**‘For As Often As He Slept’**

*A Comparative Analysis of Medieval Insular Vernacular Dream-Narratives*



J.M. Harder

5683750

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Advisor: Dr. Natalia Petrovskaia

Second Reader: Dr. Aaron Griffith

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‘*Dreamlike it was, and yet no dream, for there was no waking.’*

- J.R.R. Tolkien (The Two Towers)

‘*He found himself wondering at times, especially in the autumn, about the wild lands,*

*and strange visions of mountains that he had never seen came into his dreams.’*   
― J.R.R. Tolkien (The Fellowship of the Ring)

Abstract

Commonly found in medieval Insular literature, dreams take up a space ‘between’, providing its receipient and audience with knowledge that would be otherwise unobtainable. The way this knowledge is conveyed varies; the dream narratives utilize certain themes to deliver their message. This thesis investigates said themes and characteristics of medieval (dream-) vision literature in a selection of medieval Insular secular dream-narratives written in the vernacular. The research covers prose texts with composition dates ranging from the 8th to 12th centuries, i.e. *Aislinge Óenguso, Breudwyt Maxen Wledic, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy,* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne,* and is done on the basis of the theory of genre. The aim of this thesis is to enhance the understanding of medieval Insular secular dream narratives, and to provide an overview of shared themes between the texts. This is done through the exploration of medieval thought and literature surrounding dreams, its reflection on the corpus, medieval (dream-) vision literature, and its core characteristics. I expand upon similarities and discrepancies between central themes in a comparative analysis of the corpus, which results in a schematic overview of themes. I conclude that the unifying theme between the texts is the gaining of otherwise unobtainable knowledge through the dreams. In order for this paradox to work, I then propose that dreams and dreamscapes should be considered an inherent liminal space which sole purpose is to provide this knowledge.



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Introduction

Dreams are commonly found in medieval Insular literature. They appear in various texts, from vision literature to the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, functioning e.g. as divinatory practice or a gateway to the Otherworld.[[1]](#footnote-1) Taking place in both the world of the dreamer and different world altogether, these dreams are neither here nor there; they exist in an in-between. Both medieval Irish and Welsh literature feature such dreams; within the taxonomy of medieval Gaelic literature, such dreams were contained within the category *aisling* (lit. ‘dream’ or ‘vision’).[[2]](#footnote-2) This category contained various narratives such as *Aislinge Óengusso* (‘The Dream of Óengus’)*, Aislinge Meic Conglinne,*(‘The Vision of Mac Conglinne’)and *Aisling Tundail* (‘The Vision of Tundall’).[[3]](#footnote-3) Of those, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* has been denoted as satire by various scholars such as Henry A. Jefferies, S.J. Gwara, J.K. Bollard, Dafydd Glyn Jones, Helen Fulton, and M. Dillon.[[4]](#footnote-4) *Aisling Tundail* is an Irish translation of a Latin original, while *Aislinge Óengusso* is a vernacular narrative centring around Óengus and his dream-vision of love.[[5]](#footnote-5) *Aisling* texts thus could originate in both vernacular and non-vernacular traditions, and could cover a variety of themes.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Welsh, too, contains dream narratives. Xiezhen Zhao writes: ‘texts recorded in medieval Welsh manuscripts do not often include titles; yet the term ‘breuddwyd’ (dream) does sometimes appear in the title of medieval Welsh texts’.[[7]](#footnote-7) Of those texts, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (‘The Dream of Emperor Maxen’)and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (‘Rhonabwy’s Dream’) are the ones that are best known, of which the latter is often described as comedic.[[8]](#footnote-8) The *breuddwyd* tales do not form a specific category within the taxonomy of medieval Welsh literature. However, it might be worth considering *breuddwyd*-textsas a category of their own, as these texts (i.e. with *breuddwyd*-titles) do share distinct features, which can also be found within the *aisling* category. As the ‘(dream-)vision’ is recognised as a category within medieval Gaelic literature with identifiable distinctive stylistic and thematic features, I propose to apply those to the selected *breuddwyd* tales to see if they approach these distinct features in the same fashion.[[9]](#footnote-9) This thesis then aims to examine shared themes in medieval Insular vernacular and secular dream narratives written in prose, i.e. *Aislinge Óenguso*, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, and provide an overview of said themes*.*[[10]](#footnote-10)

The study of medieval dream narratives is not a recent development. According to Zhao, scholars have been publishing research on it for decades, and the interest seems to enjoy a steady increase.[[11]](#footnote-11) Scholars have focused on both literary tradition and its relation to other (contemporary) material. This is reflected within the study of medieval Insular dream narratives: Sir John Rhŷs has drawn parallels between *Aislinge Óenguso* and *Breudwyt Maxen*, while Nicole J.B. Volmering has researched e.g. *Aisling Tundail* in context of Medieval Irish Vision Literature.[[12]](#footnote-12) *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy,* too, have been studied alongside each other.[[13]](#footnote-13) Most recently, Xiezhen Zhao has studied medieval Welsh dream narratives to see if they constitute a specific (*breuddwyd*) genre.[[14]](#footnote-14) Taking literature spanning from c. 1100 to c. 1550, Zhao has concluded that these narratives do not, in fact, belong to one and the same genre, but instead to a variety.[[15]](#footnote-15) Instead of examining multiple texts in multiple forms spanning over a longer period of time as constituting to one singular (new) genre, this thesis examines whether or not selected texts taking the same form (i.e. prose, secular, written in the vernacular) display features of the established medieval literary category of (dream-) visions.

The four selected texts examined within this thesis have yet to be compared in this grouping, and thus thematic comparison will be of interest. In order to make a fair comparison, vernacular secular prose texts with manuscript witnesses from the same period have been selected. As the term *aislinge* was not used for eschatological visions within the timeframe this thesis focuses on, as discussed below, the texts are not of a religious nature.[[16]](#footnote-16) The question is not so much whether or not the *aisling* and *breuddwyd* texts belong to the same genre, but if they display a uniform approach to shared themes. The examination of medieval Welsh *breuddwyd* and medieval Irish *ailsinge* prose will be done on the basis of the thematic characteristics of (dream-) vision literature.[[17]](#footnote-17) These characteristics are based on themes that are typical of the medieval (dream-) vision genre. In order to understand what these themes are and why they might appear, medieval European thought and literature on dreams and dream-visions are examined, together with their possible influence on these texts.[[18]](#footnote-18) An overview of the medieval (dream-) vision genre and its characteristics will be given in order to extrapolate its central themes.[[19]](#footnote-19) Through comparison, both the similarities and differences between dreams and dream narratives within medieval Insular vernacular literature will become apparent, revealing possible connections and literary conventions.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Research Question and Methodology

Uniting medieval Irish and Welsh dream narratives, this thesis will examine literary interaction through both internal and intertextual analysis, i.e. through both textual and contextual analysis. First, the concept of dreams and dreaming in the Middle Ages and its subsequential manifestation in the selected dream narratives are examined.[[21]](#footnote-21) Then, an overview the medieval (dream-) vision ‘genre’ and its themes is given.[[22]](#footnote-22)

This thesis aims to answer the following question:

* *How do medieval Irish and Welsh secular vernacular dream narratives written in prose treat central elements of dream-visions?*

To be able to fully answer this question, other topics need to be discussed. This will be done in the following order: the theoretical framework will touch on the question of ‘genre’, and expand on the use of genre and literary categories based on the medieval Irish Tale-Lists as a framework for thematic analysis. The question whether or not medieval Irish categories can be used to examine medieval Welsh literature will be addressed as well. Then, general information about the corpus will be given, addressing and explaining my selection. Important terminology will be expanded upon and explained. The medieval European cultures surrounding dreams and their possible influence on the tales then will be discussed, after which I will expand on what exactly medieval Insular dream narratives are, and how they tie into conceptions of the medieval (dream-)vision genre. The themes which form the basis of my analysis will be discussed in the second chapter. After the comparison of themes, a conclusion on the uniformity in treatment will follow. My findings will be schematically displayed in the table found in the third chapter.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Theoretical Framework

This thesis aims to enhance the understanding of medieval Insular secular dream narratives, and to contribute to their studies. Four secular dream-tales, two in Irish, and two in Welsh, will be analysed and compared.[[24]](#footnote-24) To accomplish the set goal for this thesis, analysis on the basis of genre theory and comparative methodology will be used, i.e. the corpus is compared on the basis of themes found within the ‘genre’ the texts belong to, i.e. vision literature. The comparative thematic analysis will result in an overview of themes within medieval Insular vernacular secular dream narratives written in prose, which will be displayed and expanded on in the table in the third chapter.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The medieval category of visions, of which dream-visions are a part, will be explored through the methodology of ‘genre’, primarily following John Frow’s ideas and Nicole Volemering’s discussion of it.[[26]](#footnote-26) First, I will explain generic theory, starting with a discussion of the term ‘genre’ and its part in analysis and taxonomy, after which I will explain how it will be applied in this thesis.

The terminology used to refer to genre depends on the model of classification or analysis required.[[27]](#footnote-27) The traditional taxonomic model, also known as the ‘Aristotelian’ model of genre, states that texts can solely belong to one single category of literature. Here, the word ‘genre’ is used as a taxonomic indicator, creating classifications based on a universal set of rules. It presupposes that the texts exist in a logical relationship with the abstract parent genre.[[28]](#footnote-28) This model has been prevalent throughout the majority of literary history in the West, but modern scholarship has moved away from it, criticizing its validity.[[29]](#footnote-29) Instead of having a prescriptive model, genre should be considered in terms of sets of intertextual relations, making ‘genre’ dynamic rather than static, and allowing for overlap.[[30]](#footnote-30) While genre then still depends on the idea that texts can be organized and grouped according to their shared attributes, the classification is less rigid and limited. This allows for a rich mode of literary interpretation, which then aids in analysis: instead of a constricting factor, it now has become a tool.[[31]](#footnote-31) Frow encourages such mode, as he states that genre should not be interpreted as ‘rigid trans-historical class exercising control over the texts which it generates’, but as inspired by its predecessors, and interpreted anew by the contemporary author and reader.[[32]](#footnote-32) Frow also adds that, due to its dynamic nature, structural components of a genre should be historically specific rather than obeying a universal and formal logic.[[33]](#footnote-33) According to Nicole Volmering, this is especially visible in genres that have existed for a longer period of time, such as visions, which change their structure over the span of centuries without losing their distinct features, e.g. themes. This means that any textual manifestation and evidence of a genre is in itself historical representation, and this should be bore in mind when researching medieval genres.[[34]](#footnote-34) Hans R. Jauss expands on this, writing that it is important to acknowledge texts in their own right, and consider genre ‘in the process of becoming’. Genre is only sustained in the context of a series of works forming a continuity, and may be identified by a generic dominant determining the overall shape of the text.[[35]](#footnote-35) This reflexive model can then more easily be used to discuss multi-generic texts.[[36]](#footnote-36) In context of medieval manuscripts, this can mean that a text situated between other types of texts would be considered of the same literary category, i.e. the placement of a text within a manuscript (depending on the type of manuscript) may tell us more about common conceptions of it regarding ‘genre’ or categories. For example, the fact that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is found between various dream- and vision-texts rather than the tales it is so often paired with, and the fact that *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* can be found in combination with legal and ecclesiastical material, provides us with more information about the context in which they were received and perceived.[[37]](#footnote-37)

The methodology of genre provides a tool for analysis which is based on the idea that a genre consists of distinctive features that transgress the bounds of time. This can be used for various ends: for example, in her 2021 PhD thesis, Xiezhen Zhao uses this methodology to examine whether dreams in medieval Welsh literature can be confined to one specific genre. She concludes that her corpus, consisting of nineteen texts taking various forms and spanning from c.1100 to c. 1550, do not consitute one single genre.[[38]](#footnote-38) As her corpus includes texts both in prose, poetry, and religious writing, this conclusion appears to be a logical one: while genre consists of distinctive features that trangress the bounds of time, it is not guaranteed to cross a broad scope of types of writing. While all *breuddwyd* texts, then, might not constitute one specific *breuddwyd* genre, vision literature is an established medieval 'genre' which can be used as a tool of analysis. The distinctive features of which a genre consists, i.e. themes in the context of this thesis, provide a basis for this, and will be used to examine literary interaction. The primary function of a generic analysis of texts is to analyse their internal cohesion and dissonance.[[39]](#footnote-39) This will especially be useful within this thesis, as it sets out to examine how cohesive the themes within medieval Insular secular dream narratives are. In addition, it aims to denote similarities between the medieval Irish and Welsh texts by comparing and analysing themes central to (dream-) vision literature found in the texts. However, whilst applying modern labels and taxonomy, the generic analysis will be based on the medieval categories rather than modern genres in order to not create anachronistic research. These categories are based on the Irish Tale-Lists, which are found in the 12th-century Book of Leinster (Trinity College, Dublin, MS H 2.18 (cat. 1339)) and the 14th/15th-century portion of Trinity College Manuscript H 3 17.[[40]](#footnote-40) These Lists are documents that offer a catalogue of medieval Irish tales, the first containing 187 titles and the second 182, documenting literary categorisation made in the Middle Ages.[[41]](#footnote-41) By using these Tale Lists, medieval categories will become available for generic analysis, and the analysis itself will not become incongruent. The Lists provide a contemporary framework, which helps avoid debate about modern genre applied to medieval texts. The dream narratives, then, as a group of texts which are part of the taxonomy of insular literature, will be considered from the perspective of a literary category in their own right.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Corpus

For this thesis, four primary texts will be used: *Aislinge Óengusso* (*AOe*)*, Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (*BMW*)*, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (*BRh*)*,* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (*AMC*).[[43]](#footnote-43) Apart from important studies on specific satiric tales and recognition of the fantastical elements within *aislinge* and *breuddwyd* texts, these dream tales have yet to be subjected to detailed overall scrutiny geared to broad similarities and particular variants, i.e. have yet to be compared. An essential first step for such analysis is the establishment of a corpus of texts I have identified as secular dream narratives on reasonably objective grounds. Crucial is (1) manuscript authority for an *aisling* or *breuddwyd* title, (2) whether there is any internal reference to the action as *aisling/breuddwyd* in the text itself. The appearance of an *aisling* or *breuddwyd* title confirms the text to be considered either an *aisling* or *breuddwyd* narrative, and internal reference to *aisling/breuddwyd* confirms the appearance and description of the action itself. With the second criterion comes an additional criterion: the dream should be experienced in a dream or dream-like state. As this thesis aims to examine a homogenous group of texts, I have decided upon the following additional criteria: the text is written in prose; the tale is a stand-alone narrative; the text has a non-religious focus (i.e. can contain religious elements but is not written as a religious piece of writing). The tales identified as *aisling*/*breuddwyd* will be subjected to a thorough comparative analysis on the basis of generic themes as derived from my overview of medieval (dream-) vision literature. Further discussion of these and additional characteristics of medieval Insular dream-vision literature and the literary *aisling* category can be found in Chapter II: ‘The Medieval (Dream-) Vision’.[[44]](#footnote-44)

The four selected primary texts have significant thematic similarities, and fit the above-mentioned criteria, i.e. have manuscript authority for an *aisling*/*breuddwyd* title, have an internal reference to an *aisling*/*brueddwyd* itself, are secular vernacular stand-alone narratives written in prose. The exact thematic semblances and characteristics of the corpus can be found in both the table and the analysis of Chapter III: ‘Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’.[[45]](#footnote-45) These texts will be discussed in chronological order by composition date as discussed below.

### Aislinge Óenguso

*AOe* tells the tale of Óengus, son of the Dagdae and the Boann, who falls in love with a beautiful woman who appears to him in his dreams.[[46]](#footnote-46) After being visited by her, he falls ill, losing all appetite and wasting away. After a Fíngen, Conchobar’s physician, has visited Óengus, his illness is diagnosed. Fíngen tells Óengus that his relationship with the maiden of his dreams has been destined for him, and then sends for the Boann. The Boann searches for the maiden for a year, to no avail. Fíngen gets called to Óengus again, where the Boann reports on the search. Fíngen then advices to let the Dagdae come. The Dagdae does come, and sends a messenger to Bodb, the king of the *síd* of Munster. This messenger explains the situation (i.e. Óengus’ decline) to Bodb, and thus the maiden is sought for once again. At the end of the year, the girl is found; Óengus is invited to travel with Bodb to see if he recognises her. Óengus comes to Síd al Femen, where he feasts with the king for three days and three nights, after which they travel to Loch Bél Dracon. There they find hundred and fifty young maidens, and the fated maiden among them. Óengus recognises the girl, but cannot make contact. The maiden is revealed to be Cáer Iborméith, daughter of Ethal Anbúail, king of Síd Úamain in the province of Connacht. She is powerful, as she is able to shift into the shape of a bird. A year later, Óengus returns to the lake when Cáer is in the form of a swan. Óengus summons her to him, and Cáer agrees to go with him if she is able to return to the lake. They sleep in the shape of two swans and circle the lake three times, then take off in the shape of two white birds. They go to the Mruig Maic ind Ócc and sing a harmonious song that puts people to sleep for three days and three nights. After that, Cáer stays with Óengus. The tale finishes with a short explanation, saying that:

It is because of that there was a pact [made] between the Mac ind Óc and Ailill and Medb. It is for that reason that Óengus went with 3,000 to Ailill and Medb to drive the cattle out of Cooley.[[47]](#footnote-47)

There is only one surviving manuscript witness to *Aislinge Óenguso*, i.e. British Library MS Egerton 1782 ff. 70r22-71v10 (1516-1518).[[48]](#footnote-48) According to Francis Shaw, the existence of another manuscript containing *AOe* can be deduced from the presence of a phrase deriving from the text in the seventeenth century *O’Clery’s Glossary*, a claim which gets refuted by Christina Cleary in her 2018 PhD thesis.[[49]](#footnote-49) MS Egerton 1782 contains various Old Irish sagas, and was mostly written in 1517 by several scribes of the Ó Maoilchonaire family.[[50]](#footnote-50) The text of *Aislinge Óenguso* was copied by the chief scribe, a son of Seán mac Torna Uí Mahoilchonaire.[[51]](#footnote-51)On the basis of this manuscript various 18th- and 19th-century (modern) handwritten transcriptions have been made.[[52]](#footnote-52) The text appears between *Tochmarc Ferbe* and *Echtrae Nerai*, both of which involve the courting of (otherworldly) women.[[53]](#footnote-53) Its placement between similarly themed texts suggests that the Uí Mhaoil Chonaire scribes deliberately arranged the material in a certain order, something which is reflected throughout the clustering of tales such as *remscéla* in the section of the manuscript.[[54]](#footnote-54)

The agreed upon date of composition of the tale is the 8th century.[[55]](#footnote-55) According to Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, the linguistic evidence of the text suggests that *Aislinge Óenguso* was composed in the eighth century.[[56]](#footnote-56) Thurneysen first estimated the date-range between the 9th and 10th century, but later pushed it back to the 8th century according to Shaw and, subsequently, James Carney.[[57]](#footnote-57) The language found in the text is a mixture of Old Irish orthography and certain phonological and morphological Middle and Early Modern Irish features that belong to the Old Irish period.[[58]](#footnote-58) On the basis of orthographical, phonological, and morphological evidence, Catharine Cleary supports the posited date of composition for the text.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Over the years, various editions of *Aislinge Óenguso* have been published. This thesis uses the most recently published edition and translation into English, i.e. Christina Cleary’s edition.[[60]](#footnote-60)

### Breudwyt Maxen Wledic

*BMW* (‘The Dream of Emperor Maxen’) depicts a part of the life of Magnus Maximus, a Roman emperor from Spain who was declared emperor in the Western Roman Empire in 383 A.D..[[61]](#footnote-61) Contained in The Red Book of Hergest, *BMW* is one of two *breuddwyd* texts. Francesco Benozzo summarizes the tale as follows:[[62]](#footnote-62)

The emperor of Rome falls asleep while out hunting; in a dream he sees a beautiful princess, with whom he falls in love; he sends messengers to find her, which they do in Caernarfon; he comes to Wales and marries her. Later, he uses troops withdrawn from Britain to win his empire back from usurpers.

The tale is found in three medieval manuscripts.[[63]](#footnote-63) The earliest manuscript witness is National Library of Wales (NLW) MS Peniarth 16 (second half of the 13th century) fols. 40v-45v, which is incomplete, as it breaks off at the point of Maxen’s return to Rome.[[64]](#footnote-64) Another incomplete version of the tale appears in NLW MS Peniarth 4 (also known together with NLW Peniarth 5 as *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*, ‘The White Book of Rhydderch’ or simply The White Book, mid-14th century), fols 45r-48r/cols 178-191.[[65]](#footnote-65) The third manuscript witness and earliest complete copy is found in Oxford, Jesus College MS 111 (also known as *Llyfr Coch Hergest*, ‘The Red Book of Hergest’ or The Red Book, dated ca. 1382-1405), fols 172r-174r/cols. 697-705.[[66]](#footnote-66) The Red Book starts the text: *Llyma vreid6yt maxen wledic*.[[67]](#footnote-67) The colophon mentions the title once more: *A’r chwedyl hon a elwir Breudwyt Maxen Wledic, amherawdyr Rufein. Ac yma y mae teruyn arnaw,* which Davies translates as ‘And this tale is called The Dream of Maxen Wledig, emperor of Rome. And here it ends’.[[68]](#footnote-68)

The consensus is that the tale as we know it was composed (or rather, finalized) in the second half of the twelfth century (or ‘late’ twelfth century).[[69]](#footnote-69) However, Brynley F. Roberts notes that an earlier composition date could be possible if the author was motivated by particular circumstances or objectives, e.g. the political situation in Gwynedd at that time.[[70]](#footnote-70) He states that: ‘The Maxen legend, from being an expression of Romano-Welsh continuity, has been used as a contemporary declaration of the long-standing Gwynedd policy of Welsh hegemony’.[[71]](#footnote-71) Retelling the tale could then justify claims made by the Gwynedd court that it held power over the other Welsh rulers.[[72]](#footnote-72) Ben Guy supports the idea of an earlier composition date, quoting Sir Ifor Williams and Rachel Bromwich and writing that the ‘traditional’ subject matter and its divergence from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Maxen narrative point towards an older tradition that probably took shape before 1135.[[73]](#footnote-73)

The scholarly attention *BMW* has received has mainly been focused on the historical context of the tale.[[74]](#footnote-74) It has not been studied extensively, but has been edited and published twice: Ifor Williams made a Welsh edition of the text in 1908, and the text was also edited by George W. Brewer in 1965, although this edition in his Master’s thesis remains unpublished.[[75]](#footnote-75) In 2005, an English edition of the tale by Brynley Roberts was published.[[76]](#footnote-76) This is the edition used in this thesis, together with Sioned Davies’s translation.[[77]](#footnote-77)

### Breuddwyd Rhonabwy

The second of two *breuddwyd* texts is *BRh*. The tale can be summarized as follows: Rhonabwy, a soldier without neither patronym nor place of origin, who is looking for Iorwerth ap Maredudd, a historical figure, on behalf of his brother Madog, who ruled over Powys from 1130 to 1160.[[78]](#footnote-78) When seeking lodgings for the night, Rhonabwy and his followers come upon the house of Heilyn Goch. The quarters are uncomfortable, cold, and flea-ridden, so much so that Rhonabwy decides to lie down on a yellow ox-skin on the dais at one end of the house. The text explicitly states that good luck would befall whichever one of them got to lie on that skin. Rhonabwy falls asleep on the skin and is granted a *drych* (‘vision’), the titular dream. In his dream, he is transported into the Arthurian world, leaving the twelfth century of Madog ap Maredudd behind. This Arthurian world, however, is still rooted in Powys. Here, Rhonabwy meets Iddawg Cordd Prydain, who guides him through this dream-vision, explaining who everyone is and briefly commenting on what is happening. Iddawg leads Rhonabwy to Arthur’s encampment where troops are arriving for battle. Arthur and Owain ab Urien are engaged in a game of *gwyddbwyll*, something which according to Loomis could allude to faerie or supernatural elements.[[79]](#footnote-79) During the game various messengers report that Arthur’s men are attacking Owain’s ravens, repeatedly asking Arthur to call them off. Despite Owain’s protests, Arthur does not stop them. Then Owain orders for the raising of his standard, and his ravens start to attack Arthur’s men, picking them and their horses up and letting them fall to their deaths. The messengers now ask Owain to call his ravens off, but he does not listen. Finally, without any proper battle taking place, a truce is called by Arthur crushing the gold pieces on the board. Bards chant praise, tribute from Greece is brought by weary drivers and their donkeys. Arthur’s followers, who then are extensively listed, are told to assemble in Cornwall. Rhonabwy is awoken by the commotion of the announcement, finding out he has slept for three days and three nights, and of Rhonabwy’s search for Iorwerth ap Maredudd is never spoken again. The tale closes with a colophon stating that none can know the story without a book, because it contains elaborate descriptions of horses, arms, trappings, mantles, and magic stones.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Although the text is usually grouped together with the *Mabinogion* group, the text itself is only preserved The Red Book(1382-1402), and not in The White Book (late 14th cent.).[[81]](#footnote-81) The text is found in fols. 134v-138v/cols. 555.10-571, and has no fragments surviving in any other manuscript.[[82]](#footnote-82) It has been assumed in the past that the tale was once also included in the White Book in a now missing section. In his edition, Melville Richards cites J. Gwenogvryn Evans and Ifor Williams, perpetuating the view that the tale might have been among the other texts of the White Book.[[83]](#footnote-83) Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones state in the introduction to their Everyman translation of *The Mabinogion* that ‘Lady Guest’s title was really a misnomer [...] but it has been proven so convenient [...] and is now so well-established in use, that it would be the sheerest pedantry to replace it with a clumsier if more correct alternative’.[[84]](#footnote-84) Sioned Davies emphasizes that ‘the term Mabinogion is no more than a label, and a modern-day one at that: the stories vary as regards date, authorship, content, structure and style’, yet still includes *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.[[85]](#footnote-85) However, there is no manuscript evidence suggesting the inclusion of the text in the White Book.[[86]](#footnote-86) Within the Red Book the text is paired with other prophetic and dream texts rather than the other ten tales of the Mabinogion, surrounded by texts such as *Chwedleu Seith Doethon Rufein* (a version of the Latin collection of tales of the Seven Sages of Rome)and *Breuddwyd Sibli Ddoeth* (a text about a Roman emperor identified as Diocletian), both which contain dreams, amongst others.[[87]](#footnote-87) This implies that the text was considered as part of the same category of literature as the surrounding texts, i.e. vision texts and prophetic dreams, rather than the Mabinogion texts.

