# Reviews

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Reviewed by Felice Lifshitz, Florida International University

It is not clear why this book is packaged as a biography (the cover blurb announces a "lively, vivid portrait of an extraordinary monarch") of "Charlemagne" (whom Collins calls "Charles"). Charlemagne is not a biography; Collins points out that such a thing is not possible (p. viii). Charles emerges neither as a man, nor as a ruler. The subject of Collins' monograph is the reign of Charles. Collins' synthetic account of that reign is nuanced, sometimes insightful, and inspired by an acquaintance with the historiography in several European languages. Specialists will not agree with everything in the book, but even the most dedicated Carolingianist should be able to learn something from Collins' broad canvas.
The "Frontiers and Wars, 793-813" chapter (ch. 10) is especially insightful, revealing how Frankish military and missionary aggressiveness posed a political and cultural threat to the Danes; the reports of piratical raids by "Nordmanni" which appear in the Frankish annals by 800 are cast as a reasonable response to a difficult situation (pp. 165 - 170), rather than as spasms of barbaric violence unleashed on a civilized Europe. Also particularly valuable is Collins' parallel treatment of Spanish and Italian events in chapter 4 (esp. pp. 65 - 76). By dislodging the Italian peninsula from its fetishized status in discussions of the build-up to 800, and viewing it instead from the perspective of a Frankish center in dialogue with equally (un)important trans-pyrenean/trans-alpine territories, Collins delivers a provocative challenge to the conventional emplotment of the imperial coronation.

The chapter devoted to "The Imperial Coronation of 800, and its Aftermath" (ch. 9) is also excellent. Collins emphasizes the manifold preparations which must have attended the event, and involved the Frankish court in negotiations with everyone from the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the 'Abbasid Caliph. Most original is Collins' argument that the Frankish intention was never to revive the (Western) Roman Empire (or, presumably, to "transfer" power from the Eastern Empire?) but rather to create an entirely new Empire; he asserts that "the title 'Emperor of the Romans' could have [had] little appeal, and might even [have] seemed derogatory to Frankish self-esteem" (p. 151). I am not convinced. The claim that Roman traditions of rule were "probably little known to [the Franks] or capable of being understood by them" (p. 151) is too extreme, given how much all the barbarian federate and successor kings (including the Franks) owed to Roman practices. Such issues aside, Collins' attempt to liberate the genesis of the Frankish Empire from the Italian peninsula merits attention.

Collins devotes a great deal of space to explicit discussions of his sources. Throughout, Collins boxes with Einhard - who really did write a biography of Charles - at every opportunity tossing pot-shots such as "if Einhard be believed (which he all to often is)" (p. 121) at the courtier from the Maingau. In fact, Collins' enthusiastic highlighting of how often the sources are misleading, even mendacious (e.g. p. 88) may be a bit unsettling for some tastes. Collins proudly announces in his preface that his work is "as far as possible source-driven" and seeks to distance himself from the "modish and other methodologies" of unspecified rivals (p. ix). Collins is more of a devotee of history in the Rankean mode, preferring annals to virtually any other type of source, and using them (albeit carefully) to construct a narrative of military, diplomatic and political activities.

The author's approach to non-annalistic descriptive accounts, which he labors to categorize either as "hagiographic" or "quasi-hagiographic" (pp. 7-8), is either profoundly reactionary, or indicates an ignorance of recent developments in the study of narrative sources, whether of the radical arguments of this reviewer ("Beyond Positivism and Genre" Viator 25 (1994) pp. 95-113) or of the more moderate position of A.T. Fear (in Lives of the Visigothic Fathers (Liverpool, 1997), pp. xvii-xxi). Collins' prefatory pat on his own back for "depend[ing]...upon the primary sources of evidence for the period" (p. ix) should not be allowed to mislead the uninitiated into thinking that Collins has therefore utilized all the available contemporary evidence, or utilized it fully. Annalistically-driven military, diplomatic and political history may have pride of place in some pantheons of cherished historiographical endeavors, but its practice depends not on sticking to the evidence but on sticking to some evidence.

