the *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin,* the combination of these two marvellous rivers in the *Roman van Walewein* shows that the ideas behind these two rivers are so similar that they can be merged together. The fiery river can thus have the same meaning as the colour-changing animals. Even though a river equivalent to this is not found in *Peredur*, exploring how they overlap with the colour-changing rivers will emphasize the nature of the latter.

The similarities between two sets of rivers as they are found in Latin encyclopaedic sources have been analysed in Chapter 2. All five selected encyclopaedic works, Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*

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[340] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 3455-3592.
[341] Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld', 97.
[342] *Immram Máel Dúin*, episode XII and XIII.

(c.77 CE), Solinus' *De mirabilibus mundi* (c.200), the *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville (s.VII), Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Orientalis* (c.1219) and the Middle Dutch bestiary *Der Nature Bloemen* by Jacob van Maerlant (c.1270), include descriptions of both a river that has the capacity to change the colour of the animals that drink their waters, and a river in which objects can be lit on fire. Not only are both rivers discussed in these selected texts, their varied nature shows that there must have been a significantly larger tradition of these marvellous rivers than has been preserved in manuscripts.

This large tradition also explains the differences between the rivers described in the encyclopaedic works and the ones found in *Peredur, Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* and the *Roman van Walewein*. While they vary amongst each other, the changing animals in *Roman van Walewein* are birds and in *Immram Curaig Máel Dúin* the river has been replaced with a fence, all animals change colour due to a crossing movement, either across the river or the fence.[343] The colour-changing capabilities of the rivers in the encyclopaedic literature is transferred by the animals drinking the water.[344] However, while this presents a diversion from the discussed sources, there are enough similarities to recognise the events taking place in the Valley of the Changing Sheep as the ones caused by the rivers described in encyclopaedic literature.

Other than differences, all rivers have one important element in common. Regardless of their varied nature, all rivers can supposedly be found in the same region of the world. Even though the exact locations vary between Italy, Greece, Turkey and the area around the Red Sea, the general idea that they are located somewhere in the eastern regions of the Mediterranean is maintained. Both the rivers that have the power to change the colour of sheep and the rivers that set objects on fire are located in the East, and it is this shared nature that is emphasized when the two are combined in the *Roman van Walewein*.

That composers and audiences in Ireland between the ninth and the twelfth century, and an audience in Flanders between 1230 and 1250 could have been familiar with the descriptions of such marvellous rivers in encyclopaedic works can be established through manuscript evidence.[345] The *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville has been known in Ireland from the seventh century onwards,[346] and the works of Jacques de Vitry have circulated in Flanders since their composition at the beginning of the thirteenth century.[347] For Wales the familiarity with these encyclopaedic sources is more difficult to prove. Yet, as shown in Chapter 3, it is very likely that knowledge of the East in general and of the

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[343] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89; *Immram Máel Dúin*, episode XII; *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 5840-5852.

[344] Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, Book II.cvi, Book XXXI.ix; Solinus, *De Mirabilibus Mundi,* Chapter VII.27, Chapter XXXIII.1; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, Book XIII.xiii.5.

[345] Sven Meeder, *The Irish Scholarly Presence at St. Gall: Networks of Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages* (London 2018) 60; Jessalynn Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry: Visual and Written Commentaries as Evidence of a Text's Audience, Reception and Utilization', *Essays In Medieval Studies* (2003) 56-74, 56.

[346] Meeder, *The Irish Scholarly Presence at St. Gall*, 60.

[347] Bird, 'The *Historia Orientalis* of Jacques de Vitry', 56.

magical fountains residing there in particular was known in Wales in the period between 1100 and 1350.

In the period between 1100 and 1350 participation in the crusades sparked an interest in the Orient. The increase in travellers to the Holy Land brought forth an increase in information about this specific region.[348] Stories about the crusades were spread on a large scale through Wales in 1188 when Bishop Baldwin set out on a recruitment tour for the Third Crusade.[349] During the eight weeks of this tour, Baldwin no doubt reached a large part of the Welsh population and made Latin knowledge, which was mostly contained in monastic contexts, available to outsiders.

Baldwin was not the only clerical figure who sought direct interaction with the inhabitants of Wales. Welsh Cistercian monks, whose order was by far the most popular and successful monastic order in Wales and in the native-Welsh areas, were known for their intensive interaction with lay people.[350] Other than connections with the world outside their monasteries, Cistercian institutions are in known to have been in close contact with each other as well. Information was shared between the different monasteries on a large scale.[351] Not only information itself would travel along these lines, monks visiting other monasteries to study other manuscript collections, or manuscripts themselves traveling between different monasteries increased the level of accessible knowledge. While there is no direct evidence left of the knowledge in possession of the Welsh monasteries, manuscript catalogues of Cistercian monasteries in England show that Isidore's *Etymologiae* was a popular text in their abbeys and thus likely available for the Cistercians in Wales as well.[352]

The ties of *Peredur* with such a monastic context are strengthened when it is taken into account that one of the manuscripts in which the texts is contained, the White Book of Rhydderch, was most likely created in the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida.[353] At least one of the manuscripts in which *Peredur* is preserved circulated in a context in which ideas from Isidore's *Etymologiae* were known. At this stage in *Peredur's* life it was surrounded by people who were familiar with the source in which the existence of sheep-changing rivers in the East was confirmed.

This brings us back to the meaning of the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur*. The oriental nature of the marvellous river causing sheep to instantly change colour is present in all encyclopaedic sources and explicitly mentioned in the *Roman van Walewein*.[354] It seems that not

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[348] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades,* 30.
[349] Pryce, 'Gerald's Journey through Wales', 23.
[350] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 38.
[351] Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades*, 16, 33.
[352] H. Omont, 'Anciens Catalogues de Bibliothèques anglaises', *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 9 (1892) 201-22 ; David N. Bell, *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratenians*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 3 (London 1992).
[353] Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 253.
[354] *Roman van Walewein*, ll. 3455-3592.

only the castle of King Assentijn located in India, but also the way in which Walewein reaches India are the results of an attempt to create a geographically correct image of the Orient. With the crossing of the river the hero reached India. While the river could either be located within India or on the boarder of it, depending on which encyclopaedic text is looked at, that the hero arrives in the East on the other side is apparent.

The sheep in the Valley of the Changing Sheep in *Peredur* can be considered to have a similar function. Rather than being an oddity within the narrative, the only episode that does not seem to influence the hero, the Valley of the Changing Sheep informs the audience about the transition of the hero from the West to the East. Right before Peredur enters the valley of the changing sheep he meets a maiden who sends him towards India, indicating that at that moment in the story he is still in the West.[355] He then crosses the Valley of the Changing Sheep and arrives in the East, where he rules side by side with the Empress of Constantinople.[356] The episode influences the narrative by informing the audience of a change in location. While to a modern audience, Peredur seems to arrive in the East without any reference to it, a medieval audience familiar with the encyclopaedic descriptions of sheep-changing rivers in the East will have recognised the Valley of the Changing Sheep as a border area. Rather than an explicit textual explanation of Peredur's location, the audience is presented a vivid description of the border area between the West and the East. As such the Valley of the Changing Sheep functions as a geographical location marker to show Peredur's transition into the Eastern regions of the world.

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[355] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 89.
[356] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, 94.

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