The date of composition is debated amongst scholars, but is nowadays agreed to be in the 12th to 14th century.[[88]](#footnote-88) Thomas Charles-Edwards and Eric Hamp argue that Madog ap Maredudd is satirized in the tale, and thus the text must have been written in either his last years or soon after his death, which would be around 1160.[[89]](#footnote-89) This then has been debated by Proinsias Mac Cana and Egar M. Slotkin.[[90]](#footnote-90) Breeze, considering the text to be of a satiric nature, argues that ‘much classic satire is set in the past to attack the present [...]. The case for dating *The Dream of Rhonabwy* to about 1160 is further weakened if the *Four Branches* date from the late 1120s’.[[91]](#footnote-91) He then explains that the collection of the *Four Branches,* which stretches 92 pages,contains three French loanwords, while the 21 of the *Dream of Rhonabwy* contain about a dozen, meaning that the sole tale contains about eighteen times mor loans than the whole of the *Four Branches*. [[92]](#footnote-92) A thirty-year gap hardly allows for such an increase, and thus, Breeze concludes, the tale is best dated to the late twelfth century, or the early thirteenth.[[93]](#footnote-93) Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan states that based on the errors found in the Red Book text of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, the scribe was working from a written source composed by a single author, thus implying the composition of the tale pre-dates the composition of the Red Book ca. 1382-1402.[[94]](#footnote-94) Mary E. Giffin places it about 1300 on the basis of the descriptions of the horses and arms.[[95]](#footnote-95) Its dating, thus, is between the 12th and 14th century.

*BRh* has received a plethora of scholarly attention.[[96]](#footnote-96) However, the only edition of this text made by Melville Richards was published in 1948, and this edition, in combination with the translation made by Sioned Davies, will be used in this thesis.[[97]](#footnote-97)

### Aislinge Meic Con Glinne

The second Irish text discussed in this thesis is *AMC.*[[98]](#footnote-98)The text revolves around an Irish monk called Aniér MacConglinne, who satirizes the monks of Cork for their failure to rightfully treat him as a guest, and Cathal mac Finguine, the king of Munster. Cathal mac Finguine was a historic king who ruled from 721 to 742 CE, who tried to limit the Uí Néill to its own territories in the northern half of the country (Leth Cuinn).[[99]](#footnote-99) The story opens with a scene describing Cathal’s love for Lígach, a woman he’d wished to marry. By eating cursed apples, supposedly sent by Lígach (in actuality cursed and given by Lígach’s brother Fergal, as Fergal and Cathal were in contention for the kingship of Ireland), Cathal ingests a demon of gluttony. As a result of this, Cathal eats enormous amounts of food, subsequently devouring his kingdom. Meanwhile, Aniér MacConglinne, who is a trained monastic scholar, decides to give up his studies in order to become a poet. He decides to seek out Cathal mac Finguine, as Cathal is supposed to be generous to poets. MacConglinne walks across Ireland, from Roscommon to Cork, in one day, and stops at the guesthouse of Cork’s monastery. Because the hospitality he receives is substandard, he decides to satirize what he was given in verse. In return, the abbot of the monastery, Manchín, decides that the only proper punishment is putting MacConglinne to death. MacConglinne is stripped, whipped, and nearly drowned, after which he is locked in the guesthouse. Through ruses and legal manoeuvrings MacConglinne delays his sentence until the evening, gaining a respite overnight.

That night, an angel appears and gives him a vision, which he recounts to Manchín the next morning. The vision starts with a genealogy of food, and tells of a land made of food, and thus Manchín realizes that MacConglinne has to be sent to cure Cathal mac Finguine of his demon. MacConglinne is released under the condition that he will seek out Cathal, and MacConglinne demands Manchín’s cloak as payment for his services. He travels to Cathal, who is making a circuit of his subject kings who then are obliged to provide him with a number of feasts a year. He resides in Pichán mac Moíle Finde’s house, eating bushels of apples. MacConglinne makes Cathal share the apples with him, and then requests a boon, i.e. that Cathal will fast with him overnight. The next day, MacConglinne does not allow Cathal to eat until the preaching is done, which is how the fast lasts the entire day. MacConglinne makes the king fast for the second night, and orders Pichán to bring his most savory meats the following day. These meats are cooked in front of Cathal, who is at this point bound. As the food is cooking, MacConglinne recites two visions, driving the demon of gluttony out of Cathal. The demon is captured by a cooking vat, and although the demon actually escapes from the vessel, MacConglinne reaps many rewards for saving Cathal mac Finguine and his entire kingdom from what would have ended in a famine.

There are two extant versions of the text; one found in the early fifteenth century Royal Irish Academy MS 1230 (B; better known as the *Leabhar Breac*, “Speckled Book’, finished ca. 1411), the other in Trinity College Dublin as MS 1337 or H.3.18 TCD (H; sixteenth to seventeenth century).[[100]](#footnote-100) The *Leabhar Breac* is a compilation manuscript which almost entirely consists of ecclesiastical material.[[101]](#footnote-101) The H-version is preserved amongst legal material, which is interesting, as the text does revolve around a conflict that is, in some sense, legal in nature.[[102]](#footnote-102) Aniér Mac Conglinne is judged and punished for his satirizing of the monks of Cork, and then spends part of the narrative avoiding his punishment. However, to a modern audience, this text might not read as a text with overtly legal implications or discussions, and so the placement of the H-version might seem curious. Still, its placement within the manuscript implies that to the medieval audience the text had a legal context.

Both B and H are written in Middle Irish. Kuno Meyer, citing the text’s allusion to tithes, dates *AMC* to the end of the twelfth century. In his edition, Kenneth H. Jackson refutes this, stating that ‘his opinion on the date of its language is not supported by evidence [...] The fact is that the claim to the payment of tithes was well established in Ireland from at least the 7th century’.[[103]](#footnote-103) He estimates the language of the B version to belong to the Intermediate Middle Irish Period and the early Late Middle Irish period, *viz.* ‘if an approximate AD date is to be hazarded, somewhere in the last quarter of the 11th century’.[[104]](#footnote-104) M. Dillon dates the composition of the text to the twelfth century, but believes to be constructed upon an earlier original.[[105]](#footnote-105) Gerard Murphy agrees with the twelfth-century dating for both extant versions, and A. Harrison claims it was written ‘probably in the eleventh century’.[[106]](#footnote-106) According to Henry A. Jefferies, it is generally agreed upon that the surviving recensions were composed in the latter half of the transitional stage between the Old Irish and Early Modern Irish period, ca. 900 to c. 1200. The definition of a closer date is complicated, as there are only six extant Middle Irish texts of sufficient length, and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* survives in composites.[[107]](#footnote-107) The date given above of the last quarter of the eleventh century is too early according to Jefferies, ‘since his dating of Recension B of *Aislinge* depended on the provisional and disputed dates assigned to other Middle Irish texts, Jackson’s date for *Aislinge* must itself be considered provisional and open to question’.[[108]](#footnote-108) While Vernam Hull is mindful of the composite nature of the surviving recensions, he still bases his dating on presumed relationships with other text of which the dates are uncertain and disputed.[[109]](#footnote-109) Its dating thus is debated, although is generally agreed upon that the revisions derive (directly or indirectly) from a common ancestor tale, X.[[110]](#footnote-110) Jefferies concludes that H is thought to have been written around the same time as Recension B, and that the original *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* may have been composed in the early twelfth or late eleventh century.[[111]](#footnote-111) As discussed above, the date of composition of the text is generally placed between the late eleventh and twelfth century, which I adhere to in this thesis.

The *Leabhar Breac* version has been edited twice and translated a few more times.[[112]](#footnote-112) For this thesis, Kenneth H. Jackson’s edition is used, in combination with a republished edition of the Meyer’s translation.[[113]](#footnote-113)

## Terminology

As this thesis sets out to discover whether or not *aisling* and *breuddwyd* texts approach themes commonly found in medieval (dream-) vision literature in a similar fashion, I will now expand on the terminology used to approach and discuss this subject. First, the terms ‘dream’, ‘vision’, and ‘dream-vision’ will be explained, as they are the most important terms in regards to the subject matter. The vocabulary used for these concepts in the medieval Insular world are then discussed, so that the terminology in the vernacular can be identified and recognised, which will aid my analysis. Thereafter I will expand on the terms used to describe the concept of dreams and dreamscapes as a separate entity or space from non-dream spaces, i.e. primary and secondary worlds. After these terms are known, I will use them to discuss the concept of liminality and its application to this thesis, as they help conceptualize the term. Together, this terminology forms the basis for the analysis of my four primary texts.[[114]](#footnote-114)

### Dreams, Visions, and Dream Visions

The most important terms used in this thesis are ‘dream’, ‘vision’, and ‘dream-vision’. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the following definition for the word ‘dream’:[[115]](#footnote-115)

**1.** **a.** A series of images, thoughts, and emotions, often with a story-like quality, generated by mental activity during sleep; the state in which this occurs. Also: a prophetic or supernatural vision experienced when either awake or asleep.

**b.** A person seen in a dream or vision; an apparition.

According to this definition, a ‘dream’ can also denote a waking vision, indicating that the concept of dreams and visions cannot easily be separated. To come to a more precise definition of ‘dream’, then, ‘vision’ now will be examined.

The term ‘vision’ derives from the Latin *uisio*, defined as “the act or sense of seeing, sight, vision; a thing seen, an appearance, apparition, a vision; an image of a thing in the mind; an idea, conception, notion’.[[116]](#footnote-116) In the basis, a vision is something which is seen but is not tangible. The Oxford English Dictionary gives the following definition:[[117]](#footnote-117)

**1. a.** Something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight; *esp.* an appearance of a prophetic or mystical character, or having the nature of a revelation, supernaturally presented to the mind either in sleep or in an abnormal state.

Here, too, it is apparent that the concepts of ‘dream’ and ‘vision’ are inherently connected. It is implied that a vision is not a natural occurrence or a naturally induced experience, but rather a supernatural phenomenon. The secondary definition of the word confirms this; ‘The action or fact of seeing or contemplating something not actually present to the eye; mystical or supernatural insight or foresight’.[[118]](#footnote-118) The main difference between the two is the nature of the experience: whereas dreams consist of a series of images, thoughts, and emotions, visions contain information that is often prophetic or revelatory in nature, presented in a supernatural manner.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will use the term ‘dream’ to denote the series of thoughts, images, and/or events experienced in a sleeping state. In order to make a clear distinction between the two terms, dreams are always experienced when asleep, and visions are experienced in a waking, albeit possibly entranced, state. The term ‘vision’ then will be used to indicate a sight of a prophetic or revelatory nature that is induced and/or presented supernaturally to the person experiencing it. This sight encroaches information, possibly of the future, of importance and/or relevance to the individual or their community. For a ‘dream-vision’, the Oxford English Dictionary gives a concise definition:[[119]](#footnote-119)

**1.** The action or fact of seeing someone or something in a dream, esp. as a form of prophesy. Also (now chiefly): an instance of this; a vision experienced in a dream.

A ‘dream-vision’, then, is a vision, i.e. something of a prophetic or revelatory nature, experienced while asleep.

### Medieval Insular Vocabulary surrounding Dreams and Dreaming

As general modern terminology has been established, we will now examine the terms used in medieval texts in order to understand the vocabulary used by our corpus texts. The vocabulary surrounding dreams in the medieval Insular world is varied. The Middle Welsh language contains several terms related to dreams and sleep, of which *breuddwyd*, simply meaning ‘dream’ was most commonly used.[[120]](#footnote-120) Its etymology is unclear, first appearing in a poem in Peniarth MS 1 (the Book of Taliesin, dated ca. 1250), and later more commonly spelt as *breudwyt*.[[121]](#footnote-121) As Zhao points out, the expression describing the experience of having a dream in Middle Welsh is *gweld breuddwyd* (‘to see a dream’), which was probably an idiomatic use of the language, yet implying that in the context of medieval Welsh, the dream may have been regarded primarily as a visual experience.[[122]](#footnote-122) For example, the dream in *BMW* is described as follows: *ac ena e gwelei vreudwyt. Sef breuduyt a welei* [...], translated by Zhao as ‘Then he saw a dream. The dream that he saw was [...]’.[[123]](#footnote-123) Davies translates the same sentence as follows: ‘And then he had a dream. This was his dream [...]’.[[124]](#footnote-124) Davies' translation is less literal, while Zhao emphasizes the visual aspect of dreaming by translating *e gwelei vreudwyt* as ‘[...] he saw a dream [...]’. Zhao suggests that in most medieval Welsh dream narratives, dreams occur during the night, and always when the dreamer is asleep.[[125]](#footnote-125) The connection between dreaming and seeing, according to Zhao, is affirmed by the appearance of the verbs *gweld* (‘to see’) in combination with *nos* (‘night’) and *huno* (‘to sleep’) alongside *breuddwydio* (‘to dream’) and *golwg* (‘vision’) in the poem *I Syr Hywel y Fwyall* dated 1377-1381.[[126]](#footnote-126) While this is an interesting notion, this is not particularly visible within the texts within this thesis.As Zhao and Catherine McKenna note, *BRh* forms an exception, as it uses the term *drych* rather than *breuddwyd* to describe the dream, despite being entitled *breud6yt ronab6y*, with its title repeated in the colophon: *a’r ystorya honn a elwir Breidwyt Ronabwy* (‘and this story is called Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’).[[127]](#footnote-127)

The vocabulary surrounding dreams and dreaming in Old and Middle Irish, however, is somewhat more nuanced. *Aislinge* (lit. ‘dream’)would be a logical choice for a title concerning a dream narrative. However, *aislinge* could mean both ‘dream’ and ‘vision’.[[128]](#footnote-128) As a result, the term was often used interchangeably with *fís* (‘vision’, from the Latin *visio*) and *baile* (‘vision, frenzy’).[[129]](#footnote-129) *Fís*, *baile,* and *aisling* all could be used as a term to describe the same type of text. This is demonstrated in the medieval Irish Tale Lists, which provide a large catalogue of *scéla* (tales) ordered under a series of headings.[[130]](#footnote-130) In the lists, the texts are classified by the first word of their title. There are three surviving versions of the lists, referred to as A, B, and C, the latter of which consists of two short lists that go back to a common ancestor that may possibly be dated to the tenth century.[[131]](#footnote-131) The introductory text to list A distinguishes between *prímscéla* (‘major tales’) and *fo-scéla* (‘minor tales’), of which *fisi* were part of the former group.[[132]](#footnote-132) The oldest extant copy of list A is preserved in the Book of Leinster, which is dated to the twelfth century. List B is included in *Airec Menman Uraird meic Coise*, surviving in three manuscript copies all from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. In addition to the *prímscéla* and *fo-scéla*, this list introduces *gnáthscéla* (‘well-known tales’) which mostly consist of titles from the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* and *rémscela* (‘foretales’) to the *Táin.*[[133]](#footnote-133) *Aislinge Óenguso* appears in the D list of *remscéla* as both *Don tSeirc ro car Mac ind Ócc Chaíre Ebarbaithe* (‘Regarding the Love with which the Mac ind Ócc loved Cáer Ebarbaith’) and *De Aislingiu Óengusa maic in Dagdai* (‘Regarding the Dream of Óengus, son of the Dagdae’).[[134]](#footnote-134) *Físi* (‘visions’) are listed in the appendix of both list A and B. Interestingly, the texts referred to are mostly preserved under the term or title *baile* (‘vision, frenzy, madness’), which simply was another term for *fís* (‘vision’).[[135]](#footnote-135) As stated before, *aislinge, baile,* and *fís* were often used interchangably. This is reflected in the appearance of *Do Aislingthi Conchobair* in the Book of Leinster and Egerton 1782, but in recension B (and A) of the tale lists as *Fís Conchobair* and *Compert Con Culainn.*[[136]](#footnote-136) Another example is *Aislingthi Adamnáin*, which was recorded as an alternative title for *Fís Adomnáin*, a tenth- or eleventh-century narrative which recounts abbot Adomnán having a vision in which he visits heaven and hell.[[137]](#footnote-137) Volmering, when discussing the possibility of the titular *fís* being used as a term of reference for visions of the afterlife, discusses the implications of this interchangeable use, and writes that:

‘The inclusion of a category *físi* in the tale lists would, taken at face value, appear to confirm the usage of the title *fís.* But the uncertainty of the date at which they might have been included [...] means that they indicate no more than that *fís* was sufficiently familiar as a ‘tale-topic’ by the tenth century at the earliest [...]. The substitution of *fís* for texts otherwise known as *baili,* moreover, casts doubt on the reliability of the list for the usage of the title *fís,* especially in the light of absence of evidence from the visions that point to an affiliation with the genre *baile*’*.*[[138]](#footnote-138)

This is to say that the titles included in the tale-lists might not always be as reliable as expected, but the lists themselves still tell us about the importance of certain topics and categories, which is then captured by the listed texts.The tale-lists themselves thus are a useful tool in terms of genre and categorization, as they reflect contemporary enumeration and categorization.[[139]](#footnote-139) Moreover, they show the interchangeable use of the terms *aislinge, baile* and *fís*. The translation of each of these terms, then, is usually decided upon with reference to the context in which they appear.[[140]](#footnote-140)

As *aislinge* could mean both ‘dream’ and ‘vision’, the question remains when which meaning is used, and what the nuance between the two distinctions is. As stated above, the main difference between a ‘dream’ and ‘vision’ as used in this thesis is the state in which it is experienced: asleep or awake.[[141]](#footnote-141) Looking at the context in which the term *aislinge* appears, it seems to have an inherent association with sleep, although its use within medieval texts does not necessarily dictate that the recipient of the *aislinge* needs to be sleeping. For example, *AMC* features an *aislinge* that is experienced under circumstances that neither confirm nor deny MacConglinne being asleep.[[142]](#footnote-142) On the other hand, as Volmering writes, the anchorite in *Bithbin Menadaige* (‘The Monastery of Tallaght’, composed ca. 831-840) receives an *aislingi coildnidi* that clearly is a dream he received while he is asleep, and *AOe* explicitly states that Óengus was asleep, even though the text does not name what he sees as a vision or a dream.[[143]](#footnote-143) The vision in *Cáin Domnaig* (‘The Law of Sunday’, ca. first half of the eight century)in which the Sunday Letter was revealed to a sleeping priest (*con-tuil in clérech*) is found as follows: *danarfaid in nóeb i n-aslingiu don’t saccart nobíd frisin altóir.*[[144]](#footnote-144) The same text refers to the Apocalypse of John as *in aslingthi n-adamrai 7 in fís nóemda*, translated by J.G. O’Keeffe as ‘the wonderful vision and the heavenly revelation’, although an alternative translation, according to Volmering, could be ‘the wonderful dream and the heavenly vision’.[[145]](#footnote-145) However, as Volmering notes, the same passage omits *i n-aslingiu* in two other manuscript copies, reading *Adconnc̅ Joh̅ mac Stepedie an fís apocolipsis na run* (cf. ‘visions of the Apocolypse’) instead.[[146]](#footnote-146) This, combined with the fact that there is no indication of John being asleep in Revelations 1:10, suggests that *aslingthi,* in this context, was used or intended as an equivalent to *fís*. However, this is not the only time the terms are used in conjunction. Volmering mentions the Passion of Silvester in *B*, where the terms are combined:[[147]](#footnote-147)

*in adaig-sin din ro-saerait na maccu endga o bas, atchonnairc in rí aslinge 7 fís in oidche-sin* (l.413)  
‘On the very night these innocent children were saved from death, the king beheld a vision in a dream’.

*tadbas Petar apstal do Siluestar hi fhis aislinge* (l. 348)

‘The apostle Peter appeared to Sylvester in a vision by dream’.

Both of these examples indicate the experiencing of a dream-vision. Even though the constructions are different (*asilinge 7 fís in oidche-sin* ‘a vision in a dream’ vs. *hi fhis aislinge* ‘vision by dream’), R. Atkinson has translated them in such manner that they convey the same meaning.[[148]](#footnote-148) However, *atchonnairc in rí aslinge 7 fís in oidche-sin* would be more accurately translated as ‘the king saw a dream and a vision that night’.[[149]](#footnote-149) Still, this indicates that the visionary experience was embedded in a dream, and thus a clear distinction between the two terms is made, even if the appearance of them together may indicate the experience of a dream-vision, something succinctly distinct from being solely a dream or a vision. Similarly, the terms being used alongside each other found embedded in ‘Nía son of Lugna Fer Trí’(ca. 14th/15th c.)in *Aislinge Cormaic* (‘Cormac’s Dream’)also indicate the experience of a dream-vision:[[150]](#footnote-150)

*Baí Cormac in araili aidhchi ann in[a] c[h]otlud co faca fís 7 aislingi .i. Eocho Gunnat dar leis do t[h]iachtain cu Temraig 7 corthi na ngiall do thōcbāil dō a Temraig sechtair 7 a brith cu Cruachain 7 a sādud dó a Raith Cruachan.*

‘One night as Cormac slept he saw a vision and a dream: Eochu Gunnat seemed to him to come to Tara and lift the captives’ pillar out of and beyond Tara and to bring it to Cruachu and to set it in the fort of Cruachu’

After he sees more glimpses of the future, it is written:[[151]](#footnote-151)

*Ēirgis in rí gu huathbāsach 7 do-berthar a druídi 7 a f[h]isidi c[h]uci 7 innisid in n-aslingi dóib .i. Melchend druí 7 Óengus mac Bolcadāin 7 Allbi mac Delind 7 Fīthal; fili 7 brethem Cormaic ēisside. Do-c[h]uatar iarum in lucht sein i mmuinigin a fesa 7 do rāidsit ris breith na n-aislingi.*

‘The king rose in terror, and his druids and wise men are brought to him and he tells them the dream. Those people then had recourse to their knowledge and recounted to him the solution of the dreams’.