Economic and social history receive virtually no attention in the work. Collins' detour into what might be considered a more cultural area of history (in chapter 7, "Reform and Renewal, 789-99," pp. 102 - 124) admirably attempts to cover quite a bit of ground; however, multiple issues of intellectual, cultural and religious history are left unexplored. The Admonitio generalis "prohibition on abbesses making blessings with their hands on men's heads" is duly noted but trivialized (p. 111). Collins fails to convey either the significance of what abbesses had been doing, or the sweep of the new legislation aimed against their authority; the prohibition of the Admonitio was made against abbesses making blessings "by the laying on of hands and the sign of the cross upon the heads of men, and also veiling virgins with a sacerdotal benediction" (see MGH Legum II. Capitularia Regum Francorum I ed. A. Boretius (Hanover, 1883) p. 60). The seminal thesis of Suzanne Fonay Wemple (Women in Frankish Society (Philadelphia, 1981)), according to which a restriction of women's opportunities was part and parcel of the "reform and renewal" of the reign of Charlemagne is never addressed by Collins, as though it were entirely irrelevant to understanding the political landscape. The Admonitio generalis certainly "represents a blueprint for a new society" (p. 112), but some of its most striking reconfigurations are...
The title alone of Grace Ashton's new book excited me. So often, even those of us who specialize in devotional literature have a tendency to discuss hagiography as having a singular identity. Ashton reminds us that though there is a surface view of these texts, there is also contention for unique identities within vernacular hagiography written between 1200 and 1500 CE. In her terms, this group of texts contains "fissures" which allow for new identities to peep through.

Ashton's book has a pleasingly logical structure. After outlining her main theory and conclusions in the introduction, she goes on to address each piece in the succeeding chapters in such a manner as to culminate with her "proof." As such, she begins with an appropriate exploration of the effects of "marked writing." I am not sure she adequately explores the effect of audience, both as active listeners and as text-creators/enhancers. For instance, the idea of the community's influence on the production of hagiographic texts is broached, but is then rather quickly dismissed. This dismissal forecloses the influence of both male and female voices other than the author and subject.

Throughout Part I, Ashton presents the women of hagiography as objects trapped within a set of patriarchal circumstances. Although this stance could be problematic, Ashton does an adequate job of extricating herself from that monolithic stance by pointing out instances of paradox, tension, and fissuring. Her true offset of the overwhelming "maleness" occurs near the end of Part I in a closer examination of St. Cecilia. As a fissured text, this hagiography allows Cecilia "private space" in which to forge a unique identity. Her very passivity, Ashton claims in a convincing argument, leads to her empowerment.

Part II begins similarly strong, as Ashton introduces the idea of space into the notion of identity. She presents valuable ideas regarding psychological and emotional space. In a thought-provoking section, she explores the inner selves of the holy women as they relate to the "worldly" selves. This is a well-chosen path in the pursuance of masculine disruption. The argument becomes a bit muddled with the introduction of external influences (like clothing), but smooths out during Ashton's discussion of self-hood. The overall structure is enhanced greatly with Ashton's addition of physical space to the discussion though the use of the word "imprisonment" without greater explanation could be off-putting. Again, as with Part I, Ashton' arguments come to fruition in a closer examination of a single text, in this case St. Katherine. She concludes that St. Katherine meshes physical and psychological space the best, resulting in another "private space."

The next portion of the text focuses on language as an identity shaper. The arguments are convincing, but not wholly original. For instance, Ashton focuses heavily on the idea of silence as empowerment, a concept utilized by several others, such as Elaine Tuttle Hansen in Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender. At the same time though, this is where Ashton comes into her own with the French Feminism angle. Relying heavily upon Kristevan ideas, Ashton unmasks feminine speech, peeling away the layers of male discourse to reveal a speaking, self-conscious female subject. As with the last section, Aston's exploration culminates with an extensive look at St. Katherine, the perfect example of what Ashton refers to as "holy ventriloquism and fissured subversion" (122). The puppet master is the Holy Spirit, and Katherine's spaces are filled with divine perfection. Prayer is the transformative force.

It is with the final portion of the book that I have the most issues. Whereas the French Feminist angle contributes to a greater overall understanding of the texts, the psychoanalytic terms Ashton employs here cloud that same understanding. It is reductive, for instance, to assume that all torture is connected to Lancanian stages of development. Much more could have been done with Christ's body as metaphor, and the review of male/female distinctions seemed tired and overused. The stretch to incorporate her idea of fissures pushed Ashton's argument too far in a direction it should not have gone.