The above-given examples indicate that although there was an overlap in use between the terms *fís* and *aislinge*, they could also be used alongside each other to indicate another visionary experience, *viz*. that of a dream-vision, or perhaps to emphasize the event. The juxtaposing of synonyms to provide emphasis is something that can be seen in various texts, one of which is the Bible, that repeatedly juxtaposes the words *uisio* and *somnium*, even if they appear to have been regarded as synonyms.[[152]](#footnote-152) As with the use of the terms, the intent of the usage of both terms alongside each other might be derived from context. The samples discussed as given by both Volmering and myself, however, seem to indicate that *fís* as a term has been used to denote mostly religious and supernatural experiences, close to the Latin *uisio* of which it was derived, while *aislinge* covers a wider variety of visionary, and specifically dream-like, experiences. Adding to that, Volmering notes that the verbs commonly used with *fís* and *aislinge* are *ad-cí* (‘to see’)and *do-adbat* (‘shows, displays’), meaning that ‘the notion of a revelatory dream is not exclusive to the usage of *fís*’.[[153]](#footnote-153) Apart from that, the title‘*aislinge*’ is not used for eschatological visions, as opposed to *fís*, until the early modern period. Volmering states that this then supports the idea that *fís* was most likely associated with the Latin *uisio* in semantic, taxonomic, and etymological terms.[[154]](#footnote-154)

In conclusion, while Middle Welsh has a relatively fixed vocabulary surrounding dreams and dreaming, the Middle Irish vocabulary contains more variety. The terms *aislinge, fís,* and *baile* were used interchangably, but whereas *fís* was used for eschatological visions, *aislinge* was not, Both Welsh and Irish pair verbs denoting sight or a visual experience, i.e. *gweld* or *ad-cí* and *do-adbat,* with the nouns for dreams. Zhao proposes that this implies that dreaming was seen as an inherent visual experience, which is an implication worth considering: as can be seen in my analysis, most medieval Insular narratives describe the dream and dreamscapes in detail, thus supporting this.

### Primary and Secondary Worlds

In this thesis, dreams, dream-visions, and dreamscapes, i.e. the (meta)physical space the contents of a dream take or embody, are considered separate from the non-dreamscape, i.e. the space the characters reside in and inhabit. This idea is linked to world-building, and the concept of dreams as world-building as proposed by Zhao. This concept considers literary dreams a part of the world-building done within a narrative: it functions as a narrative tool.[[155]](#footnote-155)

In order to denote the differences between the dreamscapes and non-dreamscapes, this thesis uses the terms ‘primary world’ and ‘secondary world’ as coined by J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay ‘On Fairy-Stories’.[[156]](#footnote-156) For Tolkien, the phrase ‘primary world’ denotes the world we inhabit as represented in literature. A ‘secondary world’ is a fictional world created by human imagination, in which objects and events that are impossible in the ‘primary world’ can exist and take place.[[157]](#footnote-157) Mark J.P. Wolf uses these terms in his discussion of ‘imaginary worlds’ in terms of contemporary theoretical reflections on world-building.[[158]](#footnote-158) The term ‘imaginary world’ is a somewhat broader term for the same phenomenon as e.g. ‘secondary world’ or ‘otherworld’.[[159]](#footnote-159) In this thesis, I will use the term ‘primary world’ to denote the material world as inhabited by the characters in the narratives, i.e. the world we inhabit as presented in literature, and ‘secondary world’ to denote the ‘dreamscape’, i.e. the world as dreamt by the characters, created by human imagination, in which objects and events that are impossible in the primary world can exist and take place. This ‘dreamscape’ may exist in an in-between, as I will expand on below.

*The Concept of Liminality*

When considering the primary and secondary worlds in medieval Insular dream narratives, it is interesting to think about to what extent they are both experienced and believed to be real. One way to approach such existence of a secondary world is through the concept of liminality. This proposes that a secondary world, as opposed to the primary world, exists between states, e.g. of existence, temporality, or spatiality. The term ‘liminality’ is also often used to describe the experience of having a vision or dream-vision when discussing vision and dream-vision literature. I will now briefly expand on the origins and applications of ‘liminality’, together with its relevance to this thesis, as it will be used to discuss characteristics found in medieval Insular vernacular dream-narratives.

Liminality is a concept which originated in the field of anthropology. In 1909, ethnologist Arnold Van Gennep recognized the existence of the phenomenon liminality in his book *Les Rites de Passage.*[[160]](#footnote-160) In this book, he discussed ‘the liminal phase’ (from Latin *limes* ‘border, threshold’, or *limen* ‘boundary, limit’) through which boys in various cultures had to pass in order to become men.[[161]](#footnote-161) He noted the physical aspects of this phase, beginning his study with rituals marking travels across the border, and observed that an understanding of them would provide the groundwork towards comprehending the rites of passage as a whole.[[162]](#footnote-162) The construct of liminality then refers to the idea of a self in the condition of a transition between.[[163]](#footnote-163) After Arnold Van Gennep came anthropologist Victor Turner, who re-introduced the concept of liminality.[[164]](#footnote-164) For Turner ‘liminality’ was the state and process of being mid-transition, or ‘beyond usual categories’, and subsequently creates and defines its own category of ‘in between-ness’.[[165]](#footnote-165) Since the introduction of the concept by Van Gennep and the popularization by Turner, liminality has been expanded and applied to various other theories and studies.[[166]](#footnote-166) The construction of a general model of liminality then perhaps is something one should not wish upon themselves; however, the concept might still be used as a ‘toolbox’ to denounce the state of being mid-transition or between states, applicable to all types of studies.[[167]](#footnote-167)

The concept of liminality is a multifaceted one. It has clear connotations with marginality and margins, both sociocultural and geographical.[[168]](#footnote-168) Broadly speaking, it is applicable to both space, time, types of objects; moments or longer periods can be considered liminal, and places such as thresholds, together with individuals, groups, or societies can be too.[[169]](#footnote-169) According to Bjørn Thomassen, each of these groups (i.e. space, time, and types of objects) can be divided into three different types. These are:[[170]](#footnote-170)

* Types of subjects experiencing liminality: single individuals, social groups, and whole societies or populations, i.e. personal liminality or the state of being between separate categories of identity;
* Temporal dimensions of liminality relating to: moments (sudden events), periods (weeks, months, etc.), and epochs (decades, generations, etc.), i.e. temporal liminality or the state of being between separate categories of time;
* Spatial dimensions of liminality concerning: specific thresholds, areas or zones (border areas, monasteries, etc.), and countries or larger regions, continents; i.e. spatial liminality or the state of being between separate categories of space.

Of these, temporal and spatial liminality are especially useful in discussing the ‘dreamscape’.[[171]](#footnote-171) Applied to spaces, the concept of liminality brings about interesting ideas about secondary worlds. The word ‘space’ in this context should be defined as something different than simply a ‘place’. A *place* is a physical location, e.g. a church, while a *space* is characterized by its function, and thus produced by its use. Liminal spaces are marked by their function as an ‘in-between’, and therefore can be juxtaposing. Liminal spaces are like what Foucault termed ‘heterotopias’; real, existing spaces which simultaneously represent, contest, and invert all other spaces that exist in a society.[[172]](#footnote-172) Because this concept contains multitudes, heterotopias are capable of juxtaposing two or more other spaces that are otherwise incompatible. If a space is liminal, it thus means that it does not have to consist of an existing, physical location, but can be used to describe the non-specific concept of a place, akin to a heterotopia, or as discussed above, a secondary world. Liminal spaces are transformative because they are a place of transition between two other spaces.[[173]](#footnote-173)

Within this thesis, the concept of liminality is used to discuss the liminal characteristics found in medieval Insular vernacular dream-narratives. This includes both the state of dreaming and the supernatural encounters which could take the form of knowledge gained. The ‘liminal’ will be used to describe the state of being in between separate categories of space, time, or identity.[[174]](#footnote-174) Central to this concept is the idea of dreams as ‘a space between’ where various actions and interactions take place that further the narrative.The dreamscape is considered a liminal secondary world, as opposed to the primary world in which the characters usually reside.

The terminology established in this chapter provides the base language used for the analysis of *Aislinge Óenguso, Breudwyt Maxen Wledic, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy,* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*. This comparative analysis will be done on the basis of the generic methodology that I have expanded on above, which considers genre as a category of texts with distinctive features, such as themes. In order to comprehend the medieval Insular dream narratives and their themes, I will first explore medieval thought about dreaming, and how it might be reflected on the corpus. By providing the historical context, the shape these themes and narratives take can be better understood. This will then be used to discuss themes central to (dream-) vision literature as found in the Middle Ages, and will accumulate in the thematic analysis of my corpus. This analysis will provide an overview of shared themes, of which the results can be found in the third chapter.

# I: Historical Context

Throughout medieval Europe, a vast number of texts containing visions circulated between the sixth and thirteenth centuries.[[175]](#footnote-175) This chapter will explore the most important of these texts, and the impact they had on general medieval thought about dreaming. Reflections of such thought on the corpus of this thesis will be used to discuss these core texts, together with the dream culture found in Medieval Europe. By expanding on the historical context through a general overview of medieval thought on dreams and dreaming, the themes in medieval Insular (dream-) vision literature can be better understood.[[176]](#footnote-176)

## Dreams and Dreaming in Medieval Europe

Zhao writes that: ‘on the level of society, [...] it is possible to speak of dreams and dreaming as a cultural phenomenon in that some dreams were believed to have an effect on real life by their prophetic power’.[[177]](#footnote-177) The appearance of dreams in surviving pre-modern literary works implies that they were significant to medieval European society.[[178]](#footnote-178) This paragraph focuses on the broader medieval European culture surrounding dreams and dreaming first, and medieval European dream literature further below.

Across pre-modern western Europe there was a consensus that (specific types of) dreams contained important messages that were otherwise difficult or even impossible to obtain.[[179]](#footnote-179) For example, a dream could contain information about the future of the dreamer or those who had a connection to the dreamer, or about society as a whole.[[180]](#footnote-180) The prognostic function of dreams was thus the main focus in medieval times, and was reflected in literary works.[[181]](#footnote-181) This social interest influenced the status of dreams in literature, and medieval Wales and Ireland were no exception.[[182]](#footnote-182) Of course, there is a difference between dreams as an experience and dreams as depicted in literature. As Steven Kruger writes: ‘It is difficult to define precisely the complex affiliations between dreams found in medieval literature and the attitudes towards dreaming expressed, for instance, in dream theory or the dreambooks’.[[183]](#footnote-183) However, it would be fraught to view the two concepts as completely separated. While one may ask whether or not literature aims to reflect dreams as an experience, it is hard to argue the two are not connected. As Robin Chapman Stacey notes in her research about the connection between law texts and literature: ‘[...] what is known either about medieval law or about the nature of the medieval Welsh narrative tradition, in which the sharing back and forth of ideas, images, genres, and pseudohistorical ‘realities’ was demonstrably quite common’. [[184]](#footnote-184) And maybe more importantly:

‘As my research had shown, lawbooks of this period could communicate ideas and opinions as well as information; they could convey outrage and resentment as well as the stability of long usage. Their authors and redactors could and did indulge themselves in humorous asides and scathing parody, playing with themes and tropes and images in a manner that would have seemed very familiar to the storytellers and poets of their day. Ideas about violence, about bodies—male, female, and animal—and about movement across landscapes, both internal and external, informed the lawbooks in much the same way that they did the poetry or the tales of the Mabinogion’.[[185]](#footnote-185)

That is to say, whether or not we know the intention of the text’s author does not matter when presented with the fact that medieval thought and cultural ideas influenced its literature.[[186]](#footnote-186) By researching the ideas and attitudes towards dreams in medieval European culture, then, we create a better understanding of the medieval Insular dream narratives discussed in this thesis.

Across medieval Europe, dream divination was a popular practice. Dream divination was done by searching for the meaning of one’s dream in dream lunaries and dreambooks, which would then reflect upon the future of the dreamer. The most popular of these books was *Somniale Danielis*, which was claimed to be composed by the biblical prophet Daniel.[[187]](#footnote-187) The text survives in various editions, including translations into Old English, Middle Welsh and Irish.[[188]](#footnote-188) In his book *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, Steven Kruger discusses the position of dreams between states, e.g. between the divine and the mundane or the intellectual and physical.[[189]](#footnote-189) There was a strong belief in the prognostic power of dreams, but there was also a distrust of the dream experience.[[190]](#footnote-190) This duality of attitudes towards dreams implied a simultaneous caution and curiosity. Dreams were important ways of exploring ‘betweenness’, or what I would consider the ‘liminal’. This doubleness and middleness was central to the late-antique discussions, which were essential for medieval treatment of dreams and dreaming.[[191]](#footnote-191) This was partly due to the preservation of texts from the Late Antiquity, which were influential in the Middle Ages.[[192]](#footnote-192) In the twelfth century, in which most of the corpus texts were believed to be composed, there was a renjuvinated interest in dreams which led to a renewal of dream theories.[[193]](#footnote-193) Dreams were said to be able to ‘come true’ and ascribed to the personality of the individual dreamer.[[194]](#footnote-194) Macrobius’ early fifth-century work, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (‘Commentary on the Dream of Scipio’), which discussed Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*, rose to popularity.[[195]](#footnote-195)

It is this work that Catherine McKenna argues has had visible influence on *BRh*, as the text contains a dream that is experienced as soon as its protagonist falls asleep.[[196]](#footnote-196) Macrobius’ *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (‘Commentary on the Dream of Scipio’) (c.400) was one of the most influential texts of its time, transforming *Somnium Scipionis* (‘Scipio’s Dream’), the sixth book of Cicero’s *De Re Publica* (‘On the Commonwealth’), into a prestigious text about the theory and interpretation of dreams.[[197]](#footnote-197) Macrobius’s approach was typical for commentaries of this period, consisting of implications of the original paragraph, but also explanations and interpretations.

The *Commentarii* themselves consisted of 39 chapters in total, of which the third chapter contains a categorisation of dreams.[[198]](#footnote-198) Macrobius bases this categorisation on theories of his predecessors such as Artemidorus, and presents them as follows: enigmatic dreams (*somnium)*, prophetic visions (*visio*), oracular dreams (*oraculum*), nightmares (*insomnium*), and apparitions (*visum*).[[199]](#footnote-199) The two latter are then excluded from Macrobius’ discussion, as they are not regarded to have any prophetic significance. The enigmatic dreams, on the other hand, receive more attention, as their symbolic nature requires interpretation in order for their meanings to be understood.[[200]](#footnote-200) Macrobius divides them into five sub-categories: personal, alien, social, public, and universal, which all occur in *Somnium Scipionis*.[[201]](#footnote-201) His fivefold classification of dreams became a typology that was prevalent in concepts regarding dreams and their functions in western Europe throughout the Middle Ages.[[202]](#footnote-202)

Taking Macrobius’ fivefold classification and applying them to *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy,* McKenna argues that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is not a *breuddwyd*, despite of its title, as Rhonabwy experiences a *drych*, something more closely translated as ‘mirror’ or ‘vision’ rather than ‘dream’.[[203]](#footnote-203) Because Rhonabwy experiences his dream as soon as he closes his eyes, and because his dream begins with an encounter with a rider, McKenna states that it can be interpreted as a *visum* or *phantasma*, which Macrobius writes ‘comes upon one in the moment between wakefulness and slumber’.[[204]](#footnote-204) This notion, together with the use of contemporary categorisation as a way to think about medieval vision literature and dream narratives will be expanded upon below. The fivefold classification will be inspected as a means of analysis.[[205]](#footnote-205)

## Reflections of Medieval Thought in Insular Dream-Narratives

Within medieval European society, there was a belief that dreams were prophetic or contained prophetic powers or properties. They were able to affect real life, even if only to a certain extent.[[206]](#footnote-206) This is seen reflected in various ways: in *AOe* and *BMW*, both protagonists fall ill after experiencing their dream-vision, and in *AMC* the protagonist is able to extract the demon of gluttony from someone’s throat after reiterating his dream. None of these narratives question the dreams’ ability to cause such illness or cure: both *AOe* and *BMW* assign responsibility of Óengus’ and Maxen’s wasting sickness to the maidens seen in the dream-visions, and *AMC* immediately recognises the vision to be a viable cure for the king. There is no doubt expressed within the narratives about whether or not the dreams hold any truth, they simply are true and perceived and considered as real as the primary world. It then is no surprise that the belief that dreams contained important messages that were difficult or otherwise impossible for mortals to obtain can be seen in the texts to a certain degree too: all four of the narratives present their protagonist with new information. It cannot be doubted that were it not for the dream, Óengus and Maxen would probably not have known about the maiden they fall in love with, as it takes them several tries even with the information about their existence to find them. Rhonabwy would never have been able to remember or know about the scenes playing out in front of him, would not have known about the battle of Badon and the rivalry between Arthur and Owain during their game of *gwyddbwyll* if not for his dream, even if it remains unclear what the significance of these scenes are to him. For a soldier such as Rhonabwy, the witnessing of such battle might have taught him how battles were fought by the people in power, or might have conveyed a judgement upon his leaders. It might very well be that seeing these scenes is supposed to have a certain impact on Rhonabwy, even if the text itself never explicitly states it. Additionally, MacConglinne would probably not even have survived were it not for his vision, as his vision was the reason he was let go instead of crucified. While the intention or main function of this new information might not always be clear, e.g. it is uncertain what Rhonabwy actually obtains from receiving the information given in his dream, there is no doubt that a transferral of knowledge has taken place.

Kruger describes the position of dreams as being between states: between the divine and the mundane, the intellectual and the physical, meaningful revelation and individual agitation.[[207]](#footnote-207) There was a strong belief in the prognostic power of dreams, but a distrust of the dream experience too.[[208]](#footnote-208)As the discussion above states, there is no direct distrust shown towards the dream experiences within the corpus. While it is true that Maxen’s retinue is not happy with his slow decay following his dream, there is no outright distrust voiced. The position of dreams as being between states of being or existence, however, is interesting. Certain elements in the texts, such as the general landscape descriptions in *BMW*, point towards the dreams containing their own sort of space, in which things are possible which would not be possible in the primary world, e.g. MacConglinne’s journey through a land made of food. It could be interesting to consider dreams and the metaphysical space they occupy as a sort of mediator, a place that enables contact between the dreamer and the divine and intellectual. This then will be further explored below in Chapter III: ‘Medieval Insular Dream-Narratives’.[[209]](#footnote-209) But first, we will expand on the interpretation of dreams in our corpus aided by Macrobius' categorisation below.

## Applying Macrobius’ Categories

Catherine McKenna applies Macrobius’ dream categories to the text of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.[[210]](#footnote-210) She argues that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* was not, in fact, a *breuddwyd*, but a *drych*, which could be interpreted as a *visum* or *phantasma*, which Macrobius writes ‘comes upon one in the moment between wakefulness and slumber’.[[211]](#footnote-211) This because Rhonabwy experiences his dream as soon as he closes his eyes, and starts with the encounter with a rider. The term *drych*, too, is better translated as ‘vision’ or ‘mirror’ rather than ‘dream’.[[212]](#footnote-212) The fivefold categorisation of dreams can also be applied to the other corpus texts: in the same line of thinking as McKenna, Óengus’s and Maxen’s experiences might be better described as a *visum*, an apparition, as their dream shows them the appearance of a beautiful maiden with whom they fall in love. However, as this is not the only thing that appears in Maxen’s dream, it might not be fully correct to categorise his primarily as a *visum*; there is a whole journey he experiences whilst asleep, which he will later repeat in the primary world. Yet, the dream is not prophetic or oracular *per se*. While Rhonabwy’s dream is certainly enigmatic, Maxen’s is not: he is traveling through the countryside to eventually meet his beloved. Similarly, Mac Conglinne does not experience a dream that is particularly enigmatic, although it might be read as puzzling. The vision itself has a clear goal, and is never intended to come true, only to be verbally repeated. This discussion then suggests it might be useful to apply Macrobius’s categories to the texts.

Macrobius’ categories can also be used to debate whether dreams are part of vision-literature. Katharine Lynch, for example, regards the literary vision as a genre, which takes the external version of a dream or a waking vision.[[213]](#footnote-213) However, I would argue that while visions *can* be dreams, not every dream is a vision, which makes Macrobius’ categories interesting to look at. Although Macrobius’ categories largely reflect on the human experience, they are written as a commentary on a written work, and thus they can provide us with new ways to think about literature as well. Within both the modern taxonomy and even medieval literature as reflected by the medieval Irish Tale Lists, vision literature is (perceived as) an established literary genre or category. In this, dreams can be the form the vision takes, the way it is channelled or received. Macrobius’ categorisation, however, implies that dreams can be a category *an sich*, of which visions are a part. Having these competing categorisations is interesting, because it gives us a new angle to consider, i.e. that of dreams as a stand-alone ‘genre’ or category. While it feels like solely one of these should be true, there might be a possibility that both are true. There might be a question of what the difference between categories and genres is, and if there’s a cohesion looking at medieval insular dream tales in the vernacular. Zhao has examined medieval Welsh dream literature spanning form c. 1100 to 1550 to see if they can be perceived as a genre on their own, and concluded that they are not based on the amount of thematic variation between texts.[[214]](#footnote-214) Volmering, however, has used genre theory to discuss medieval Irish vision literature, which then did form a cohesive group of texts of which Volmering deduced and described the characteristic features.[[215]](#footnote-215) While vision literature, then, can be considered a genre, dream literature may not. One then might propose that dreams can be approached as a thematic constant, but not as a literary category. Within the selection, there is a clear discrepancy between the tales centred around love (*BMW*, *AOe*) and the two other tales, which other scholars have marked as either parodies or satire (*BRh*, *AMC*).[[216]](#footnote-216) It is true that fated love through dreams was a theme recognised within the Index of Folk Literature written by Stith Thompson, i.e. the Aarne-Thompson Index, and can be found under T11.3, ‘falling in love through a dream’.[[217]](#footnote-217) Because of the high number of texts in which this motif appears, it might seem like those texts form their own category of literature.[[218]](#footnote-218) At the same time, all dream-visions have to be taken into account. Would taking dream literature as a category or genre be possible if there are sub-genres added in and considered, e.g. eschatological visions and visions of love, or a subdivision similar to that of Macrobius? A part of this thesis relies on the idea that, based on the requirements set out, the texts show enough thematic overlap to be considered of the same category. The use of Macrobius’ dream categories then is interesting, because it approaches dreams as a thematic constant, a uniform group with subdivisions, almost like a genre with subgenres. This is almost as opposed to modern scholarship which tends to view vision-literature as a uniform genre of which dreams and dream-visions are a subgenre. Taking both views into account provides a new lens through which to approach genre and medieval literature.

## Conclusions

As this overview suggests, ideas about dreams were divided in medieval Europe. This is true for both secular and religious society, which both developed a typology to explain this division. In both ecclesiastical and profane literature, a dream could be a means to define and deepen an individual’s understanding. Dreams, existing as narratives, were relevant to both the individual and the social group that recounted them to its values.[[219]](#footnote-219) Macrobius’ fivefold categorisation was most influential within secular context, especially in the twelfth century.[[220]](#footnote-220)

Some of the medieval beliefs are reflected in the selected texts: none of three of the narratives (i.e. *AOe*, *BMW* and *AMC*) doubt the ability to influence the lives of their protagonists. Óengus and Maxen their wasting sickness is connected to their dream, and there is no doubt that MacConglinne’s vision will be able to cure the king. The belief that dreams contained messages or information otherwise difficult or impossible to obtain, too, is reflected in the texts, as all four protagonists are presented with new information through their dream or dream-like experience. The application of Macrobius’ dream categories contributes a new angle with which there can be looked at the texts, approaching dreams as a subject *an sich* rather than part of a category, providing for a different view on categorisation and genre.

By discussing popular ideas and attitudes towards dreams in medieval Europe, the context in which the four selected medieval Insular vernacular dream-narratives existed is improved upon. Closer examination showed similarities between medieval thought on dreams and its literature, although it was in no ways conclusive. Still, this general overview of medieval thought on dreaming provides a context for the themes and central characteristics of medieval (Insular) vision literature. As will be shown in the following chapter, some of these themes are reflective of general thought. Through our understanding of the culture in which our corpus existed, literary dreams, visions, and dream-visions as discussed in the next chapter can then both be contextualized and better understood.

# II: The Medieval (Dream-) Vision

As discussed in the previous chapter, the medieval understanding of dreams was varied. Dreams existed as means to define and deepen an individual’s understanding, and were relevant to both the individual and the bigger mass. There was a belief that dreams contained messages or information that was otherwise difficult to obtain.[[221]](#footnote-221) These beliefs were partially reflected by (dream-) vision literature. This chapter discusses themes central to (dream-) vision literature through the exploration of vision literature as a category. It introduces the concept of vision literature and how it took form in the medieval Insular world. The central literary characteristics are then applied to the corpus, and open up the discussion of shared themes between the narratives as found in the following chapter.

## Medieval (Dream-) Vision Literature

In order to understand themes central to medieval Insular dream-visions, vision literature needs to be explored first. As dream-visions are a part of vision literature, we will first define the literary category and its characteristics.

The term ‘vision literature’ is used to refer to a body of texts that contain visions which were not a natural occurrence, but a supernatural phenomenon.[[222]](#footnote-222) These texts were written and circulated in Western Europe and beyond between the sixth and thirteenth centuries.[[223]](#footnote-223) Examining medieval European literary dreams in light of philosophical thought and genre theory, Kathryn Lynch regards the literary vision as a genre which takes the external version of a dream or waking vision, thus making dream-visions part of vision literature.[[224]](#footnote-224) According to Lynch, the function of a (philosophical) vision was to ‘assist the reader in understanding the aims of a group of works that adhere to a set of relatively precise and limited norms’.[[225]](#footnote-225) Its base structure is as follows: the main character has a dream, and as a dreamer they embark on an interior epistemological journey. Throughout the dream, they gain knowledge through imagination, reason, and memory.[[226]](#footnote-226) Such *uisio* could also concern itself with visions of the afterlife, gathered through various forms of revelation, such as prophecies or oracles. [[227]](#footnote-227)

The base structure of a vision as described above implies its visual nature. In his research, Peter Dinzelbacher states that a vision is not merely defined by the visual experience nor supernatural action, but by the condition of the visionary as well:

*Von einer Vision sprechen wir dann, wenn ein Mensch das Erlebnis hat, aus seiner Umwelt auf außernatürliche Weise in einen anderen Raum versetzt zu werden, er diesen Raum beziehungsweise dessen Inhalte als beschreibbares Bild schaut, diese Versetzung in Ekstase (oder im Schlaf) geschieht, und ihm dadurch bisher Verborgenes offenbar wird.* [[228]](#footnote-228)

Dinzelbacher writes that a ‘vision’ transports its receipient out of their perceivable world into another space, in which the contents of the vision are shown. This vision might be experienced in either extacy or sleep, and reveals information that was up until that point unavailable to its receipient. The implications of this is that the space a vision takes up is a different space from the experienced world alltogether: it can be seen as a metaphysical space that is seen, yet not tangible. As discussed in the Introduction, the term ‘vision’ is defined as ‘the act or sense of seeing, sight, vision; a thing seen, an appearance, apparition, a vision; an image of a thing in the mind; an idea, conception, notion’.[[229]](#footnote-229) In the basis, a vision is something which is seen but is not tangible. This implies that it is not a natural occurrence or a naturally induced experience, but rather a supernatural phenomenon. This idea is prevalent in all types of revelatory literature, and thus an important aspect of medieval vision literature as well. Dinzelbacher adds onto this idea, explaining that the condition of the visionary as well as a change of location are central to the visionary experience.[[230]](#footnote-230) This implies that the circumstances under which the visions are experienced are of importance to the narrative, and thus I will expand on this in my analysis below.[[231]](#footnote-231)

Generally, these are then seen as core characteristics of vision literature: a vision is experienced as a supernatural phenomenon, and transports the visionary to a different location, albeit in a possible metaphysical way. This change of location relates to the idea of the soul leaving the body to go elsewhere.[[232]](#footnote-232) Volmering expands upon this, writing that ‘the supernatural manner in which the vision is received is often expressed by a change in the state of consciousness of the visionary: the visionary may appear to be near death or asleep’.[[233]](#footnote-233) This change might come with an additional mind-altering factor, such as (continued) fasting or illness. She states that, while both auditory revelation and apparitions form part of vision literature, the main qualifier is the removal of the visionary to an alternate location.[[234]](#footnote-234) The experience of the visionary is often emphasized by a description of the ‘scene setting’, the circumstances under which the vision is received such as ‘location, disposition, and time of day’.[[235]](#footnote-235) This places the vision in an identifiable (historical) place and time, although it does not imply that the dreamscape is supposed to be existant in the world as experienced by the visionary.[[236]](#footnote-236) Apart from the supernatural phenomenon and transportation to a different location, another distinguishing feature of vision literature is, according to Volmering, that ‘the vision is a tangible and intensive experience understood to be real’, implying that to the visionary it is as realistic as any aspect in their life. [[237]](#footnote-237) This might also tie in to the general belief in the Middle Ages that some dreams were able to affect real life: in order for a dream to affect the visionary, it should hold a certain perceivable degree of reality.

As part of vision literature, dream-visions have their own subset of characteristics that distinguish them as a sub-category. In order to recognise the themes in our corpus texts, thus, we need to examine what these are. Elizabeth Solopova, drawing on various examples in Middle English, gives a definition for the literary dream-vision: dream-visions contained events as seen in either a vision or dream, centred around a narrator. [[238]](#footnote-238) The content of these dream-visions could vary, and include all kinds of subject matter. The features which are referred to by Solopova can be matched to multiple texts that can be either secular or religious, such as *The Dream of the Rood*, an Old English poem about a vision of The Cross, and the Middle French *Le Roman de la Rose*, and, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the four core texts of this thesis.[[239]](#footnote-239)

## Medieval Insular (Dream-) Vision Literature

Now that we have examined the general characteristics of medieval (dream-)vision literature, we will it in the medieval Insular context. It is true that both medieval Welsh and Irish contain vision texts written both in Latin and the vernacular. Volmering proposes to consider an ‘Irish vision’ a vision that can be demonstrated to have Irish origins or provenance based on the following levels or criteria: its survival as a physical artifact, i.e. manuscript evidence; its bibliographical details, i.e. authorship and title; and on its internal features.[[240]](#footnote-240) While it would be ideal for a text to contain all three levels, this is simply often not the case with medieval literature. Irish vision texts then include texts with Irish provenance, but also texts that include Irish language, authorship, an Irish visionary, or a setting in Ireland.[[241]](#footnote-241) The same criteria can be extended for Wales. A (medieval) Welsh vision text is defined by one or more of the three criteria, e.g. a vision written in the vernacular, set in Wales, experienced by a Welsh visionary, or of Welsh provenance. Additionally, they should display one or more of the characteristics of medieval vision literature, and medieval Insular dream-visions, then, should adhere to the above, *and* contain several of the characteristics as described by Salopova.[[242]](#footnote-242)

Apart from visions, medieval Insular literature also contained dream narratives. These *breuddwyd* or *aisling* narratives were often part of vision literature, as they contained dream-visions. Within the taxonomy of medieval Gaelic literature, *aislinge* (‘dream, vision’), or sometimes *aislingthe*, consisted of an encounter with the supernatural, initiated when the protagonist was dreaming or in a similar altered state. This protagonist was invariably male.[[243]](#footnote-243) This largely matches the established characteristics of medieval vision literature as discussed above.[[244]](#footnote-244) The supernatural encounter could take various forms, although they most often took the form of a beautiful woman or angel. The supernatural encounter could also consist of knowledge that would be otherwise inaccessible, much like Dinzelbacher described for vision literature in general, such as foreknowledge of the future or visions of future events.[[245]](#footnote-245) This also echoes the belief found in medieval Western Europe that dreams could contain information that was otherwise difficult to obtain.[[246]](#footnote-246) The medieval *aisling* narratives were, apart from their vision aspect, quite diverse in both composition, date of composition, setting, theme, and tone. Much alike medieval dream visions in general, there were themes of love, religious experience and doctrine, or political arguments. They could contain and represent allegorical figures, historical figures, or saints, could be used as a stand-alone narrative, such as *AOe,* or they could be embedded in a larger narrative.[[247]](#footnote-247) Good examples of this are *Aislinge nAimirgin* (‘The vision of Aimirgin’), *Aislinge Dubthaich* (‘The vision of Dubthach’), and *Aislinge Con Longes* (‘The vision of [Cormac] Con Longes’), which are incorporated into Recension I of the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (‘The Cattle Raid of Cooley’).[[248]](#footnote-248) Medieval Insular (dream-)vision literature, then, consisted of texts featuring the Otherworld, written in the vernacular or Latin, imagined in non-Christian and Christian modes.[[249]](#footnote-249) Similar things are true for the Welsh *breuddwyd* tales, although they technically do not form their own contemporary category as they are not part of a medieval Welsh tale list. However, the lack of known existence of such Welsh tale lists does not mean that *breuddwyd* texts did not form a separate category, but it *does* mean that we have no way of proving whether or not this was true. Still, multiple texts contemporarily titled *breuddwyd* or *breudwyt* can be found, displaying various characteristics of vision literature, as demonstrated below.

Reflections of Central Elements of Medieval (Dream-) Vision Literature  
As described above, medieval dream narratives can be considered part of the broader scope of vision literature. This could be both in an eschatological and secular context.[[250]](#footnote-250) Although the basis of these texts was that they contained a vision, something that was seen but not tangible, they often also contained themes of love, politics, and/or religious experience.[[251]](#footnote-251) The visionary experience was one that was supernatural in nature, and often featured the Otherworld. These texts could be written in the vernacular or Latin, imagined in non-Christian and Christian modes, but *should* always feature the supernatural or liminal occurrence of experiencing a vision, albeit waking or asleep. [[252]](#footnote-252) This supernatural encounter was also central to the medieval *aisling*, which was initiated when the protagonist is dreaming, or in a similar altered state.[[253]](#footnote-253) This encounter could take various forms, and could contain or consist of knowledge that would be otherwise inaccessible.[[254]](#footnote-254) Taking these characteristics as a basic frame, I will now look at how they are reflected in the texts. This will be done by examining the circumstances of the central supernatural experience and the form of the supernatural encounter.

### Circumstances of the Supernatural Experience

The circumstances under which the dream-vision is experienced that appear clearest upon first inspection are the ones set up in *Aislinge Óenguso*. Óengus is asleep one night when he sees a maiden coming towards him while he resides on his bedstead.[[255]](#footnote-255) This maiden, the most beautiful that there was in Ireland, is being taken by the hand and brought into Óengus’ bed.[[256]](#footnote-256) The maiden disappears, Óengus awakes, and the next night she appears to him again, now with a *timpán* she plays for him. Her appearance has an immediate effect on him: from there on out, he is unable to speak.[[257]](#footnote-257) Yet, it is unclear whether or not Óengus is already asleep when she appears to him; the initial meeting with her seems to imply so, while it is later on suggested that:*Seinnid céol ndó. Con:tuil friss* (‘She played music for him. He fell asleep to it (i.e. the music)’).[[258]](#footnote-258)

Emperor Maxen similarly experiences his dream-vision under seemingly regular circumstances.[[259]](#footnote-259) After a hunt in a valley, under the great heat of the sun that is high in the sky, Maxen falls asleep. His chamberlains protect him from the sun by raising their shields on spear-shafts around him, and a gold-chased shield is placed under his head. [[260]](#footnote-260) He then dreams of a journey through various landscapes, which eventually leads him to a meeting with Elen Luyddog, the daughter of Eudaf son of Caradog.[[261]](#footnote-261) They embrace, and Maxen is awoken by the sounds of dogs straining at their leashes, the corners of shields touching one another, spear-shafts striking each other, and the stamping of horses.[[262]](#footnote-262) He then falls ill, similarly to Óengus, and is unable to eat. Whereas Óengus’ vision repeats, Maxen only experiences his once in a dreaming state, with his head placed upon a gold-chased shield.[[263]](#footnote-263) However, the maiden he meets in this dream-vision keeps reappearing in his sleep. He does not explicitly repeat his dream-vision journey, but the reappearance of the maiden does imply a repeat experience in some shape or form.

Rhonabwy experiences his dream-vision whilst laying on a yellow ox-skin.[[264]](#footnote-264) As opposed to Óengus and Maxen, the circumstances which he endures whilst experiencing his dream-vision are less pleasant.[[265]](#footnote-265) He resides in a house with a hag, who throws a lapful of chaff on the fire, which causes smoke to enter into everyone’s nostrils.[[266]](#footnote-266) On the dais of the house lies a yellow ox-skin, which would cause good luck to befall on whoever would lay down on the skin.[[267]](#footnote-267) There is a sudden surge of wind and rain that confines the guests to the guesthouse. As the retinue grows weary, and they try to fall asleep on dusty, flea-infested straw-ends, mixed with bits of twig covered with a greyish-read blanket that is rough and threadbare and full of holes and a half-empty pillow on top of a coarse tattered sheet with big holes.[[268]](#footnote-268) While his two compatriots fall asleep, Rhonabwy has trouble finding rest, and decides to lay down on the yellow ox-skin, immediately falling asleep. He then is granted a vision in which he travels across Maes Argyngroeg, and from there on he is led through his dream until he meets Arthur and Owain.  
 Aniér MacConglinne, too, is granted his vision in less than pleasant circumstances.[[269]](#footnote-269) In fact, MacConglinne is awaiting his crucifixion after having satirized the monks of Cork and their hospitality, and is left waiting tied up to a rock. He remains bound up until midnight, when an angel of God appears to him, and manifests his vision. This angel causes an uncomfortable heat that only becomes comfortable as the angel moves on a ridge away from MacConglinne. Interestingly, there is another moment in the tale in which MacConglinne is expected to sleep under circumstances akin to those of Rhonabwy; after his journey across the lands of Connaught to Cork, MacConglinne arrives in a guesthouse in Cork. The weather is despicable, wind and snow and rain about the door, and the bed full of lice and fleas.[[270]](#footnote-270) This, however, is not when MacConglinne sleeps; he instead washes his feet and sings his psalms, until his meagre rations, which eventually become the source of his satirizing, are brought to him.[[271]](#footnote-271)

It is clear, then, that the two Welsh protagonists are depicted asleep, for Rhonabwy is granted his vision ‘as soon as sleep entered his eyes’ (*Ac yn gytneit ac yd aeth hun yn y lygeit y rodet drych* [...]), and Maxen is announced asleep ‘[...] and so the emperor slept’ (*ac ena e gwelei vreudwyt*).[[272]](#footnote-272) However, the circumstances under which Maxen falls asleep are somewhat more comfortable than those of Rhonabwy: Maxen falls asleep *en plein aire*, while Rhonabwy finds himself in a flea-infested guest house, laying atop an ox-skin on the dais. Looking at the Irish texts, the circumstances under which the dream-visions are experienced are more ambiguous. It is uncertain whether MacConglinne is asleep throughout his vision, as this never is confirmed by the text. It might be implied, as the angel of God only appears to him at midnight while he is tied to a rock and only departs at the end of the night, but more than this implication cannot be taken from the text. Similarly, Óengus is depicted asleep as the first appearance of the maiden is described, but the state in which he experiences the following apparitions remains unclear. This is due to the maiden playing music that puts Óengus to sleep (*Seinnid céol ndó. Con:tuil friss.*).[[273]](#footnote-273) The text explicitly states the maiden appears to him at night (*Boí an ind adaig dáno aithirriuch*), but unless he falls asleep whilst experiencing his dream-vision, e.g. sleeps in his dream, her appearance must happen before he is asleep, otherwise her playing music cannot put him to sleep. It would be somewhat of a paradox if Óengus dreams of falling asleep, although it is not impossible. A possible explanation for this discrepancy might be that the opening line to *AOe* correlates with and refers to the first line of *Tochmarc Ferbe*, as Thomás Ó Cathasaigh has noticed:[[274]](#footnote-274)

AOe: *Boí Óengus in n-aidchi n-aili inna chotlud. Co:n-accae ní, in n-ingin cucai for crunn siúil dó*.

Óengus was asleep one night. He saw something: a maiden coming towards him while he was on his bedstead.[[275]](#footnote-275)

TFe: [*B*]*uí Conchopur macc Neusa aidqu n-ann ina chotlud con facco ní ind oiccbein chuicci*.

Conchobar mac Nessa was asleep one night, when he saw a young woman coming towards him.[[276]](#footnote-276)

Óengus being asleep does not directly correlate with the seeing of the maiden; they appear to be separate events, which might be interpreted as happening simultaneously. At the very least, it seems to be implied that the vision takes place during his sleep; were this not the case, it would have made more sense for the first and second sentence to be switched around, placing the seeing of the maiden before the announcement that he was asleep. However, this then would appear strange, as the fact that Óengus was asleep would be a mere afterthought if not correlated or connected to the first sentence by a copulative such as ‘because of that’. Narratively, however, this would line up more with the construction as we see it later on, i.e. his sleeping being caused by the appearance of the maiden. It is peculiar that the first experience of his dream-vision, the supernatural encounter with the maiden, is implied to experienced asleep, while the following encounters are experienced in a waking state with the consequence of him falling asleep. Interpreting the text this way, i.e. in such manner that implies Óengus to be awake whilst being put to sleep by the music played for him by the maiden and not him dreaming to fall asleep whilst he is already in a sleeping state, Óengus thus experiences his dream-visions both awake and asleep, albeit always during the night time.

The singular dream-visions of MacConglinne and Rhonabwy also take place during the night, whilst Maxen is the only one to have his experience during the day-time. It is important to note though that Maxen keeps being visited in his sleep by the visage of the maiden after the initial dream, of which the time is not specified:

*Ny cheffit dim e ganthaw namen kyscu canys en e mynychet y kyskei, e wreic uwyaf a garei a welei trwy e hun y gyt ac ef. Pryt na chysgei enteu, ny handendei dim amdanei cany wydyat o’r byt pa le yd oed*.[[277]](#footnote-277)

He did nothing but sleep, for as often as he slept, he would see in his sleep the woman he loved best; when he was not sleeping, because of her he cared for nothing, for he did not know where in the world she was.[[278]](#footnote-278)

In addition to that, Maxen and MacConglinne are both outside whilst seeing their initial dream-vision, and Rhonabwy is left in a windy guesthouse, making Óengus the only protagonist to experience his vision in the comfort of his own sleeping compartment, even if the later recurring encounter between Maxen and the maiden’s apparition takes place at Maxen’s court. The circumstances under which the supernatural occurrence is experienced are variable, and differ from text to text. The texts are neither completely unique in their approach nor vastly uniform; structurally, both Óengus and Maxen dream about their maiden, then travel towards her, while Rhonabwy and MacConglinne travel inside and outside of their dream-vision, without much of a romantic focus. As can be seen in the table on page 66, both Irish protagonists are alone when they fall asleep, while the Welsh protagonists are surrounded by others. But for both Óengus and Maxen, the visage reappears after their initial dream-vision, while Rhonabwy and MacConglinne only experience it once. Thus, there is no uniformity in how the tales approach the context of the supernatural encounter, even if they show similarities in pairs.

### Form of the Supernatural Encounter

Now that we have looked at the circumstances of the supernatural encounter in our corpus, we shall look at its forms. As stated in ‘The Medieval Literary (Dream-)Vision’ above, the supernatural encounter that was central to medieval dream-visions could take various forms, such as that of a beautiful woman or an angel. Both elements are on hand in our texts, although not at the same time. *BMW* and *AOe* both contain the appearance of a beautiful maiden:

AOe: *Is sí as áildem ro:boí i n-Ére.*[[279]](#footnote-279)She was the most beautiful that there (ever) was in Ireland.[[280]](#footnote-280)  
BMW: *Morwyn a welei yn eisted rac e vron e mewn cadeir o rudeur. Nyt oed haus edrech arnei na disgwyl noc are er heul pan vyd taeraf a thecaf rac y theket hitheu.*[[281]](#footnote-281)  
He saw a maiden sitting before him, in a chair of red gold. Because of her beauty it was no easier to gaze upon her than it would be upon the sun when it is at its brightest and most beautiful.[[282]](#footnote-282)

The supernatural encounter in *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* is one with an angel:

*Iar sin ticc aingel Dé chuci for in corthi 7 fo-róbairt in aislingthi do f[h]oillsiugud dó.*[[283]](#footnote-283)

Then an angel of God came to him on the pillar-stone, and began to manifest the vision onto him.[[284]](#footnote-284)

The text missing an obvious example of a supernatural encounter, then, is *BRh*. There is no meeting with an apparition, no beautiful maiden or angel. However, there is a young yellow-haired rider that appears almost immediately after Rhonabwy falls asleep, who later introduces himself as Iddog son of Mynio and guides Rhonabwy through his dream, explaining who certain people are and what titles and functions they hold.[[285]](#footnote-285) It can be argued that this rider is the supernatural encounter: much like the angel in *AMC*, he provides the protagonist with additional information, and the green horse he rides on marks Iddog as supernatural. However, the apparitions in *BMW* and *AOe* are not forms that provide additional information apart from their existence; the only information they convey to the protagonists is that they are there, yet neither maiden does speak. Their appearance does not reveal name nor location. In addition, Rhonabwy meets various riders throughout the text, donned with various colours. And, although it is stated in the text itself that falling asleep on the ox-skin was an omen of good luck, it is unclear whether or not that luck is the vision or something else entirely. The use of this ox-skin is noticed by Andrew Breeze in his discussion of the date of the tale, and he states that:

‘The use of an ox’s hide and not that of another animal, and the fact that Rhonabwy sees a king in his dream, rather than receiving a message from a deity, have closer parallels in Irish than in Vergil or Geoffrey. This is somewhat surprising, since *The Dream of Rhonabwy* shows no particular knowledge of Irish tradition [...]. Yet Rhonabwy’s ox hide is difficult to account for except through Irish influence. [...] Perhaps the author heard of the Irish practice of *tarbhfeis* from a visitor to Ireland, of whom there would be many in Wales after 1169’.[[286]](#footnote-286)

This practice of *tarbhfeis* (‘bull-feast’) was akin and connected to *imbas forosnai* (‘great knowledge that enlightens’), which was a practice of the Irish *filid* (‘poets’) to induce a sleep- or dream-like state in which knowledge would be revealed to which they would otherwise not have access, i.e. a vision.[[287]](#footnote-287) The practice of *tarbhfeis* is directly related to bulls and oxes, of which materials would be used to aid such induction of visions, e.g. by sleeping on the skin or by chewing on a piece of meat. This skin or meat then would function as a mediator between worlds, and would thus become a source of knowledge.[[288]](#footnote-288) This practice appears for example in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (‘The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel’) and *Serglige Con Culainn* (‘The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulainn’).[[289]](#footnote-289) In context, the ritual was often used to determine the successor to the king. This is clearly not true for *BRh*, although it is interesting to note the potential influence of the practice, as well as the consideration of the yellow ox-skin as a mediator between the primary and secondary world. By using Irish texts and sources to explain *BRh*, an inherent connection is made between the two. Breeze explains the possible connection by stating that there was an exchange of visitors between the countries after 1169, which would provide grounds for literary exchange and influence. However, while there is a possibility the Irish had influence in medieval Wales, there is no clear evidence. While then Irish can be used to understand Welsh texts, its use does require justification.[[290]](#footnote-290)

*BRh* is an interesting tale in regards to what the dream-vision brings Rhonabwy; for Maxen and Óengus, the answer is clearly the knowledge of the existence of their beloved maidens and their subsequent introductions to them. For MacConglinne it is something to save his skin; rather than getting crucified for satirizing, he is allowed to visit Cathal so that he can cure him from the demon in his throat by repeating his vision to him. For Rhonabwy it remains uncertain what the retainment of the dream-vision brings him except for the possibility to transfer the story, even if he is given an in-text reason for retaining it, i.e. the seeing of the stone in the ring Arthur is wearing:

*V[vn] o rinwedeu y maen yw, dyuot cof ytu a weleist yma heno; a phei na welut ti y maen ny doei gof ytti dim o hynn o dro*.[[291]](#footnote-291)

One of the virtues of the stone is that you will remember what you have seen here tonight; and had you not seen the stone, you would remember nothing about this.[[292]](#footnote-292)

The seeing of the stone, then, gives Rhonabwy the ability to reiterate his dream. The ending of the tale explicitly tells its audience that no one knows the dream without a book, as it contains so many descriptions. In order to explain the initial transmission (i.e. from Rhonabwy’s account into written form), the stone is put in as a mnemonic device, allowing for an explanation as to how it could have been written down at all (i.e. Rhonabwy retained it by seeing the stone).