Ashton's book is a useful tool for students of hagiography. While primarily intended for scholars, parts of it, especially Part I, could be interesting to the curious non-scholar. The clear style of the first half makes the book readable and enjoyable, and this style carries into the last portion, even if the argument is thin. Overall, a commendable effort.
Alvin Lee sets two goals for this book: to focus on "the metaphorical power of the language and verbal imagining of *Beowulf*" and to provide "a theory that is wide-ranging and supple enough not to be a critical straitjacket for the poem" (4). He succeeds with the former but not with the latter. While working on this book, he notes that he was made general editor of the collected works of Northrop Frye, one of his professors at Toronto, and that scholar's influence is manifest on every page. He makes clear this theoretical viewpoint at the beginning: "As the still-relevant New Criticism would have put it, the poem is a thing in itself, a unique verbal structure with multiple internal subtleties and meanings.... *Beowulf* -- first, last and foremost -- is a poem and fictional narrative. It is not a doctrinal treatise, as some would have it, or a documentary guide to any actual situations or events in history." (3) These two other theoretical approaches, which he calls exegetical and (old/new) historical, are the straw men that he comes back to again and again when setting forth his, or rather Frye's, theories of how *Beowulf* should be read. He sets two contexts which he sees the poem as relevant for the study of the poem: "That of the rest of Old English literature, particularly the extant poetry, and a broad, what used to be called comprehensive reading and thinking about other literature, mainly of the Western world" (ix). He mentions very little of the areas on which *Beowulf* studies is lately becoming more and more focused, for example, Anglo-Saxon manuscript production, monastic culture, or the relationship between the English and the Danes, nor does he examine the problems that are inherent in relating *Beowulf* to the other extant Old English poems, not to mention other English or European works of literature from widely different time periods.

In Chapter 1 Lee sets forth Frye's "five major fictional modes": myth, romance, high mimetic, low mimetic, and the ironic mode (13-20). All these Lee finds useful for studying *Beowulf*, but the poem primarily "announces itself as imagined and composed in the romance mode" (19). Frye suggested that European fiction has been moving steadily from myth to the ironic mode over the centuries, and thus situating *Beowulf* in the romance mode shows "something of where the poem sits in the overall sequence of literary history" provided that we have "not only the discipline and rigour that are part of the best literary historical scholarship but also a critical *theoria* not itself confined by the dying gasps of modern and postmodern ironic assumptions" (21). One problem that arises with his approach is in his treatment of romance as "the structural, inescapable core of all fiction" and "the mode of verbal imagining which gives a sense of fiction as such, by presenting within a narrative form a combination of events, characters, and things that could not ever come together that way in actuality" (27). Within romance, he treats not only *Beowulf*, but other poems such as *Andreas*, *Juliana*, *Elene*, *Guthlac A*, *Guthlac B*, and *Judith*. These works are in close alignment with myth, and therefore the characters can be identified with the Creator or Christ; however, "because the dominant mode is romance, the myth is somewhat displaced in the direction of realism" (27, italics mine). He does not address the problem of how "fictional" a medieval audience might consider Guthlac's struggles with the devils or the tortures faced by Andreas. In any case, it seems circular to define these works as romance because of the events of the narrative and then to show how the structure of the poems is the way it is because the poems are in the romance mode.

One appealing facet in this chapter is his metaphorical reading of the three-tiered universe, which he sees as an archetype found in literature of many cultures, European and non-European. Metaphorically, Heorot the gold-hall can function as an image of heaven in its first pristine state and after Beowulf restores it to its primal joy; yet it is also seen as hell, ruled by Grendel, as "the utter perversion of all true loyalty and love." It also represents nostalgically the idealized middle world. Anything taking place in the divine realms, creation, for example, or the rebellion of Lucifer, is therefore metaphorically paralleled by the events taking place in the real world. He finds "four major symbolic settings of Old English poetry": the eternal halls of heaven, the paradisal dwelling places on earth, the ruined hall in the wasteland, and the halls of hell (46). Unlike the mythic poems *Genesis A and B*, or *Christ and Satan*, which show movement between all four settings, *Beowulf* stays mostly in the middle realm, because that is the characteristic of romance. When Beowulf must make the movements between settings, such as when he dives into the mere (Hell), then the mythic, divine elements come in, and "He must directly experience divine power and depend on it absolutely [i.e., the sword on the wall]. It is almost as if he must lose his own heroic identity, symbolized by his mighty hand-grip and the weaponry of the dryht world, in order to reemerge from the mere as triumphant champion and deliverer of the middle dwelling" (47). In this section too, however, there are the same problems with circular reasoning. The journey to Denmark "could almost belong to the actual world. But then, because the demands of romance require a departure from the world of ordinary experience, some form of break in consciousness, we are taken (up) into the idealized realm of the greatest of halls beneath the heavens or down into a nightmarish hell-world" (49; italics mine).
The remaining three chapters of Part I continue in the same vein. In Chapter 2, Lee turns his attention to metaphor, specifically kennings. Some of his discussions, like the extended consideration of *hildegicelum*, are quite compelling, while several of the other kennings he mentions (*scieldweall, wælscæft, waelrest, dea_bed* and *meadowongas*), I would hesitate to call kennings at all. In Chapter 3, he returns to Frye and discusses the five phases of *langage* that Frye developed out of Vico's theory of the three ages of society (mythical, heroic and the age of the people). Lee places *Beowulf* as primarily being composed in the first phase, poetic language, which corresponds to the mythic age, where the language is highly metaphorical. According to Lee, *Beowulf* is definitely not written in the second, or heroic, phase, in which allegory reigns over metaphor, and recent attempts by so-called exegetical critics to read the poem allegorically arise from a "misconception" relating the poem to other works of medieval literature. "Beowulf is in an important sense 'pre-medieval,' engaged directly in a *langage* of myth and metaphor, and, as such, is due for a radical critical reappraisal in light of the illuminating Vico-Frye theory" (95).