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the one of the possible forms of the supernatural encounter central to medieval dream-visions is knowledge.[[293]](#footnote-293) The supernatural encounter could contain or consist of knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible. For Rhonabwy, this then might be triggered by the sleeping on the ox-skin, as implied by *blaenbren oed gan vn onadunt a gaffei vynet ar y croen hwnnw* (‘good luck would befall whichever one of them got to lie on that skin’).[[294]](#footnote-294) I would like to propose that the supernatural encounter in *BRh* is the knowledge gained through dream-vision. In extension, this can also be true for the other three texts: the maiden and the angel then would turn into the form the supernatural encounter takes, e.g. the manner in which it is delivered. In order for this to work, we should consider the dream-vision as an inherently liminal space, of which the main function is to transmit knowledge that would otherwise be impossible to obtain. The space needs to be liminal in order for the knowledge to be otherwise unobtainable; if the dreamscape is part of the primary world of our protagonists, it exists as a ‘real’ location where the information can be obtained, in whatever shape of form. The space of the dream-vision then should both exist and not exist at the same time: it functions as a metaphysical space in which the information can be accessed. At the same time, the paradoxical nature of the information itself as a state between states, i.e. the obtainable (contained within the primary world) and the unobtainable (being non-existent), shapes the space in which it is contained. The way this knowledge is delivered then may vary, e.g. be delivered through the appearance of a beautiful maiden or an angel, during day or night, outside or inside etc., but the crux of a dream-vision should always be that the recipient wakes up with knowledge that would otherwise have been inaccessible. As part of my proposition, then, the supernatural encounter should be considered the means to an end; the connecting factor between the dream narratives should be the obtaining of knowledge through the experiencing of a vision in a sleep- or dream-like state.

The form the supernatural encounter takes is similar in *AOe*, *BMW* and *AMC,* in that they all take the form of a beautiful maiden or an angel. *BRh* does not feature one such encounter, although there is a rider that is met at the start of the dream-sequence. While *AOe*, *BMW*, and *AMC* all contain clear indication of what the dream-vision brings (i.e. knowledge about the existence of the maiden they will marry, and in MacConglinne’s case knowledge that will save him from crucifixion), *BRh* does not. It does, however, contain an explanation for retainment of what he witnesses in his dream, i.e. the seeing of the stone of Arthur’s ring. Even if it is unclear what Rhonabwy gains from his dream-vision apart from the ability to transmit it, the information appears to be important enough to be remembered. As supernatural encounters could also consist of otherwise inaccessible or unobtainable knowledge, the dream-vision itself is the supernatural encounter in *BRh*. This then extends to all our narratives: they all gain knowledge through their dream-vision, in whatever form they are delivered. My proposal then is that the core supernatural encounter in *AOe*, *BMW*, *BRh* and *AMC* is the knowledge gained.

## Conclusions

The term ‘vision literature’ was used to refer to a body of texts which contained visions as a supernatural phenomenon. These texts were written and circulated between the sixth and thirteenth centuries. Dream-visions were a part of vision literature, and defined by Solopova as a medieval literary genre, of which the works are mostly written in the first-person singular presenting events as seen in a vision or a dream. They contained various themes of e.g. religious, political, philosophical, satirical, or fictional nature. The vision central to these narratives was a supernatural phenomenon. Within the literature of medieval Ireland and Wales, an ‘Irish’ or ‘Welsh’ vision could be identified by a text having Irish or Welsh origins or provenance based on either its physical survival, i.e. manuscript evidence, bibliographical details, and internal features. Additionally, the texts contain characteristics of medieval vision literature. Some of the Insular vision texts can be found in the medieval Irish tale lists, where they formed their own category.[[295]](#footnote-295) Within the taxonomy of medieval Gaelic literature, *aislinge* texts consisted of an encounter with the supernatural, initiated when the protagonist was dreaming or in a similar altered state. The form this encounter took could vary, and were generally diverse in composition date, setting, theme, and tone. Alike dream visions in general, they could contain themes of e.g. love, religion, and politics. While *breuddwyd* texts did not form a known separate category, conceptions of dreams and dream-visions were still known in medieval Welsh literature.

*Breuddwyd Maxen Wledig, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, *Aislinge Óenguso* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* all share both thematic similarities and discrepancies in regards to displaying central characteristics of medieval dream-visions. The protagonists both fall asleep and do not, experience their vision inside and outside, in the daytime and night time. There is no uniformity in themes across all tales, except for the central theme: the supernatural occurrence of experiencing a vision in a sleeping or similarly altered state.This supernatural experience, too, is known to take various forms: a beautiful woman in the case of Maxen and Óengus, an angel in the case of MacConglinne. Rhonabwy’s encounter is one that is more ambiguous, as he does not meet angel nor maiden, but a rider. Instead, there is a slight emphasis placed on the reason for him remembering his dream: the seeing of the stone in the ring of Arthur. The gaining of knowledge through a dream-vision, arguably, is his supernatural experience. If we consider the form the supernatural encounter takes, e.g. angel or beautiful maiden, a mediary or a narrative tool, the knowledge gathered through dreams can be seen as the supernatural experience across the corpus. This is what connects all four texts: each dreamer gains knowledge through the vision presented to them. This, then, makes sense if the (metaphysical) dreamscape is considered an inherently liminal space of which the main function is to transmit knowledge.

III: Medieval Insular Dream-Narratives

Thus far, the concepts of genre, liminality, and dreams as a cultural phenomenon and in literature of the medieval West have been discussed, as well as central elements of vision literature and dream-vision narratives. As we have seen before, certain aspects of medieval European dream culture can be seen reflected in the selected tales.[[296]](#footnote-296) All corpus texts adhere to the core characteristics of (dream-) vision literature, and contain a supernatural experience, even if their approach is not uniform.[[297]](#footnote-297) It has been shown that the corpus shares one main characteristic: knowledge that is otherwise unobtainable or extremely hard to obtain is gained through the dream-vision. As the core elements of dream-vision literature have been discussed in context of our corpus, it is now time to look at the variables: how then do the texts treat themes commonly found in (dream-) vision literature? What characteristics of medieval literary dream-visions get reflected in medieval Insular dream-narratives?

## Shared Themes in Medieval Insular Dream-Narratives

Apart from the central vision-element and supernatural encounter, medieval (Insular) dream-visions were quite diverse of composition, setting, theme, and tone. As Solopova writes:

“The content of dream-visions is varied and may include religious, philosophical, political, satirical, lyrical, and fictional subject matter’.[[298]](#footnote-298)

Generally, as was common with medieval dream visions, there could be themes of love, religious experience and doctrine, or political arguments.[[299]](#footnote-299) They could also contain and represent allegorical figures, historical figures, or saints. This diversity of themes is also displayed within *Breuddwyd Maxen Wledic* (*BMW*)*, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (*BRh*), *Aislinge Óenguso* (*AOe*)and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (*AMC*), and can be found in the table below which depicts shared themes between the selected medieval Insular vernacular secular dream narratives, based on my own analysis. This table provides an overview of the themes shared between the texts: dots indicate explicit incorporation of the themes, those between brackets indicate implicit incorporation of the themes. The table is divided into five categories based on discussion throughout this thesis, i.e. *circumstances*, *contents*, *characters*, *effects*, and *miscelaneous themes*.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Breudwyt Maxen Wledic** | **Breuddwyd Rhonabwy** | **Aislinge Óenguso** | **Aislinge Meic Con Glinne** |
| *Circumstances* |  |  |  |  |
| **1.1 Time** | Day/ | Night | Night | Night |
| (Night) |
| **1.2 Location** | Outside | Inside | Inside | Outside |
| **1.3 Company**[[300]](#footnote-300) | Retinue | Comp. | Alone | Alone |
| **1.4 Awoken by** | Noise | Noise | - | - |
| *Contents* |  |  |  |  |
| **2.1 Apparition**[[301]](#footnote-301) | • | • | • | • |
| **2.1.1 *Beautiful Maiden*** | • |  | • |  |
| **2.1.2 *Angel*** |  |  |  | • |
| **2.1.3 *Soldier/Rider*** |  | • |  |  |
| **2.1.4 *King*** | • | • |  |  |
| **2.2 Journeying** | • | • |  | • |
| **2.3 Battle** |  | • |  |  |
| **2.3.1 *Gwyddbwyll*** | • | • |  |  |
| *Characters* |  |  |  |  |
| **3.1 Visionary** | m | m | m | m |
| **3.1.1 *Soldier*** |  | • |  |  |
| **3.1.2 *Scholar*** |  |  |  | • |
| **3.1.3 *Emperor*** | • |  |  |  |
| **3.2 Historical Figures** | • | • |  | • |
| **3.3 Mythological Figures** |  |  | • |  |
| *Effects of Dream/Vision* |  |  |  |  |
| **4.1 Wasting Sickness** | • |  | • |  |
| **4.2 Anomalous Passing of Time** | • | • | (•) |  |
| **4.3 Cure** |  |  |  | • |
| **4.4 Gaining of Knowledge** | • | • | • | • |
| *Themes outside of Dream/Vision* |  |  |  |  |
| **5.1 Conquest** | • | (•) | • |  |
| **5.2 Religion** |  |  |  | • |
| **5.3 Travel** | • | (•) | • | • |

This table provides the framework for my discussion: as the circumstances and the supernatural experience (i.e. the core characteristics of (dream-) vision literature) have been discussed above, the thematic discussion will commence with a discussion of the major themes. First, I will discuss time and travel, i.e. 2.2 and 4.2. Thereafter, I will expand on the characters, i.e. sections 3.1-3.3, and end with a section on love and sickness, i.e. 4.1-4.3.[[302]](#footnote-302)

### Time and Travel

As seen in *Breuddwyd Maxen Wledic*, the landscape dreamt has ties to the physical world. Through retracing his steps, Maxen is able to physically travel to the locations he has dreamt about. The people Maxen dreams about are already there; they did not come into being simply through his dream. The dreamscape then may be considered liminal, existing in-between. The journey sequence is presented as follows:[[303]](#footnote-303)

[...] *sef breidwyt a welei,- y uot yn kerdet dyffrynn yr avon hyt y blaen. Ac y vynyd uchaf o’r byt y deuei. Ef a tebygei vot y mynyd yn gyfuch a’r awyr. A phan deuei dros y mynyd ef a welei y vot yn kerdet gwladoed teccaf a gwastattaf a welsei dyn eiryoet, o’r parth arall y’r mynyd; a phrif ayonyd y kerdei. py hyt bynnac y kerdei velly, ef a doeth y aber prif auon vwyhaf o’r a welsei neb; a phrif dinas a welei yn aber yr avon, a phrif gaer yn y dinas [...], Ef a welei y dyuot y ynys deckaf o’r holl vyt; a gwedy y kerdei ar draws yr ynys o’r mor py gilyd hyt yr ymyl eithaf o’r ynys, kymmeu a welei, a diffwys, a cherric uchel, a thir agarw amdyfrwys, ny rywelsei eiryoet y gyfryw. Ac odyno ef a welei yn y mor guarwyneb â’r tir amdyfrwys hwnnw, ynys: ac y rygtaw a’r ynys honno y gwelei ef gwlat, a oed kyhyt y meastir a’e mor, kyhyt y mynyd a’e choet. Ac o’r mynyd hwnnw avon a welei yn kerdet ar traws y wlat yn kyrchu y mor.*

The dream that he saw was how he was making along the river valley towards its upper reaches; and he came to the highest mountain in the world. He thought the mountain was as high as heaven; and as he came over the mountain he could see how he was traversing the fairest and most level regions that mortal had ever seen, on the far side of the mountain. And he saw great wide rivers making from the mountain to the sea, and he journeyed towards the sea-fords on the rivers; however long he was journeying so, he came to the mouth of a river, the greatest any one had seen. And he saw a great city at the mouth of the river, and in the city was a great castle [...]. A sail was hoisted on the ship, and away she went over the sea and ocean. he saw how he came to an island, the fairest in the whole world, and after he had traversed the island from the sea to answering sea, even to the uttermost bound of the island, he could see valleys and seeds and towering rocks, and a harsh rugged terrain whose like he had never seen. And from there he saw in the sea, facing that rugged land, an island. And between him and that island he saw a country whose plain was the length of its sea, its mountain the length of its woodland. And from that mountain he saw a river flow through the land, making towards the sea.[[304]](#footnote-304)

The sequence opens with *sef breidwyt a welei* ‘the dream that he saw’. The use of *gwelei* ‘to see’ implies a sense of vision.[[305]](#footnote-305) This vision of the landscape mainly concerns natural sources, shapes, and directions. As opposed to *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy,* which is rich and generous in its use of colours in descriptions, this text does not use any colour to paint a picture of the landscape.[[306]](#footnote-306) Valleys, rivers, mountains, countries, seas, mouth of rivers, etc. are all arguably natural occurrences that are described, with their chromatic nature implied. They are paired with adjectives that elaborate on their appearance, albeit in a generic way, e.g. *mynyd uchaf o’r byt* [‘the highest mountain in the world’] or *ynys deckaf o’r holl vyt* [‘the most beautiful island in the whole world’]. Its descriptions are intentionally vague, and this causes our protagonist to be unable to connect the dreamscape to a space or location he is familiar with. Instead, while the sequence contains a number of prepositions of directionality (e.g. *dros* ‘over, across’, *ar draws* ‘across’, *hyt* ‘as far as’) and verbs expressing movements (e.g. the liberal use of *cerdet* ‘to walk, to cross, to move’ to describe the space between the valley and the river source, the space of the level country, the space between the rivers and sea-fords, *and* the whole space of the island) Maxen finds himself in a visual space to which he has yet to develop a relationship outside of his dream. This does eventually happen as Maxen physically travels across it. Interestingly, the second description of the landscape occurring in *Breuddwyd Maxen Wledic* mirrors the above, with the main difference being the insertion of place-names that localize the adventure, i.e. give it a place in the physical, primary world, and the shortening of certain description. This can for example be seen in the following:

[...] *ac e doethand y enys Brydein e’r tir. A’r enys a gerdassant ene welant Eryri* [...] *Odena e kerdassant racdunt ene welsant enys Von gyvarwynep ac wynt ac eny welynt Arvon heuyt.*[[307]](#footnote-307)

[...] And in that large ship they steered over the sea and came to land in the Island of Britain. And they crossed the Island until they saw Eryri[...] They carried on until they saw the Island of Môn facing them, and until they saw Arfon, too [...].[[308]](#footnote-308)

The localisation through use of placenames confirms the existence of the dreamscape in the primary world.[[309]](#footnote-309) It is worth considering, then, that the description of landscape and journey in *Breuddwyd Maxen Wledic* reflects a certain state of being. The generic descriptions, in contrast to the specifically named locations, signify the liminal nature of dreams. While the descriptions in the dream sequence are just specific enough to be able to recreate or retrace the journey, they are also just nondescript enough to create a sense of uncertainty of the relation between the dreamer and its surroundings. The dreamscape is a visual space which is neither confirmed nor denied to be rooted in reality until after the dream sequence has ended, and thus exists as an in-between. The descriptions are essential in reflecting the relationship between the subject (Maxen) and the external world, albeit physical or metaphysical. It is no coincidence that the descriptions in the dream sequence are the most elaborate, as Proinsias Mac Cana notes:

‘In the dream the journey is described in considerable detail and with much stylistic elaboration, during the search it is recounted more concisely through this time the destination is firmly identified by the use of place-names, and in the final instance it is compressed to a couple of sentences, reflecting Maxen’s impatience to reach his goal, but to the place-names of the second journey are now added the names of Elen’s father and brothers’.[[310]](#footnote-310)

The landscape as described in Maxen’s dream-sequence thus provides for recognisable landmarks, while the search or the second journey provides names to put to these landmarks, confirming their existence in the primary world.

The theme of travel is also featured in the text of *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, in which Aniér MacConglinne travels to Cork in one day, and then is granted a vision in which he journeys through a superfluous landscape.The landscapes are utilised very differently in this tale compared to *BMW*. Whereas the descriptions in *BMW*’s dream sequence are that of perceivably realistic landscapes, those in *AMC* are more fantastical.[[311]](#footnote-311) He travels through a land of plenty- everything in the vision is centred around food, e.g.:

*Aislingi do-m-árfas-[s]a,*

*taidbsi ingnad indisimm*

*i fhiadnaise cháich;*

*curchán gered gerthide*

*i purt Locha Lemnachta*

*ós lind betha bláith.*[[312]](#footnote-312)

A vision that appeared to me,

an apparition wonderful

I tell to all:

A lardy coracle all of lard

within a port of New-milk Loch,

upon the World’s smooth sea.[[313]](#footnote-313)

Much like is the case with Maxen, MacConglinne’s vision or dream sequence is a journey, in which he travels through various planes of food. The primary function of this sequence is to save MacConglinne’s neck by revealing itself to be a source to cure king Cathal of the demon of gluttony residing in his throat. The journey that the sequence envisions, then, is not one which should be replicated, although it is designed to be retold. There are no pretences of the envisioned landscapes possibly being real, in contrast to *BMW*. They are not even directly described as a vision or dream, but only when MacConglinne relates his vision to Manchín the following morning:

*‘Is maith’, or se, ‘dia lecther dam in cumair mbriathar fil occum do relad duit-siu .i. aislingt[h]i do-m-arfad arer’, ar Mac Con Glinne; ‘7 dia lecther dal dam, indisfet in aislingthi*’.[[314]](#footnote-314)

“It is well with me,’ said Mac Con Glinne, “if I am allowed to relate a [verbal summary] to you [of] a vision I had last night. If I am given a respite, I’ll relate the vision’.[[315]](#footnote-315)

The experience is then described as a vision, but only after the fact. The Irish itself uses the term *aislingthi*, that can be translated as both dream or vision, but in context has often be described as ‘vision’.[[316]](#footnote-316)

The sights he then describes contain a voyage across Lake New-milk in a coracle of lard to a land where nearly everything consists of food, including the house of a chieftain, his wife, and their steward.[[317]](#footnote-317) The second recounting of this vision to Cathal, however, is more elaborate, and details MacConglinne’s voyage to the land of the Tribe of Food and his encounter with the *fáithliaig.* This relating also paints MacConglinne himself as a seeker within his own vision for a cure for his own voracious appetite, which seems to be appropriate concerning the circumstances and objectives of this iteration, i.e. to cure Cathal of his demon of gluttony. The tale then must stretch out long enough for the demon to be successfully enticed and lured out of Cathal’s mouth in search of food. As a result of this, the descriptions in *AMC* are plenty yet not mappable onto the primary world; the only tale to rival the many descriptions featured in the texts is *BRh*, which, as mentioned before, features various depictions of people and horses, specifically in regards to colours. This is opposed to *BMW*, which contains only the description of Elen, Cynan, Gadeon, and Eudaf, and *AOe* which really only describes Caer. The high number of descriptions is not the only similarity between *AMC* and *BRh*: neither centre around the finding of ones’ love, have abhorrent sleeping conditions that are marked by a flea infestation, both are humourous, and both feature explanations of proverbs and names of vestiges, buildings, or locations.[[318]](#footnote-318)

As stated, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, too, features journeying. In fact, Rhonabwy’s dream-vision starts in the middle of his travelling:

*Ac yn gytneit ac yd aeth hun yn y lygeit y rodet drych idaw y vot ef a’e gedymdeithon yn kerdet ar traws Maes Argygroec, a’e ohen a’e vryt a debygei y uot part a Ryt y Groes ar Hafren. Ac val yd oed yn kerdet y clywei twryf, a chynheb[yg]rwyd y’r twryf hwnnw nys ryglywssei eiryoet. Ac edrych a oruc dra’e gefyn. Sef y gwelei gwraenc penngrych melyn a’e varyf ynnewyd eillaw, y varch melyn. Ac o penn y dwygoes a thal y deulin y waeret yn las*[...].[[319]](#footnote-319)

As soon as sleep entered his eyes he was granted a vision, that he and his companions were travelling across Maes Argyngroeg, and his inclination and intent, so he thought, was towards Rhyd-y-groes on the Hafren. As he was travelling, he heard a commotion, and he had never heard a commotion like it. He looked behind him, and saw a young man with curly yellow hair and his beard newly trimmed, on a yellow horse, and from the top of its forelegs and its kneecaps downwards green [...].[[320]](#footnote-320)

The landscape, as it presents itself, is clearly familiar to Rhonabwy, who identifies it as a place in eastern Powys to which he might have travelled. In this tale, it is not the landscape itself denoting the liminal nature of a visual experience, as it is in *BMW*, even if it is mappable onto the primary world much like the dreamscape in *BMW*. Instead, the high saturation of colour and description of appearances might indicate the existence of a secondary, liminal, world.[[321]](#footnote-321) This is supported by an anomalous timeline, which is reflected by the fact that Iddawg states that he left Arthur three days before the end of the battle of Camlan, and that he did penance for seven years.[[322]](#footnote-322) This then implies that the battle took place in the past, with Arthur possibly deceased, and thus means that Rhonabwy is dreaming of the past rather than the future. However, Arthur is presented and introduced alive and well, thus implying that time within this space is not entirely linear. The discrepancy in time between the secondary dream world and primary world indicates that it exists as a separate space. On top of that, the non-linear passage of time points towards the liminal nature of the dreamscape, as temporal liminality is one of the aspects of liminality.[[323]](#footnote-323) Another thing setting apart Rhonabwy’s dream-vision is the appearance of a magical stone that enables Rhonabwy to remember the events of the night, something I touched upon before:

*[V]vn o rinwedeu y maen yw, dyuot cof yti a weleist yma heno; a phei na welut ti y maen ny doei gof ytti dim o hynn o dro*. [[324]](#footnote-324)

[O]one of the virtues of the stone is that you will remember what you have seen here tonight; and had you not seen the stone, you would remember nothing about this.[[325]](#footnote-325)

This ties in with the revelation that Rhonabwy has slept for three days and three nights on the yellow ox-skin, even though the dream itself refers to the time as *heno* (‘tonight’), indicating that the events that transpire are only experienced as a single night:

*Ac rac meint kynnwrwf hwnnw deffroi a oruc Ronabwy. A phan deffroes yd oed ar groen y dinawet melyn, gwedy ry gyscu ohonaw teir nos a thri dieu*.[[326]](#footnote-326)

So loud was that commotion, Rhonabwy awoke. And when he awoke, he was on the yellow ox-skin, having slept for three nights and three days.[[327]](#footnote-327)

A similar lapse of time is found at the end of *AOe*:

*To:comlat ass i ndeilb dá én find co mbátar ocin Mruig Maicc ind Ócc ocus cechnatar coicetul cíuil co corastar inna doíni i súan trí laa 7 téora n-aidche. Anais laiss ingen íar sin.*

They took off in the shape of two white birds to the Mruig Maic ind Ócc and they sang harmonious music so that it put the people to sleep for three days and three nights. The maiden stayed with him after that.[[328]](#footnote-328)

And once again, in *AMC*:

*At-berut eólaig (.i. scélaige) co mboí in rí teóra láa 7 teóra [h]-aidche isi[n] aen chodlad-sin. At=berat libair C[h]orccaige ná boí acht ón tráth co ‘raile.*[[329]](#footnote-329)

The learned (viz. the story-tellers) say that the King was three days and three nights in that one sleep. But the books of Cork relate that he only slept the round of the Hours.[[330]](#footnote-330)

The texts indicate that three days and three nights pass while Cathal sleeps; among the texts, *BMW* is the only tale that does not display this threefold of days being spend asleep. Maxen does not sleep for three days and nights, instead awaking after a non-specified amount of time to continue his travels to Rome.[[331]](#footnote-331) However, he *is* awoken by noises, much like Rhonabwy:

*A phan ytoed ef a’e dwy law am vunwgyl e vorwyn ac a’e grud ef urth y grud hitheu, rac angerd e kwn urth e kynllyvaneu a’e ysgwyd urth e taryaneu en kyuarvot y gyt, a pheleider e gqaeur ygyt en kyflad a phystolat e meirch defroi a wnaeth er amperauder*.[[332]](#footnote-332)

And as he had his arms around the maiden, and his cheek against her cheek, what with the dogs straining at their leashes, and the corners of the shields touching one another, the spear-shafts striking together, and the stamping of the horses, the emperor woke up.[[333]](#footnote-333)

As it is clear from the quotation above that outside commotion causes Maxen to wake up, this is less clear in *BRh*; the commotion might as well have come from outside as inside his dream. It has the similar kind of ambiguity as the state in which Aniér MacConglinne experiences his vision; while it is never confirmed in text that he is asleep an audience might assume so. Similarly, it is never confirmed whether or not it was the clamouring of the people within Rhonabwy’s dream that awoke him, but similar assumptions might have been made. Both Welsh texts explicitly state the reason for their protagonists waking up, whereas the Irish texts have it remain ambiguous. It is presumable that both Óengus and MacConglinne simply wake through natural circumstance: Óengus remains in his bedstead until the next day, and MacConglinne remains at the place of his vision until morning, reciting ways to relate his experience.[[334]](#footnote-334) As MacConglinne is confirmed neither asleep nor awake, his waking remains as much of a mystery. Similarly, while Óengus is described as asleep in the first sentence of the text, he is never explicitly waking up. There is a parallel to be drawn between both Welsh and Irish tales: both Welsh texts state reasons for their protagonist waking up, while it remains unclear in the Irish texts.

Whether Rhonabwy is awoken by noise outside or inside his dream is not the only thing that remains unclear within the narrative of *BRh*. For example, the function of the game of *gwyddbwyll* played by Arthur and Owain remains unclear. Kirstie Chandler suggests that this game parodies its role as a symbolic reference to sovereignty found in *BMW* by solely being a symbol without the symbolism.[[335]](#footnote-335) Its presence, much like the presence of the skin and the ring, draw attention to the superfluity of the narrative as agents of symbolism, i.e. do not fulfil the expectations of the reader nor convey the metaphoric and metonymic statements suggested to be delivered by their mere presence.[[336]](#footnote-336) The ox-skin, which is said to cause good luck to befall upon whoever lies on it, is never confirmed to do so as the story ends fairly abruptly after Rhonabwy waking up. Similarly, it is hard to determine what the actual purpose of the dream sequence is. Structurally, the ending makes sense, as the dream starts with Rhonabwy falling asleep on the ox-skin, and then ends up with him waking up on it. Narratively, this produces a frame which is commonly found in the description of dreams. It might be considered then that the appearance of the ox-skin signifies the entrance into a secondary world, and that the saturated appearance descriptions and non-linear elements indicate the dwelling in a liminal dreamscape, much like the generic landscape descriptions in *BMW*. For *AOe,* a similar element that signifies the entrance into a secondary world might be the *timpán* which Caer plays to Óengus every night: [[337]](#footnote-337)

*Co:n-accae timpán inna láim as bindem boíe. Seinnid céol ndó, Con:tuil friss.*  
He saw a *timpán* in her hand, the sweetest there was. She played music for him. He fell asleep to it (i.e. the music).

The apparition plays the instrument, after which Óengus falls asleep. It is interesting, then, that the appearance of the girl takes place both *before* and *after* Óengus falls asleep; the initial meeting seems to be as he is asleep, while the citation above shows him falling asleep to the music as played by her form.[[338]](#footnote-338) The following line does not clarify whether Óengus is already asleep:[[339]](#footnote-339)

*Blíadain lán dó 7 sí oca aithigid fon séol sin co-ndid:corastar i seurc.*

He [was (like that)] for a full year, and she repeatedly going to him playing that music, so that it put him in a decline.

Óengus’s liminal state of dreaming is connected to both the apparition of the girl and her playing music, the act signifying his departure from the primary world. The interesting here is that out of all the tales, Óengus’s dream is the only one that is equal parts auditory and visual experience. Whereas *AMC*, *BRh*, and *BMW* mainly consist of visual descriptions and the occasional conversation here and there, *AOe* both sees the form and her *timpán* and hears the music it produces. It is the only instance in which the auditory experience helps the dreamer fall asleep instead of wake up, and the only instance in which the auditory experience concerns music. Much like the clamouring in *BRh* and the vision manifested by the angel in *AMC*, the experience exists in an in-between, where it both does and does not exist, in the sense that it is experienced and perceived by the protagonist but never established to exist in the primary world. The appearance of the girl, much like the appearance of the angel, is already established as a supernatural encounter above, one of the central elements of dream-visions.[[340]](#footnote-340) Perhaps, then, it is in the very nature of these encounters that they are liminal, existing somewhere between reality and the unknown, or: the primary and secondary world.

### Historical and Mythological Characters

Central to the narratives are characters that journey, conquer, and/or love. Each of the corpus texts features a protagonist with a different background: *AOe* centres around Óengus, son of deities, *BMW* is led by a Roman emperor, *BRh* presents a soldier as its protagonist, and *AMC* features a scholar who wants to become a satirist. Three of the selected Insular narratives feature historical figures, which is most discernible in the Welsh texts. *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* revolves around Maxen Maximus, emperor of Rome. The historical figure at the centre of this story called Macsen Wledig in the text, is Spanish-born Maximus, also known as Magnus or Clemens. Maxen reigned AD 383-388, and although considered a usurper by Roman historians, was generally liked by the Welsh for staving off Gratian in 383.[[341]](#footnote-341) His reign ended with his dead, when he was killed by Theodosius the Great at Aquileia. Gildas and Nennius both name Maxen as the “first ruler of an independent Britain, from whom all legitimate power flowed’ in their works.[[342]](#footnote-342)

The Madog ap Maredudd of Powys mentioned in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is a clear reference to prince Madog ap Maredudd, or Madawc uab Maredud (d. 1160).[[343]](#footnote-343) Madog inherited Powys from his father Maredudd ab Bleddyn in 1132, and was faced with the expansionary ambitions of Owain, prince of Gwynedd, on his northern border.[[344]](#footnote-344) There were several poems written about him by Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr, and he was eulogised by Gwalchmai ap Meilyr, as well as remembered as a great prince in *Brut y Tywysogion* (‘Chronicle of the Princes’).[[345]](#footnote-345) Madog was the last to rule Powys in its entirety; the kingdom was shared between his brother, nephew, and sons after his death, and Powys was later split into two parts.[[346]](#footnote-346) Iorwerth, his brother, too, is a historical figure mentioned in *Brut y Tywysogion* as Iorwerth Goch. Similar to his brother, he fought against Owain Gwynedd and was eulogised by Cynddelw.[[347]](#footnote-347) There is no historical record of the feud as it is depicted at the start of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, but there is also no textual evidence to support the opposite.[[348]](#footnote-348)

*Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, too, features historical political figures; Fergal mac Maele Dúin died in 722, and Cathal mac Finguine, king of Munster, died in 742.[[349]](#footnote-349) There is, however, a small discrepancy: Fergal mac Maele Dúin was king of Cenél nEogain rather than Cenél Conaill, as attested by the *Annals of Ulster*. [[350]](#footnote-350) There is little textual evidence to prove that Aniér mac Conglinne himself was a historical figure, but he is referenced in a poem copied into *Félire Oengusa*, a text originally composed in the late eight century.[[351]](#footnote-351)  
 While *Aislinge Óenguso* does not include historical figures, it does feature figures of power and political importance. There are various leaders mentioned by the text that appear elsewhere in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* and the Ulster Cycle, such as Aillil and Medb. Óengus Mac Óc or Mac ind Óc himself was the son of the Dagda and the Boann and appears in various other texts, e.g. *Tochmarc Étaíne* (‘The Wooing of Étaín’) and *Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (‘The Pursuit of Diarmuit and Gráinne’).[[352]](#footnote-352) *Aislinge Óenguso* also features Ethal Anbúail, Connacht leader of the Tuatha Dé Danann with their *sídh* at Úaman, as well.[[353]](#footnote-353) Although these are not historical figures, they still probably would have been recognisable figures to the medieval Irish audience.

All four texts contain figures of power. For three of four texts, i.e. *BMW, BRh,* and *AMC,* feature historical figures, each in a different role. *AOe* features figures of power that appear throughout various other texts. *BRh* and *AMC* both feature kings or rulers who are not protagonists, but still tied to the plot. *BMW* has the emperor of Rome front and centre, implying the purpose to be more political than for example *AOe*. The text connects the emperor to Wales through his marriage with Elen; Elen is shown as steadfast and certain, creating a new infrastructure throughout Wales and Britain under Maxen’s rule.[[354]](#footnote-354) Her brothers help Maxen conquer at the end of the tale, and this conquest is given as the reason for the existence of Britons.[[355]](#footnote-355) The appearance of Maxen pushes a political narrative, whilst the historical figures in *AMC* and *BRh* give the texts context in terms of setting. The feud between Madog and Iorwerth in *BRh* is interesting, as there is no textual evidence remaining. Nevertheless, their appearance is one that would likely be recognisable to their audience, just like the mythical yet political figures that appear in *AOe.*

### Love and Sickness

As shown above, there are various themes connecting the four texts: apparitions, journeying, visionaries, and other figures. However, there are two other major themes yet to be discussed: love and sickness. These are themes that interwoven, yet distinguishable from each other; as the appearance of one's beloved causes sickness in both *AOe* and *BMW*, it is possible to speak of a ‘love-sickness’. These themes are inherently connected, and thus will be discussed together below.

As a theme, love is found in three of four of the texts: *AOe, BMW,* and *AMC.* It is most apparent in *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* and *Aislinge Óenguso,* where it is the central theme. However, one could argue for its presence in *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* as well*,* as the reason why king Cathal has a demon of gluttony residing in his throat is because of love. To expand on that: Cathal was in love with Lígach. Lígach had a brother called Fergal, who was in contention with Cathal for the kingship of Ireland. Fergal cursed a batch of apples, which he sent to Cathal under the guise being a gift from Lígach. By eating the apples, Cathal ingests a demon of gluttony, resulting in him consuming vast amounts of food, so much so that Ireland was eventually threatened with famine. It is then due to love that one of the problems central to *AMC* arises.

*BMW* and *AOe* both feature a wasting sickness, caused by the appearance of their fated love in a dream. In both tales, a retinue is sent to search for this beloved; they travel through the country, failing two times before finally succeeding on the third try. The love theme is essential both narratives, the driving factor behind most of the actions the characters undertake. It then should be no surprise that of the tales, BMW and AOe have been paired together and examined alongside each other. The first of such was done by Sir John Rhŷs; even though his focus might have been on the supposed existence of a primitive Celtic dawn-goddess who, according to Rhŷs, appeared in *BMW*, and while his beliefs that *AOe* reflected ‘a more primitive version’ of the Welsh tale are yet to be proven by supporting textual evidence, it is hard to deny that the tales share thematic similarities which Rhŷs clearly recognised.[[356]](#footnote-356) To quote George W. Brewer and Bedwyr Lewis Jones:

‘Both tales are basically about heroes falling in love with a maiden seen in a dream. In both the dream vision is followed by a love-sickness which manifests itself in a refusal to eat. In both the vision recurs whenever the heroes fall asleep; both dreamers keep their dreams and the cause of their wasting a close secret; both ultimately confide in interpreters; in both there follows an initial vain search for the maiden of the dream’.[[357]](#footnote-357)

Brewer and Lewis Jones perfectly sum up the similarities found between the texts. However, for as much thematic similarities these dream-tales share, there are differences too. One of the major differences can be found in the theme of travel in connection with love: while Maxen enjoys an entire journey across the land and sea, narrated in detail within the dream sequence where he finds his love and repeated in detail in reality, although getting briefer with each sequence Maxen gets closer to finding Elen, Óengus endures no such thing. There is a stark contrast between the dream sequence in *AOe* and the one in *BMW*. Out of all texts, *AOe* arguably spends the shortest number of words describing the dream:

*Boí Óengus i n-aidchi n-aii inna chotlud. Co:n-accae ní, in n-ingin cucai for crunn síuil dó. Is sí as áildem ro:boí i n-Ére. Luid Óengus do gabáil a llámae dia tabairt cucai inna imdai. Co:n-accae ní, fo:sceind úad opunn. Nícon:fitir cía árluid úad. Boí and co íarnabárach.*[[358]](#footnote-358)

Óengus was asleep one night. He saw something: a maiden coming towards him while he was on his bedstead. She was the most beautiful that there (ever) was in Ireland. Óengus went to take her hand to bring her to him into his bed. He saw something: she suddenly springs away from him. He did not know where she had departed from him. He was there until the next day.[[359]](#footnote-359)

The text quoted here is the whole dream sequence in *AOe.* Óengus sleeps, sees a maiden, brings her to his bed, then awakes. This in contrast to Maxen, who spends a good portion of the tale traversing through a landscape he is not yet familiar with just so that he can find his beloved. This landscape is central to the narrative, as its description offers the possibility for Maxen to reunite with the maiden of his dreams. This is because there are no toponymic references in the dream itself; the messengers have to find a place starting from its description. Francesco Benozzo argues that the dreamt landscape becomes a real place because Maxen remembers it an is able to describe its features.[[360]](#footnote-360) I, however, would argue that the dreamt landscape does already exist; it is merely a reflection of a possible variant of events, a mirror of possibilities. The events in the dream sequence exist as something that has not yet happened yet are happening at the same time. Somewhere Maxen is dreaming, and the land and people he dreams about are simultaneously already in existence, while the events are not yet, but eventually will be. The nature of this dream sequence is not as much prophetic as simply one of the possibilities of sequences of actions taking place within the primary world, showing Maxen what *could* be. While it is true that the dream sequence leads to the eventual meeting of Maxen and Elen, the journey itself does not immediately prompt Maxen to take action; instead, he wastes away, e.g.:

*A phan deffroes hoedel nac einnyoes na bywyt nyt oed idaw am e vorwyn a ry welsei trwy e hun. Kyhung vn asgurn endaw na menwes vn ewin yg kyuoethach lle a vei uwy no hwnnw nyt oed ar ny bei gyflawn o gareat e vorwyn. Ac ena e dywaut y deulu urthaw:*

*‘Argluyd,’ heb wynt, ‘neut ydiw tros amser yt e gemryt de vwyt.’*

*Ac ena yd esgynnws er amperauder ar e balfrei en dristaf gur ry welsei den eryoet ac e kerdus y ryngthaw a Ruvein. Ba negesseu bennac a wnelit urthaw ny cheffit atep amdanadunt rac y dristet a’e anhygaret. Ac ena e doeth e gaer Ruvein ac e velly e bu er wythnos honno ar e hyt. Pan elhei y deulu y yvet o eulestri ac e gemryt eu llewenyd nyt aei ef y gyt a nep onadunt wy. Pan elynt e warandaw kerdeu a didanuch nyt aei ef gyt a neb. Ny cheffit dim e ganthaw namen kyscu canys en e mynychet y kyskei, e wreic uwyaf a garei a welei trwy e hun y gyt ac ef. Pryt na chysgei enteu, ny handendei dim amdanei cany wydyat*

*o’r byt pa le yd oed*.[[361]](#footnote-361)

And when he awoke he could no longer live or breathe or exist because of the maiden he had seen in his sleep. Not a bone-joint of his, not the root of a fingernail, let alone anything larger, was not full of love for the maiden.   
Then his retinue said to him, ‘Lord,’ they said, ‘it is gone time for you to eat.’  
Then the emperor mounted his palfrey, the saddest man that anyone had ever seen, and he made his way to Rome. Whatever messages he was given, no answer was received because of his sadness and moroseness. And then he arrived in the city of Rome, and he was thus the whole week long. Whenever his retinue went to drink from golden vessels and to take their pleasure, he would not accompany them. He did nothing but sleep, for as often as he slept, he would see in his sleep the woman he loved best; when he was not sleeping, because of her he cared for nothing, for he did not know where in the world she was.[[362]](#footnote-362)

This is similar to Óengus:[[363]](#footnote-363)

[...] *Do:génai galar ndó in delb ad:condairc cen a acaldaim. Nícon:luid biad inna béolu. Boí and ind adaig danó airthirriuch. Co:n-accae timpán inna láim as bindem boíe. Seinnid céol ndó, Con:tuil friss. Biid and co íarnabárach. Nícon:ro-proind danó íarnabárach. Bliádain lán dó 7 sí oca aithigid fon séol sin co-ndid:corastar i seurc. Nícon:epert fri nech. Fa:ceird íarum 7 ní:fitir nech cid ro:mboí.*

It made him sick, the figure which he had seen without [her] having spoken to him. Food did not enter his mouth. She was there another night again then. He saw a *timpán* in her hand, the sweetest there was. She played music for him. He fell asleep to it (i.e. the music). He/She was there until the next day. He still could not eat the following day. He [was (like that)] for a full year, and she repeatedly going to him playing that music, so that it put him in a decline. He did not tell anybody. It afflicted him afterwards and nobody knew what was the matter with him.

Maxen cannot eat, and does nothing but sleep; Óengus cannot sleep, and is explicitly stated to have fallen ill after his dream-vision. The amount of text that is spent expressing their sickness emphasizes the impact their dream-visions have had; the loss of any type of lust or hunger is not simply a one-off thing, but continuous. Óengus' health continues to decline for a year as a result of seeing the maiden. Maxen, too, continues to waste away for over a week.

After both men have fallen ill, a physical search for the location of the maiden ensues. In both tales a retinue is sent ahead first, and the search only is completed after three years. These three years of searching might be seen as a transitionary period: while the protagonists are experiencing their love-sickness due to a figure appearing in their dreams, their retinues are trying to find what their dreams contained. It is a period that is static for our protagonists, but dynamic for their following. While Óengus and Maxen are bed-ridden, the search for their maidens ensues. From the protagonists their perspective, the time spanning their wasting sickness is the time that passes between the initial (metaphysical) meeting of the maiden and their final (physical) meeting. It is in this period that an attempt is made at making a connection between the secondary dream world and the primary world: the goal of the search is to locate markers or characters from the dreamscapes within the physically perceived world. Another thing to note is that, despite not being able to eat for an extended period of time, both Óengus and Maxen are able to persevere. Whether this is simply convenient for the narrative or a way to signify anomalous time-passage is open for interpretation. Considering it a expression of anomalous time-passage implies that the experience of having a dream-vision is liminal, as it indicates a metaphysical space in which time does not adhere to the rules as perceived in the primary world, i.e. temporal liminality. The wasting sickness then becomes a state in which the protagonists remain between passages of time.

The thematic similarities of love and sickness found in *AOe* and *BMW* indicate that there might have been a well-known theme that the texts draw on. Within the Aarne-Thompson Index, which describes common themes within folk literature, ‘falling in love through a dream’ is an established theme.[[364]](#footnote-364) There is a high number of texts containing this theme, and thus it seems propable that it was wide-spread and known to both audience and narrator. However, while the basis might be the same, i.e. both Óengus and Maxen meet their fated love in their dream-visions and subsequently fall ill until they find her, both texts approach the theme differently. Whereas Maxen dreams of a complete journey which he later replicates, Óengus solely dreams of the maiden. In both texts retinues are sent out before the protagonist joins the search, but in *AOe* the maiden is already found, and in *BMW* the journey suddenly contains toponymic references. The journey and the length of the dream-vison are the biggest discrepancies between the two tales: whereas Maxen enjoys a long vision and a long travel with a plethora of landscape markers and descriptions, Óengus simply sees and finds the maiden. It is then likely that the texts drew on a commonly known trope, such as ‘falling in love through a dream’, rather than each other.[[365]](#footnote-365)

## Conclusions

It is clear, then, that *Breuddwyd Maxen Wledig, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, *Aislinge Óenguso* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* all share both thematic similarities and discrepancies. The protagonists both journey or stay put, are awoken by noise or not, experience time in a non-linear fashion, fall in love, fall ill, or cure a demon. While there are themes shared between the stories, there is not one that is uniform across all four corpus texts. For example, all texts might be considered containing apparitions, but they seldom take the same form. All four texts feature figures of power, but only three contain historical figures. The function of these historical figures differs from text to text; Maxen, as the protagonist, supplements a political connection between Wales and Rome, whilst Cathal, Madog, and Iorwerth supply a socio-political context for the time in which the narrative takes place. It is interesting, too, to consider the protagonists of our stories: emperors, kings, scholars, sons of leaders, and a soldier. Whereas *BMW* and *AOe* clearly feature protagonists of status and importance, this can be debated for *AMC* and *BRh.* It is these sorts of oppositions that change the tone of the narratives, implying a humorous nature as discussed by Kirstie Chandler.

The only thematic constant is the gaining of knowledge through the dream-vision. For Maxen and Óengus it is the existence of their beloved, for Rhonabwy it is the witnessing of a historical event, and for MacConglinne it is the cure that ultimately might save the people of Ireland from starvation. The form this supernatural experience or occurrence then takes varies, but always has the same effect: the protagonist ends the tale with more knowledge (which would otherwise be impossible or very hard to obtain) than he started with.

The concept of the dreamscape as a liminal space, then, is particularly interesting. For example, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* contains an extensive journey through the space which is later mirrored when Maxen repeats his travels. This dreamscape is shown to exist in the ‘real’ primary world, as the journey is mirrored, but at the time of dreaming unknown to Maxen. It shows Maxen what *could* be: Elen and her father and brothers are already alive in the primary world, as shown later in the tale, but they are connected through this secondary dreamscape. Both the people and the places are revealed to exist in the primary world within the narratives, but the dream-vision offers something not yet in existence: the connection between Maxen and his beloved, a meeting, something he would otherwise not have been aware of. This connection links Elen and Maxen, i.e. Wales and Rome, cementing political relations to the reader. It seems to me, then, that the dreamscape is not a space entirely separate from the primary world, and instead exists in an in-between. This spatial liminality is emphasized by *BMW*’s toponymic descriptions. Similarly, Rhonabwy and MacConglinne spend a considerable amount of time traveling through the landscape envisioned. In *BRh*, the temporal discrepancies point towards the liminal nature of the dreamscape: Rhonabwy is able to identify the location, but the appearance of Arthur after the battle of Camlan indicate a non-linear passage of time. On top of that, there is a high amount of descriptions and saturation that separate the secondary dream-world from the primary world. This amount of descriptions also occurs in *AMC*, where MacConglinne travels through the land of plenty, a fantastical land made of food. It is not implied that this land is supposed to exist in the primary world, as opposed to *BMW* and *BRh*, but accepted as something grotesque. Still, MacConglinne’s journey through the dreamscape is essential, as through retelling his travels MacConglinne is able to cure king Cathal from the demon of gluttony residing in his throat. Without his journey through the dreamscape, there would have been no cure.

The only one protagonist not able to move through his dream-space is Óengus, who, much like Maxen, is plagued by the visage of his fated love. He dreams of a beautiful maiden, and then falls ill, unable to eat anything. Maxen experiences much of the same decay after his initial dream-vision. In *AMC* Cathal falls ill as well, after eating apples supposedly sent by his beloved. While Cathal’s illness, too, can be pinned onto his beloved, the cause of his illness is stated much more explicitly, almost as if parodying the theme of love-sickness due to fated love. However, whereas Cathal almost consumes a country’s worth of food, both Óengus and Maxen waste away. Both men are bedbound for a prolonged period of time, although they never actually pass away. To me, the period of their illness appears to be a transitionary period between the initial and final meeting of the maiden, which may even be considered anomalous to our protagonists, as they do not eat for a prolonged period of time, yet manage to stay alive.

In conclusion, it can be said that the four selected Insular dream narratives share themes and motifs, but no structural uniformity. This is reflected by the table as found at the start of this chapter, where all similarities between the tales can be found.

# Conclusion

This thesis aimed to examine shared themes and elements of medieval dream-vision literature in medieval Insular vernacular and secular dream narratives written in prose, i.e. *Aislinge Óenguso*, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, and provide an overview of said themes. This has been done both through the discussion of medieval European dream culture and its influence on the corpus and the discussion of characteristics in medieval (dream-) vision literature, which were later applied to the corpus, and resulted in a table of shared themes.

Through my analysis it has become clear that while the corpus-texts share thematic similarities and discrepancies, there is no uniformity in treatment of these themes and central elements of dream-vision literature. This is reflected in the table provided. There are shared themes such as journeying, love, and sickness, but none but one is consistent amongst all four texts. When examining the corpus of medieval Insular dream-narratives, the dreams demonstrate a wide range of capacities relating to circumstance, form, time, themes, and space. The dreams prove themselves to be flexible in regards to setting and purpose, ranging from fully contained journeys to simple appearances. The purpose of the texts themselves, as debated by scholars such as Kirstie Chandler, vary too: *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* establishes relationships between Wales and Rome, but *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* appear to be mostly humorous or comedic. While *Aislinge Óenguso* and *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* contain enough thematic parallels to consider them drawing from the same theme as denoted by the Aarne-Thompson index, there are too many discrepancies to establish a direct relationship between the two. The same might be said for the other texts; there are thematic constants, but the way these are used within the narratives implies that they were drawing on established themes within a literary category rather than each other directly.

The unifying factor between these Insular dream narratives, then, is the fact that they all transmit knowledge to the dreamer or protagonists, which would otherwise be incredibly hard or even impossible to gain. The themes may then be seen as a means to an end, a way to convey this knowledge: the dreams are liminal spaces of which the main purpose is to transmit knowledge. The spaces are formed by the information they convey, and do not have to form a literal space: for Óengus, his dream-vision solely consists of the appearance of a beautiful maiden, while for Maxen it takes the shape of a journey through the landscape leading him to his maiden. MacConglinne travels through a fantastical land of food, only to retain the information in order to repel a demon and save his own life; Rhonabwy travels through Powys, witnesses Arthur’s *gwyddbwll* game, and retains the information presented in the dream-vision, even if the narrative does not explicitly state to what ends this information can be used. It may be that for him, much like for Óengus and Maxen, the information is supposed to be of a personal nature. It is this concept that is central to all dream-vision literature: the information that is gathered by the protagonist through the vision experienced in a dream or dream-like state.

From this, I then propose the dreamscape to be an inherently liminal one. This is seen reflected in the way the landscapes are described in *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, but also in the anomalous time-passage displayed in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and, to some extent, *Aislinge Óenguso.* The space the dreams inhabit need to simultaneously exist and not exist: if they existed in the primary world, the knowledge our protagonists ‘need’ would already be obtainable, but if it did not exist, the knowledge would not be obtainable at all. Without this unobtainable knowledge, which is paradoxical in nature, the narratives would not be able to move forward. Indeed, it is the knowledge itself that drives the stories. Both in- and outside of the narratives this knowledge establishes connections: between peoples, locations, individuals, and even time. These concepts would otherwise be hard to connect, both for the protagonist and the audience. The existence of the unobtainable knowledge in relation to the protagonist creates the necessity for a space in which they can both exist, i.e. in order for the protagonists to directly obtain the unobtainable knowledge, without intermediaries, they need to be able to inhabit a shared space outside of the primary world. Because the unobtainable knowledge becomes obtainable if it exists in the primary world, it perpetually resides in an in-between, a secondary world of sorts. The direct transferal then *needs* to happen in a liminal space, a space between worlds. In the corpus, this space takes the shape of a dream or a dream-vision, which then expresses itself in various ways. The obtaining of unobtainable knowledge, then, is a major shared theme between the medieval Insular dream narratives, because it is, in large part, what these dream-visions are for.

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1. See e.g. Nora Chadwick, ‘Imbas Forosnai’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 4.2 (1935): 97-135; Peter Dinzelbacher, ‘The Way to the Other World in Medieval Literature and Art,’ *Folklore* 97:1 (1986): 70-87; Caitlin Matthews, *Celtic Visions: Seership, Omens and Dreams of the Otherworld*, (London: Watkins Media Limited, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Geraldine Parsons, ‘Aisling (Vision)’, in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, (Wiley Online Library, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Christina Cleary, *An Investigation of the Remscéla Tána Bó Cúailnge & An Edition and Translation of Aislinge Óenguso with Textual Notes*, PhD Dissertation, (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 2018); Parsons, ‘Aisling (Vision)’ (2017); Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson (ed.), *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*, (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1990); Kuno Meyer (ed.), *Aisling Tundail* (Cork, 2009) https://celt.ucc.ie/published/G207009A.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. M. Dillon, *Early Irish Literature*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 1948): 143; Dafydd Glyn Jones, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, in Bowen, G. (ed.), *Y Traddodiad Rhyddiaith yn yr Oesau Canol,* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1974): 177; J. K. Bollard, ‘Traddodiad a Dychan yn Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ [Tradition and Satire in The Dream of Rhonabwy], *Llên Cymru* 13 (1980): 155-163; S.J. Gwara, ‘Gluttony, Lust and Penance in the B-text of Aislinge Meic Conglinne’, *Celtica* 20, (1988): 53-72; Lisa M. Bitel, ‘*In Visu Noctis:* Dreams in European Hagiography and Histories, 450-900’, *History of Religions* vol. 31 no.1 (Aug., 1991): 39-59; Henry A. Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne, and Their Authors,’ *Studia Hibernica*, no. 29 (1995): 7-30; Helen Fulton, ‘Literature of the Welsh Gentry: Uses of the Vernacular in Medieval Wales’, in *Vernacularity in England and Wales*, *c. 1300-1500*, ed. Elisabeth Salter and Helen Wicker, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011): 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Parsons, ‘Aisling (Vision)’ (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more details on this topic, see Chapter II: ‘The Medieval (Dream-) Vision’, specifically the section ‘Medieval Insular (Dream-) Vision Literature’: 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Xiezhen Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature*, Ph.D. Dissertation Cardiff University (Cardiff, 2021): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Fulton, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2017); Brynley F. Roberts (ed.), *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 2005); Kirstie Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, *Studia Celtica* XXXVI (2002): 59-71; Melville Richards (ed.), *Breudwyt Rhonabwy,* (Cardiff 1948). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I use the term ‘theme’ throughout this thesis to denote the identifiable distinctive stylistic features of a genre or literary category, e.g. vision and dream-vision literature; i.e. a theme is ‘the subject of discourse, discussion, conversation, mediation, or composition; a topic’, OED s.v.1.a. *Theme*, n. Even though Zhao has examined whether her corpus of medieval Welsh texts spanning from 1100-1550 can be constituted to the same *breuddwyd* genre, a thematic comparison on the basis of generic characteristiscs of (dream-) vision literature has yet to be done. Instead of examining the corpus in context of a stand-alone genre or category, I examine whether or not they can be considered part of a recognised medieval literary category. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. I adhere to the spelling of the titles as given in the editions used within this thesis, i.e. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319-414; Roberts (ed.), *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (2005); Jackson (ed.). *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990); with the exception of Breuddwyd Rhonabwy, which is spelled Breudwyt Rhonabwy in Richards (ed.), *Breudwyt Rhonabwy* (1948) but usually spelled Breuddwyd Rhonabwy, see e.g. Bollard, ‘Traddodiad a Dychan’ (1980): 155-63; Edgar M. Slotkin, ‘The Fabula, Story, and Text of Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 18 (1989): 89-111; Kirstie Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies 18* (1989), 89-111; Thomas Øverby, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy: A Historical Narrative?*, MA Thesis Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, (Oslo: University of Oslo, Spring 2009); Helen Fulton, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, in: *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, (Wiley Online Library, 2017); Catherine McKenna, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, in *Arthur in the Celtic Languages: The Arthurian Legend in the Celtic Literatures and Traditions,* eds. by Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan and Erich Poppe, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019): 70-99; Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature’, in Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts ed al., *The Arthur of the Welsh Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020): 183-208. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 2. See e.g. Mary E. Giffin, ‘The Date of the Dream of Rhonabwy’, *Cymmrodorian Society Publications* (1959): 33-40; Vernam Hull, ‘The Verbal System of Aislinge Meic Conglinne’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* (1962-4): 325-378; Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter*, (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981); Kathryn Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); William Sayers, ‘Diet and fantasy in eleventh‐century Ireland: The vision of Mac Con Glinne’, *Food and Foodways,* 6:1 (1994): 1-17; Jean-Claude Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West’, *in Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, eds. by David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa, (New York: Oxford University Press 1999): 274-287; Lisa Lettau, *Conscious constructions of self: Dreams and visions in the Middle Ages*, (2008); Elizabeth Boyle, ‘Visionary Texts’, in A. Classen (ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Studies*, 3 vols., (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010): 145-181; Jesse Keshiako, *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); see also the footnotes throughout the following discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Nicole J.B. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature: a genre study,* PhD Thesis, (Cork: Universtiy College Cork, 2014); John Rhŷs*, Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by Celtic*

    *Heathendom*, (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1892). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See e.g. Jones, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibidem: 225-230. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See ‘Terminology’: 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The Irish Tale-Lists are a collection of texts documenting medieval Irish tales divided by category, for more information see ‘Theoretical Framework’: 13 and Gregory Toner, ‘Reconstructing the Earliest Irish Tale Lists’, *Éigse* 32 (2000): 88-120; Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland*, (Dublin: DIAS, 1980). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See ‘Chapter I: Historical Context’: 40-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. See ‘Chapter II: The Medieval (Dream-) Vision’: 50-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See ‘Chapter III: Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’: 66-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See ‘Chapter I: Historical Context’: 40-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See ‘Chapter II: The Medieval (Dream-) Vision’: 50-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See ‘Chapter III: Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’: 66-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. I.e. *Aislinge Óengusso, Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic,* and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy.* [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. J. Frow, *Genre*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 65; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 29-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Volmering*, Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Frow, *Genre* (2006): 24; Melissa Valiska Gregory, ‘Genre,’ *Victorian Literature and Culture* 46, no. 3-4 (2018): 715. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Ibidem: 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Gregory, ‘Genre’, (2018): 715-716. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Frow, *Genre*, (2008): 24; Gregory, ‘Genre’, (2008): 715; Volmering*, Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Frow, *Genre* (2008): 68; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature*, (2014): 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. H.R. Jauss, ‘Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature’, in Jauss, H. R. (ed.), *Toward an Aesthetic*

    *of Reception, Theory and History of Literature* 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982): 80-82; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cf. Frow, *Genre*, (2008): 68; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne’ (1995): 7; Catherine McKenna,‘ ‘What Dreams May Come Must Give Us Pause’: Breudwyt Ronabwy and the Red Book of Hergest’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 58 (2009): 72; Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature’, in Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts ed al., *The Arthur of the Welsh Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020): 183; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Cf. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 229-230. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980) and Toner, ‘Reconstructing’ (2000): 88-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Toner, ‘Reconstructing’ (2000): 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Although these four texts are not found together in a singular manuscript, I have grouped them together on the basis of language, subject matter, composition date, title, and type of text. The selection criteria will be expanded upon below. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The composition dates of these tales are estimated as follows: *Aislinge Óenguso*: 8th century, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic, Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, and *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*: 12th century. Details on the composition dates and the dates of the manuscript witnesses will be given in the discussion of the tales below. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See specifically ‘Medieval Insular (Dream-) Vision Literature’: 53-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See ‘Chapter III: Medieval Insular Dream-Narratives’: 66-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The summary of Aislinge Óenguso as given in this thesis is based on Christina Cleary’s edition and translation, see Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319-414. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus* (1934): 29; Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The Cauldron of Knowledge: A Companion to Early Irish Saga*, (Indiana, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014): 139; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus* (1934): 30-31; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 261-262. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus* (1934): 29; Ó Cathasaigh, *The Cauldron of Knowledge* (2014): 139; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 259-260. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ó Cathasaigh, *The Cauldron of Knowledge* (2014): 139; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus* (1934): 37; Ó Cathasaigh, *The Cauldron of Knowledge* (2014): 139; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ó Cathasaigh, *The Cauldron of Knowledge* (2014): 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus* (1934): 37; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 261; for more details on the various features see Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 274-292. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibidem; further explicitly stated in the Editorial policy, 313-315. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319-414; The first edition of Aislinge Óenguso was a 19th-century diplomatic edition accompanied by a translation by Edward Müller. In 1918, Rudolf Thurneysen published corrections to this edition in an article, and Patricia Kelly published a diplomatic edition online in Thesaurus Lingae Hibernicae. The first ‘critical’ edition of the text was provided by Francis Shaw in 1934, accompanied by a translation. Shaw followed a policy of restoring the text to standardised Classical Old Irish, removing Middle Irish features in the language and standardising the orthography. Cleary’s critical edition is the most recently published edition, and includes a translation as well. See Eduard Müller [ed. and tr.], ‘Two Irish tales’, *Revue Celtique* 3 (1876–1878): 342–360; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 260; Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus* (1934): 30-31 and 38-39; for Patricia Kelly’s edition see https://www.ucd.ie/tlh/text/pk.tlh.002.text.html. Apart from editions, various translations have been produced over the years; Gantz and Kenneth Jackson have provided additional (loose) translations into English, Christian Guyonvarc’h and Françoise Le Roux into French, Maartje Draak and Frida de Jong into Dutch, and Tatyana Mikhailova into Russian. Additionally, Tomás Ó Cathasaigh produced new translations and interpretations of selected sections of Aislinge Óenguso: see also: Christian Guyonvarc’h, and Françoise le Roux, ‘Le rêve d’Oengus’, *Ogam* 18 (1918): 117-121; Kenneth Jackson, *A Celtic Miscellany: Translations from the Celtic Literatures*, (Hardmondsworth, 1951): 39; Maartje Draak and Frida de Jong, *Van Helden, Elfen en Dichters: de oudste Verhalen uit Ierland*, (Amsterdam, 1979): 202-207; Tatyana Mikhailova, Videniye Engusa, *Pokhishcheniye byka iz Kualnge*, (Moscow, 1985): 59-65, Jeffrey Gantz, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas*, (Hardmondsworth, 1982): 108-112; Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Knowledge and power in Aislinge Óenguso’, in A. Alqvist, and V. Čapková (eds), Dán do Oide, *Essays in memory of Conn R. Ó Cléirigh*, (Dublin, 1997): 431–438. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. James McKillop, ‘Breuddwyd Macsen [Maxen] Wledig’, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); Ben Guy, ‘Constantine, Helena, Maximus: on the appropriation of Roman history in medieval Wales, c.800-1250’, *Journal of Medieval History* 44:4 (2018): 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Francesco Benozzo, *Landscape Perception in Early Celtic Literature*, (Celtic Studies Publications Aberystwyth, 2004); Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Van Hamel Codecs, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, https://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/Breudwyt\_Maxen\_Wledic.; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Roberts (ed.), *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (2005): xi; Van Hamel Codecs, *Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 16*, https://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/Aberystwyth,\_National\_Library\_of\_Wales,\_Peniarth\_MS\_16; Zhao, Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Roberts (ed)., *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, (2005): xii; Van Hamel Codecs, *Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 4*, https://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/Aberystwyth,\_National\_Library\_of\_Wales,\_Peniarth\_MS\_4; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): xiii; Van Hamel Codecs, *Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111*, https://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/Oxford,\_Jesus\_College,\_MS\_111 [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Zhao, *Dreamns in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Jesus College MS 111, fol. 172r/col. 697, line 39; Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 11; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 110; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): xxiv-xxv; Guy, ‘Constantine, Helena’ (2018): 384-385; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Brynley Roberts, ‘Breuddwyd Maxen Wledig: Why? When?’, in *CSANA Yearbook 3-4*,

    eds., Joseph Falaky Nagy and Leslie Ellen Jones (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005): 311-312. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): lxxxv-lxxxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Guy, ‘Constatine, Helena, Maximus’, (2018): 384. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. See e.g. Øverby, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (2009); The earliest modern critical analysis of the text is found in Sir John Rhŷs’s comparative study of Breudwyt Maxen and the Irish Aislinge Oenguso *in Lectures on the Origin of Growth of Religion as illustrated by Celtic Heathendom* in 1892. A response to this study was written by George Brewer and Bedwyr Lewis Jones, who refute Rhŷs’s argument that Elen is a primitive Celtic dawn-goddess, as suggested by the placenames in Breudwyt Maxen and Elen’s epithet lluyddog. Thomas Gerald Hunter has expanded on the place-names within the tales, and Francesco Benozzo reflects on the landscapes in Breudwyt Maxen as a ‘symbolic form’. Apart from that, Xiezhen Zhao has discussed the text extensively in her PhD *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature*; see also Rhŷs, *Lectures on the Origin* (1892): 167-75; George W. Brewer and Bedwyr Lewis Jones, ‘Popular Tale Motifs and Historical Tradition in ‘Breudwyt Maxen’, *Medium Ævum* vol. 44 no. 1/2 (1975): 23-30; Benozzo, *Landscape Perception,* (2004); Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 64-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ifor Williams, *Breuddwyd Maxen, gyda Rhagymadrodd, Nodiadau a Geirfa Lawn* (Bangor: Jarvis & Foster, 1908; 2nd edn. 1920; 3rd edn. 1927); George W. Brewer, *Astudiaeth Feirniadol o’r Chwedl Breuddwyd Macsen*, (unpublished Master’s thesis, University of Wales, Bangor, 1965); Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Roberts (ed)., *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 167-175. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Andrew Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997): 85; Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan and Erich Poppe, *Arthur in the Celtic Languages : The Arthurian Legend in Celtic Literatures and Traditions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019): 76- 80; Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature’, in Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman, Brynley F. Roberts ed al., *The Arthur of the Welsh Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 2020): 184; for the translation on which this summary is based, see Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 297- 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. George W. Brewer and Bedwyr Lewis Jones, ‘Popular Tale Motifs and Historical Tradition in ‘Breudwyt Maxen’’, *Medium Ævum* vol. 44 no. 1/2 (1975): 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2020): 184; Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997): 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997): 31; McKenna, ‘What Dreams May Come’ (2009): 70; Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2020): 183; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Melville Richards (eds)., *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, (Cardiff, 1948): ix-xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Ibidem; Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (tr.), *The Mabinogion*, Everyman’s Library 97, 2nd ed., (London: Dent, 1974). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Sioned Davies (tr.), *The Mabinogion*, (Oxford, 2007): x. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. McKenna, ‘What Dreams May Come’ (2009): 70-71; Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2020): 183; see also Daniel Huws, ‘Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 21 (Summer 1991): 1-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. McKenna, ‘What Dreams May Come’ (2009): 72; Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature’ (2020): 183; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Mary E. Giffin, ‘The Date of the Dream of Rhonabwy’, *Cymmrodorian Society Publications* (1959): 40; T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi’, *Transactions of the Hounourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1970-71): 266; Eric P. Hamp, ‘On Dating and Archaism in the Pedeir Keinc’, *Transactions of the Hounourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1972-73): 99; J. Angela Carson, ‘The Structure and Meaning of The Dream of Rhonabwy’, *Philological Quarterly* 53, 3 (Summer 1974): 289-290; Proinsias Mac Cana, *Writers of Wales: The Mabinogi*, (Cardiff, 1977): 87-89; Edgar M. Slotkin, ‘The Fabula, Story, and Text of Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 18 (1989): 89- 90; Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997): 86; Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2020): 184 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Hamp, ‘On Dating’ (1972-73): 99; Charles-Edwards, ‘The Date of the Four Branches’, (1970-71): 266; Slotkin, ‘The Fabula, Story, and Text’, (1989): 89- 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Mac Cana, *Writers of Wales*, (1977): 87-89; Slotkin, ‘The Fabula, Story, and Text’ (1989): 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997): 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Lloyd-Morgan, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2020): 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Carson, ‘The Structure and Meaning’, (1974): 289-290; Giffin, ‘The Date’ (1959): 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. See e.g. Thomas Parry, *Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg hyd 1900*, trans. and expanded by Harold Idris Bell, *A History of Welsh Literatur*e (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955); Jones, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (1974); Carson, ‘The Structure and Meaning’ (1974); Slotkin, ‘The Fabula, Story, and Text’ (1989); Sarah Lynn Higley, ‘Perlocutions and Perlections in The Dream of Rhonabwy: An Untellable Tale’, *Exemplaria* 2(2) (1990); Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997); Kirstie Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’, *Studia Celtica* XXXVI (2002): 59-71; McKenna, ‘What Dreams May Come’ (2009); . [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Melville G. Richards, [ed.], *Breudwyt Ronabwy: allan o’r Llyfr coch o Hergest*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1948); Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 297- 312; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 73-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. The summary of the text in this thesis is based on Kuno Meyer’s translation, Kuno Meyer [tr.], *Aislinge Meic Conglinne: The Vision of Mac Conglinne, a Middle-Irish wonder tale*, In Parentheses Publications Medieval Irish Series Cambridge, (Ontario 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Lahney Preston-Matto, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne*, (Syracuse N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2010): xii; for more details on the historical context, see Introduction xiv-liii of this book. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Preston-Matto, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* (2010): liii; Ailís Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, *Satirical Narrative in Early Irish Literature*, Ph.D. Dissertation NUI Maynooth (2007): 177; Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne.’ (1995): 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne’ (1995): 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): xxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Ibidem: xxiii; Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, *Satirical Narrative* (2007): 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Dillon, *Early Irish Literature* (1948): 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Gerard Murphy, *Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland,* (Dublin, 1955): 56; A. Harrison, *The Irish Trickster*, (Sheffield, 1989): 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne’ (1995): 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ibidem: 28; Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): xxiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Vernam Hull, ‘The Verbal System of Aislinge Meic Conglinne’, *Zeitschrift für Keltische Philologie* (1962-4): 325-378. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. See e.g. Hull (1962-4), Jefferies (1995), and Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh (2007): 177-182. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne’ (1995): 29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. The first to publish both recensions with translations was Kuno Meyer in 1892, together with a critical introduction by Professor Wilhelm Wollner of Leipzig University. Professor Kenneth H. Jackson has published an edition and translation of the B recension in 1990. More recently, Patrick K. Ford and Lahney Preston-Matto have produced translations of the text, following Rudolf Thurneysen, who published a translation in 1901; see also Rudolf Thurneysen, ‘Mac Conglinnes Vision’, in: Thurneysen, Rudolf, *Sagen aus dem alten Irland, Berlin* (1901); Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990); Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne’ (1995): 7; Patrick K. Ford, *The Celtic poets: songs and tales from early Ireland and Wales*, (Belmont, Massachusetts: Ford & Bailie, 1999); Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, *Satirical Narrative* (2007): 177; Preston-Matto, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* (2010): liii; for further research done see e.g. Ní Mhaoldomhnaigh, *Satirical Narrative* (2007), Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne’ (1995); Hull, ‘The Verbal System’ (1962-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Jackson (ed.), *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990); Kuno Meyer,[ tr.], *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, (2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. See ‘Chapter III: Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’: 66-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. OED s.v.1. *dream.* [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. cf. C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary founded on Andrews’ edition of Freund’s Latin*

     *dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879; repr. 1966). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. OED s.v.1.a. *vision.* [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. OED s.v.1. *dream vision.* [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. GPC s.v. *breuddwyd*; cf. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Ibidem: 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Brynley F. Roberts, ed., *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advance Studies (2005): 1, lines 18-19; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. In *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, Maxen experiences his first vision whilst asleep, but the subsequent visions of the beautiful maiden are less clearly experienced in a sleeping state. In how much this repetition then can be considered a dream or extension of the dream itself is discussed in Chapter III: ‘Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’: 62-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 5-6 and 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): p. 1, line 0, and p. 21, line 9; Jesus College 111, col. 555, line 10, and col. 138v, lines 16-23; McKenna, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2019): 61; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. eDIL s.v. *aislinge*. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980); Toner, ‘Reconstructing’ (2000): 88-120; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 358-359. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. See Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980): 33-40 for more details about lists A, B, and C, and 41-65 for an edition of the Irish texts; see also Toner, ‘Reconstructing’ (2000): 88-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. The full list of *prímscela* is as follows: *togla, tána, tochmarca, catha uatha, immrama, oiite (=aideda), fessa, forbasa, echtrai, aithid, airgne,* and additionally, as mentioned in the appendix, *tomadmann, fisi, serca, sluagid*, and *tochomlada*; Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980): 87-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. The categories mentioned are: *tana, echtrai, comperta, (prim)chatha, togla, fessa, buili, tochmarca, aithid, togla*, and *tomadmann, fisi, serca, sluagid,* and *tochomlada*; ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980): 89; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Ibidem: 361; cf. eDil s.v. 2 *baile*; eDil s.v. *fís*. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980): 361; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 81-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980): 360. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 81-82. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. See ‘Terminology’: 27-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 11; *Fessid co medón oidche ann. Iar sin ticc aingel Dé chuci for in corthi 7 fo-róbairt in aislingthi do f[h]oillsiugud dó.* ‘He remained there until midnight. Then an angel of God came to him on the pillar-stone, and began to manifest a vision unto him’, transl. Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (2000): 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. E.J. Gwynn and Walter J. Purton [ed.] [tr.], ‘The monastery of Tallaght’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 29 C (1911-1912): 121-123; Volmering, Medieval Irish Vision Literature (2014): 82; Francis Shaw, *The Dream of Óengus: Aislinge Óenguso*, (London: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1934): 43: *Boí Óengus in n-aidchi n-aili inna chotlud. Co n-accae ní, in n-ingin cucci for crann síuil dó. Is sí as áilldem ro boí i n-Ére*. ‘Another night Oengus was asleep. While he was in bed, he saw something, a girl coming towards him. She was the most beautiful that was in Ireland.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. ‘The saint revealed it in a vision to the priest who was at the altar’. J.G. O’Keeffe (ed. and trans.), ‘Cáin Domnaig’, Ériu 2 (1905): 204-5; Vernam Hull, ‘Cáin Domnaig’, *Ériu* vol. 20 (1966): 156; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 82-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Ibidem: 200-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Ibidem; R. Atkinson (ed. and trans.), *The Passions and the Homilies from the Leabhar Breac: Text, Translation and Glossary*, TLS 2, (Dublin: The Academy, 1887): 52, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Cf. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. There is little known about the possible composition date of both *Nía son of Lugna Fer Trí* and *Aislinge Cormaic* (‘Cormac’s Dream’). James Carney has edited and translated the text based on three separate manuscript texts, which can be dated to the 14th/15th century. E.J. Gwynn mentions in a footnote that *Nia mor mac Lugna Firtri* is mentioned in the Book of Ballymote (1384-1406). See E.J. Gwynn, ‘The Three Drinking-Horns of Cormac UA Cuinn’, *Ériu* vol. 2 (1905): 188; James Carney, ‘Nia son of Lugna Fer Trí’*, Éigse*: a Journal of Irish Studies 2 (1940): 187, 192-193. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Cf. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 83-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Ibidem: 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Ibidem: 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Zhao bases her argument on the work of both Frow and Wolf, who argue that a text that tells a story constructs a schematic world, a world with limited reality. These ‘projected worlds’ consist of ‘time, space, categories of actors and settings, causality and motivation- and the interpretation they call for. There is a wide range of such worlds, which, according to Frow, perpetuates the idea that there is an inherent connection between the concept of genre and that of a literary world. This is the basis on which Zhao argues that dreams can be seen as world-building. See Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*, (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. J.R.R. Tolkien, ‘On Fairy-Stories’, in J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf; Simith of Wootton Major; The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975): 43, 50, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds* (2012): 377; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Ibidem: 13-14; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. See e.g. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977). Van Gennep’s work was originally written in French (1909), and it is the English translation (1960) by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee that gained traction. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Van Gennep does not state where he draws the concept from; some authors have argued that it originates from limes (e.g. Froman & Foster Jr.), others have argued it originates from limen (e.g. Victor Turner) or even both words (e.g. Moran). According to the Oxford Latin dictionary both words have the same root ‘limus’, and their meanings overlap. Finding the exact root or origin of the concept then is somewhat complicated, as the concept itself refers to an ‘in between-ness’, which is found in the meaning of both words. See also Victor Turner, ‘Variations on a Theme of Liminality’ in *Secular Ritual* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977): 36-37; D. Moran, *An extract from questions of the liminal in the fiction of Julio Cortázar*, (Oxford: Legenda, 2000); W.J. Froman & J.B. Foster Jr., ‘General Introduction’ in W.J. Froman & J.B. Foster Jr. (eds.), *Thresholds of Western culture: identity, postcoloniality, transnationalism*, (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002); Jasper Balduk, *On Liminality: Conceptualizing ‘in between-ness’*, Master’s Thesis Human Geography, (Radbout University, 2008): vi-xi; Harry Wels, Kees van der Waal, Andrew Spiegel & Frans Kamsteeg, ‘Victor Turner and liminality: An introduction’, *Anthropology Southern Africa* 34:1-2 (2011): 2; Iver B. Neumann, ‘Introduction to the Forum on Liminality’, *Review of International Studies* 38 (2) (2012): 473-479; Bianca Teodorescu; Razvan Alexandru Calin, ‘The Base Articulations of the Liminality Concept,’ *Review of European Studies* 7, no. 12 (2015): 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Agnes Horvath, Bjø Thomassen, and Harald Wydra, *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* (Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2015): 2; Jeremy DeAngelo, *Outlawry, Liminality, and Sanctity in the Literature of the Early Medieval North Atlantic* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018): 61; cf. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (1960). [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Augustine Nwoye, ‘Liminality’, in: Runehov A.L.C., Oviedo L. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Teodorescu and Calin, ‘The Base Articulations’ (2015): 98; Wels, van der Waal, Spiegel, and Kamsteeg, ‘Victor Turner’ (2011): 1; Balduk, *On Liminality* (2008): vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Wels, van der Waal, Spiegel, and Kamsteeg, ‘Victor Turner’ (2011): 1; Balduk, *On Liminality* (2008): vii; Turner, ‘Variations on a Theme’ (1977): 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. E.g. anthropology, Derridean deconstruction, Lacanian psycho-analysis, Foucauldian and Deleuzian philosophy, feminism, media studies, narratology, literary analysis, phenomenology, social studies, postcolonialism, urban sociology, and cultural studies. Postmodernism questioned the possibility of linear movements, because linear processes easily indicate the presence of dualism and reveal a hierarchized binary opposition. Poststructuralism deconstructs these oppositions. Jacques Derrida argued that ‘in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence [...] but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two controls the other [...].’. This led to the deconstruction of linear movements, binary oppositions, and the ambivalence of liminality. Derrida eventually proposed a science that would examine margins, limits, and liminality, and proposed the term ‘limitrophy’ concerning ‘what sprouts or grows at/around the limit by maintaining the limit, but also what feeds the limit, generates it, raises it, and complicates it’ cf. Klapcsik, *Liminality in Fantastic Fiction* (2012): 1, 9-12; Norma T. Mertz, *Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2006): 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Ibidem: 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Wels, van der Waal, Spiegel, and Kamsteeg, ‘Victor Turner’ (2011): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Horvath et al., *Breaking Boundaries* (2015): 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. See ‘Chapter III: Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’: 66-86, specifically ‘Time and Travel’: 68-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias’ (1984): 46-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Lisa Weston, ‘Women’s Medicine, Women’s Magic: The Old English Metrical Childbirth Charms’, *Modern Philology*, vol. 92, no. 3 (1995): 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Joseph Falaky Nagy, ‘Liminality and Knowledge in Irish Tradition’, *Studia Celtica* 16 (1981): 135. In her PhD thesis, Zhao mentions liminality very few times: to discuss Revelations of Divine Love, in her discussion of Katherine Lynch, and her conclusion. She writes that Lynch ‘emphasises the liminal state of dreaming’, stating that while her own thesis does not focus on ‘[...] the relationship between the body and the consciousness in dreams, the marginal status of dreams is nevertheless of interest to us particularly as regards the perception of space and time by the dreamer and the reader of the dream narrative involved in presenting literary dreams as a world-building activity’; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 4; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. See ‘Chapter II: The Medieval (Dream-) Vision’: 50-65 below. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision* (1988): 1-2; Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 5-6; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 4-5; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. See also ‘Chapter II: The Medieval (Dream-) Vision’: 50-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Kruger*, Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 4-5; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 49-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Robin Chapman Stacey, *Law and the Imagination in Medieval Wales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018): 23-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Stacey, *Law and the Imagination* (2018): 213-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between law and literature, see Stacey and Karras, *Law and the Imagination* (2018). For a discussion on history, literature, and medieval textuality, see Brian Stock, ‘History, Literature, and Medieval Textuality’, *Yale French Studies* no. 70, *Images of Power Medieval History/Discourse/Literature* (1986): 7-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 7-16; Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams’ (1999): 7-16; 275-276; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Ibidem: 15; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 64-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Ibidem: 58-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 58-69; Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams’ (1999): 279; cf. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. McKenna, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2019): 61; Zhao also observes this, see Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 54, 76-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. The number of extant copies of Macrobius’s work hint towards its popularity in the medieval period. This popularity was also reflected in the fact that it was used or referred to by contemporary writers such as Boethius, Isidore of Seville, Bede, Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, and Chaucer. But, while the influence of the Commentarii was far-reaching, its influence on medieval Insular literature remains unclear, as there is no Irish or Welsh translation of the Commentarii known to us. See Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 21-32, 57-82 ; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 54; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 7; for an edition of the text see Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, and James Willis, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013); for a translation see Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, and William Harris Stahl, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, 3rd printed, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies, No. 48, (New York etc.: Columbia U.P, 1973). [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 53; there is evidence that the *Commentarii* was spread throughout medieval Wales and Ireland: the earliest extant manuscript of Macrobius’ *Commentarii* is an incomplete 8th-century manuscript believed to be copied in the British Isles. In the late 11th century, the text was found throughout western Europe, see also: Alfred Hiatt, ‘The map of Macrobius before 1100’, *Imago Mundi* 59:2 (2007): 149-176 (154), and for more information about the reception of the *Commentarii* see Albrecht Hüttig, *Macrobius Im Mittelalter: Ein Beitrag Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte Der Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, Freiburger Beiträge Zur Mittelalterlichen Geschichte, bd. 2. (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 21-23; Macrobius, *In Somnium*. I.3.7.; Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams’ (1999): 275-276, 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 53; Macrobius, *In Somnium*. I.3.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Ibidem: I.3.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 19-20; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. McKenna, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2019): 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. See ‘Applying Macrobius’ Dream Categories’: 46-48. After Macrobius’s dominance in the twelfth century, Aristotlean ideas rose. Intellectual changes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries challenged the views of dreams as something with a double and middle nature. The translation of Aristotle’s *De somno et vigilia, De somniis*, and *De divinatione per somnum* into Latin caused a shift, and reinforced the idea that dreams were part of somatic and psychological process. The texts also reintroduced the possibility that dreams did not have a divine origin, but still maintained the idea that some dreams may signify or cause future events. Instead of the signal coming from a higher power, it was a natural physiological or psychological process signifying a starting illness, which would be ‘too small to be observed in waking moments, becoming evident in sleeping’. Late-medieval dream thought would thus be dominated by Aristotlean ideas, although this is not to say that Aristotle was accepted uncritically by late-medieval dream theorist, nor that other dream authorities were rejected. Another majorly influential work in the Middle Ages was the Bible, but as I am not examining eschatological visions, I will only briefly expand on this here. The Bible considers dreams a nocturnal phenomenon, and there is a clear division between a waking vision and a dream. While daydreams are not considered dreams, nightmares are. God *can* be the origin of a dream, but they could also be false. This created a distrust towards dreams, which is reflected by e.g. Augustine of Hippo's dismissal of *Visio Sancti Pauli* in *De Genesi ad litteram,* which proposes a threefold distinction of perception, i.e. *uisio corporalis* (a vision perceived through bodily senses, e.g. sight), *uisio spiritualis* or *imaginatiua* (a vision perceived in spirit, e.g. through the imagination), and the *uisio intellectualis* (a vision perceived in the intellect, or an understanding of sorts, of abstract concepts; knowledge of God). While this classification did not provide a tool for recognizing the reliability or validity of visions, it did become a standard categorization in the Middle Ages. To read more about dream theory in the fourteenth century, see Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 89-122. See also Jacques Le Goff, ‘Christianity and Dreams (Second to Seventh Century)’, in Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans., Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988): 193-231; Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams’ (1999); Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 55-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 15; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Ibidem: 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. See ‘Chapter III: Medieval Insular Dream-Narratives’: 66-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. I.e. enigmatic dreams (*somnium*), prophetic visions (*visio*), oracular dreams (*oraculum*), nightmares (*insomnium*), and apparitions (*visum*), of which the latter two were excluded by Macrobius’s discussion because he did not believe them to hold any prophetic significance. See Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (1992): 21-23; Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams’ (1999): 275-276, 278; McKenna, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2019): 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. McKenna, ‘Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2019): 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. GPC s.v.1 *drych.* [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Ibidem: 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. See e.g. Dillon, *Early Irish Literature* (1948): 143; Bollard, ‘Traddodiad a Dychan yn Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (1980): 155-63. For a more extensive list, see footnote 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Antti Aarne, and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folk-Tale: A Classification and Bibliography: Antti Aarne’s Verzeichnis Der Märchentypen*, 2nd reved. F.f. Communications, No. 184, (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961); Brewer and Lewis Jones, ‘Popular Tale Motifs’ (1975): 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Schmitt, ‘The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams’ (1999): 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. *De Genesi ad Litteram*, XII.12 (esp. §§6-12); Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 6; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Ibidem: 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision* (1988): 6-7; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Ibidem: 4-5; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 4-5; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 50-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Dinzelbacher, *Mittelalterliche Visionsliteratur* (1989): 29; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision literature* (2014): 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Cf. C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary founded on Andrews’ edition of Freund’s Latin*

     *dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879; repr. 1966); see also ‘Terminology: *Dreams, Visions, and Dream-Visions*’ in ‘Introduction’: 27-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Dinzelbacher, *Mittelalterliche Visionsliteratur* (1989): 29; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. See ‘Reflections of Central Elements of Medieval (Dream-) Literature’: 55-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Ibidem: 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Ibidem: 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Ibidem: 11-12; cf. Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur* (1989): 229-230; based off of Dinzelbacher Volmering also proposes the following elements that distinguish visions from other revelatory literature: the visionary is usually a man who usually reacts to the vision by changing his life (positively); the vision happens suddenly; it contains detailed descriptions of multiple spaces; the visionary actively engages with these surroundings, even reacting emotionally to them; the vision is a tangible and intensive experience understood to be real; the relationship between the characters is usually impersonal; the length of the vision varies from a ‘very short time’ to multiple weeks. These then are typical characteristics, but need not all appear in any given vision. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Elizabeth Solopova, and Stuart D. Lee, *Key Concepts in Medieval Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Solopova, *Key Concepts* (2007): 175; See also ‘Reflections of Central Elements of Medieval Dream-Vision Literature’: 55-63, and Chapter III: ‘Medieval Insular Dream Narratives’: 66-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. For a more complete overview of Irish vision literature, see Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Ibidem: 16-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. I.e. be written in first-person singular, present events as seen in a vision or dream by a narrator, contain an introductory scene or prologue describing the circumstances of the vision, combine narrative with meditation and interpretation of the events described, containing themes of religion, philosophy, politics, satire, or fiction; cf. Elizabeth Solopova, *Key Concepts in Medieval Literature* (2007): 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Parsons, ‘*Aisling* (Vision)’, (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. I.e. the vision is experienced as a supernatural phenomenon, and transports the visionary to a different location, albeit in a possible metaphysical way, and is experienced to be real. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Parsons, ‘*Aisling* (Vision)’, (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. See also ‘Dreams and Dreaming in Medieval Europe’: 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Steven F. Kruger, ‘Dream Visions’, in: *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, (Wiley Online Library, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Parsons, ‘*Aisling* (Vision)’ (2017); for a full edition of *Aislinge Con Longes* see Carney, *Nía Son of Lugna Fer Trí* (1940): 187-197. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Ibidem; Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Volmering, *Medieval Irish Vision Literature* (2014): 85; Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Steven F. Kruger, ‘Dream Visions’, in: *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, Wiley Online Library (2017); Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Bitel, ‘In Visu Noctis’ (1991): 40; Kruger, ‘Dream Visions’ (2017).. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Parsons, ‘*Aisling* (Vision)’, (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Ibidem: 321. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Ibidem: 322-323. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Ibidem: 324-329. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Cf. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 1; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. *A’r heul oed uchel ar er awyr uch e benn a’r gwres en uawr ac e doeth ksycu arnaw. Sef a wnaeth y weissyon ysteuyll castellu taryaneu en e gylch ar beleider gwaewr rac e tragwres. Tarean eurgrwyder a dodassant a dan e benn ac e velly e kyscus er amperauder. Ac ena e gwelei vreudwyt*. Roberts [ed.], *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, (2005): 1-2, cf. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, *The Mabinogion,* London (1974) and Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Roberts [ed.], *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic*, (2005): 2-3; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 104-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Ibidem; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 104-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. N.B. the journey is repeated later on, but does not reappear to Maxen in the form of a vision. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. *Ac ar y parth arall y gwelynt croen dinawet melyn ar y parth. A blaenbren oed gan vn onadunt a gaffei vynet ar y croen hwnnw. [...] A Ronabwy, hyt na allei na chyscu na gorffowys, medylyaw a ortuc bot yn llei boen idaw mynet ar groen y dinawet melyn y’r part y gyscu. Ac yno y kysgwys*.

     Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 2-3; cf. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 215-216. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Kirstie Chandler argues that this is intentionally done and humourous: it is a stark juxtaposition to the usual lodgings offered in medieval narratives. See Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2002): 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 2; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Ibidem; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Ibidem; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. *Fessid co medón oidche ann. Iar sin ticc aingel Dé chuci for in corthi 7 fo-róbairt in aislingthi do f[h]oillsiugud dó. Céin boí in t-aingel forsin c[h]loich ba ro-the dó; in tan téged for imaire uad ba so-f[h]ulaing dó. Conid de-sin fil Imaire in Aingil hi fhaithchi Chorccaige; ní boí-sium matain cen drúcht. Do-lluid uad in t-aingel deód n-aidche. Cumaid-sium iarum cennp[h]urt mbec uad fodén bid imchubaid ré aisnéis amal ro fhaillsiged dó, 7 at-aig ann sin co matain co cendp[h]ort a aislingt[h]i do léri lais.*  
     Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 11-12; cf. Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (2000): 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. This is opposed to the lodgings usually offered in medieval narratives, and can also be found in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*; see Candler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2002): 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. See Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 4-7 *Do-c*[*hummlai i cend sétta* [...]- [...] *isin tig oíged co matain;* Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (2000): 5-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 103, 215; Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 1; Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 326. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Knowledge and power’ (1997): 433, note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Ó Cathasaigh, ‘Knowledge and power’ (1997): 433, note 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 321. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (2000): 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Cf. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 215-216. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997): 86; I should also note that Maxen does fall asleep with his head resting on a golden shield. While it is not an identical circumstance, it is interesting to see that both Welsh tales include the resting of a head on an object, while neither of the Irish texts explicitly do so. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Chadwick, ‘Imbas Forosnai’ (1935): 97-135; Nagy, ‘Liminality and Knowledge’ (1981): 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Ibidem: 136-137. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. E.g. ‘A bull-feast is gathered by the men of Erin, in order to determine their future king; that is, a bull used to be killed by them and thereof one man would eat his fill and drink its broth, and a spell of truth was chanted over him in his bed. Whosoever he would see in his sleep would be king, and the sleeper would perish if he uttered a falsehood’, Whitley Stokes, ‘The Destruction of Da Derga’s Hostel’ *Epic and Saga* (New York: P. F. Collier & son, Harvard Classics no. 49, 1910). [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. For further reading on the Irish influence on medieval Welsh literature, see Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. See also ‘Medieval Insular (Dream-) Vision Literature’: 55; cf. Parsons, ‘*Aisling* (Vision)’, (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 21; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales* (1980): 89; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319. See also ‘Medieval Insular Vocabulary surrounding Dreams and Dreaming’, specifically 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. See ‘Reflections of Medieval Thought in Insular Dream-Narratives’: 44-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. I.e. the tale must be considered either *aisling* or *breuddwyd* based on their surviving title or reference to their title in the medieval period; the tale is written in the vernacular (i.e. Irish or Welsh); the text has a non-religious focus (i.e. can contain religious elements but is not written as a religious piece of writing); the text is prose; the tale is used as a stand-alone narrative; the narrative is experienced in a dream or a dream-like state; there is an encounter with the supernatural. It has a basic frame, which consists of a lead-up to the dreamer having a dream, and the dream itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Solopova, *Key Concepts in Medieval Literature* (2007): 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Kruger, ‘Dream Visions’ (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. I.e. Maxen falls asleep surrounded by his retinue, whilst Rhonabwy is in the company of two fellow men, as will be explicated below. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. As can be seen, the beautiful maiden and angel are grouped together in the apparition category; they are considered variations on the supernatural encounter that is central to medieval dream visions, as discussed in the previous chapter. Within this table, the apparition functions as a supernatural encounter. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. The themes outside of the (dream-) vision will not be explicitly be expanded upon in a separate paragraph, but briefly discussed here, as they are not major themes. Outside of the dream sequence, the corpus texts share two themes, albeit explicitly or implicitly. Conquest is featured in both *BMW* and *AOe*: after seven years in Wales, emperor Maxen receives a letter which threatens him and announces a new emperor. On his way back to Rome, Maxen conquers France and Burgundy and all the countries as far as Rome. Elen’s brothers help him lay siege on Rome, and conquer various parts after Maxen has taken his position as emperor of Rome. In *AOe*, the king of de *síd* refuses to come to the Dagda, and Ailill’s people and the Dagdae’s troop set out towards the *síd* and destroy it. *BRh* contains implicit themes of conquest due to the Battle of Camlan mentioned, and the Battle of Badon which is played out through the game of *gwyddbwyll*, but ultimately inconclusive. Both Maxen and Óengus travel outside of their dream towards their beloved, and MacConglinne travels through Ireland to get to Cork, where he eventually is granted his vision. Rhonabwy is on a quest when he finally arrives at the guest-house he receives his dream in, but is not explicitly said to travel. Cf. Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (2000): 5, Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 109-110, 214, 216, 222, 225; Cleary ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 392-396. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Ifor Williams, *Breuddwyd Maxen,* (Bangor, 1920): 1-2; Benozzo, *Welsh Landscapes* (2004): 124-125. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Jones and Jones, *The Mabinogion* (1974): 79-80; Benozzo, *Welsh Landscapes* (2004): 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. See also ‘Terminology’: 29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Chandler notes that the variety of colours used in *BRh* actually parody one of the most famous descriptions of female beauty, i.e. *kyn uelynet a blodeu y banadyl* when describing the colour of the mantle worn by Iddawg and his horse. This allusion then is echoed in the description of the following arrivals of Rhufawn Befr fab Deorthach Wledig. The detailed description of various characters and the repetition of *blodau y banad* had a comedic effect. See Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2002): 62-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 106-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. cf. Mac Cana, *Writers of Wales: The Mabinogi* (1977): 84-85; Benozzo, *Welsh Landscapes* (2004): 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Mac Cana, *Writers of Wales: The Mabinogi* (1977): 84-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. See the whole journey throughout MacConglinne’s vision, but especially Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 14-16, and Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (2000): 13-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Meyer, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* (2000): 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Ford, *The* *Celtic Poets* (1999): 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. See e.g. Rudolf Thurneysen, ‘Mac Conglinnes Vision (1901), William Sayers, ‘Diet and fantasy in eleventh‐century Ireland: *The vision of Mac Con Glinne*’, *Food and Foodway*s, 6:1 (1994): 1-17, Jefferies, ‘The Visions of Mac Conglinne.’ (1995), Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (2000), Preston-Matto, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne = the vision of Mac Conglinne* (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Catherine McKenna, ‘Vision and Revision, Iteration and Reiteration, in *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne*’, in *Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition: A Festschrift for Patrick K. Ford, CSANA Yearbook 3-4*, eds. Joseph Falaky Nagy and Leslie Ellen Jones, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004): 274-275. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. For an extensive discussion on the humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy, see Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2002): 59-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. See also Zhao, *Dreams in Medieval Welsh Literature* (2021): 80-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. cf. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 4-5; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Horvath et al., *Breaking Boundaries* (2015): 48; see also ‘Terminology’: 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Richards, *Breudwyt Ronabwy* (1948): 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Jackson, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (1990): 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Meyer, *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* (2000): 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. cf. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 3; Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. cf. Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Con Glinne* (2000): 12; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Chandler, ‘The humour in Breuddwyd Rhonabwy’ (2002): 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Ibidem: 60-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 324-329. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. See the opening line of *Aislinge Óenguso*: *Boí Óengus in n-aidchi n-aili inna chotlud. Co:n-accae ní, in n-ingin cucai for crunn síuil dó.* ‘Óengus was asleep one night. He saw something: a maiden coming towards him while he was on his bedstead’; Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Ibidem: 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. See also ‘Reflections of Central Elements of (Dream-) Visions’: 55-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. James MacKillop, ‘Breuddwyd Macsen [Maxen] Wledig’, In *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (1997): 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Ibidem; see also David N. Dumville, ‘Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend,’ *History* 62 (1977): 180; Joseph A. McMullen, ‘Three Major Forts to Be Built for Her: Rewriting History through the Landscape in Breuddwyd Maxen Wledig.’ *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 31 (2011): 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Richards, *Breudwyt Rhonabwy* (1948): xxv-xxvii; John Cannon and Robert Crowcroft, ‘Madog ap Maredudd’, in: *A Dictionary of British History*, (Oxford University Press, 2004); Thomas Øverby, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy: A Historical Narrative?,* MA Thesis Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo (Spring 2009): 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Richards, *Breudwyt Rhonabwy* (1948): xxv-xxvii; Øverby, *A Historical Narrative?* (2009): 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Øverby, *A Historical Narrative?* (2009): 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Richards, *Breudwyt Rhonabwy* (1948): 24-25; Øverby, *A Historical Narrative?* (2009): 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Jefferies, ‘The Visions’ (1995): 15; James MacKillop, ‘Cathal mac Finguine’, in: *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. James MacKillop, ‘Angus Óg’, in: *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. James MacKillop, ‘Ethal Anbúail’, in: *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Ibidem: 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. John Rhŷs, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by Celtic Heathendom* (1892); Brewer and Lewis Jones, ‘Popular Tale Motifs’ (1975): 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 319-322. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Benozzo, *Welsh Landscapes* (2004): 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen* (2005): 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007): 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Cleary, ‘An Investigation’ (2018): 324-329. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Antti Aarne, and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folk-Tale: A Classification and Bibliography: Antti Aarne’s Verzeichnis Der Märchentypen*, 2nd reved. F.f. Communications, No. 184, (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961); Brewer and Lewis Jones, ‘Popular Tale Motifs’ (1975): 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Ibidem. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)