In part II Lee investigates the polysemous meanings of *Beowulf* through the fourfold method of interpretation (literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical), as reinterpreted by Frye. He examines the Scyldings and Heorot in their literal and typological meanings, especially as they relate to the Biblical stories of creation and the fall. By the end of the poem, as he explains in the last chapter, "we are no longer in the semi-mythical innocent world of the primal Heorot. We are in the more realistic world of experience in which the emphasis is on the closeness of death for all human beings" (233). In spite of Beowulf's efforts to save Heorot or his own kingdom, in the end he must fail because heroes cannot live forever. "In the mythological thought of the poem, the creation of the great guest-hall is the first in the progression of metaphors and myths -- succeeded by Fall, Flood, re-creation, history, Doomsday -- which express the poem's primary concerns" (247). It is not really Grendel or the dragon that are the true dangers to the humans of the poem; rather it is humanity itself, as suggested in the references to the future of Heorot at the hands of Hrothulf or the coming wars after the death of Beowulf. The "monsters," represent metaphorically this evil undercurrent of humanity. In discussions such as this, when Lee is examining the metaphorical images of the poem, his readings can be quite subtle and compelling. It is only his attempts to force the poem into the theories and structures of Frye, which Lee readily admits were not developed with *Beowulf* in mind, that make the book seem less useful and even frustrating, not to mention dated. Still, one would be hard-pressed to find a book in which the author's love and admiration for a poem comes across more clearly than does Lee's for *Beowulf*.

**Antonio García y García, Historia de Bretoña (Lugo, 1999), I.S.B.N. 84-8192-164-5, Edita Servivio /Publicacións Deputación Provincial/ San Marcos 8 /Lugo 2700, 180pp**

Reviewed by Simon Young

There are twenty-five kilometres of winding mountainous roads from the coastal plain of Galicia (Spain) to the village of Bretoña. When I made the journey I paid for a taxi there is no public transport and arrived just before dawn. I had spent the previous day in Mondoñedo a typical Spanish city with bars and tapas and noise. Now as the light lifted I found myself in a completely different world. I was in a rich green valley the vegetation, the climate and even the birdsong of which was uncannily like some of the more rugged British countryside in the Pennines or Wales. I walked through the waking village to the church and there stood on one of the last parts of Bretoña's ancient dyke and looked over the small rise where fifteen hundred years before British Celtic colonists had founded a settlement.

Bretoña was only one settlement of the many founded by the British Celtic colonists that came to Galicia in Northwest Spain in the fifth and sixth centuries. Part of that same diaspora that led to the foundation of Brittany, the Galician Britons were numerous enough to have had their own bishop in the sixth century. However, unlike their sister colony to the north they failed to keep their autonomy into the high Middle Ages and seem to have been quickly absorbed either into the Suevian kingom or its Visigothic successor.

There are several historical notices about the colony, mainly from the sixth century and these have excited some debate. However, unfortunately, articles about the colony are almost always published, not in international journals, but in local Galician ones. As a result many fundamental works are virtually unknown outside Spain. It is, for example, lamentable that the most important article on the colony Antonio García y García's 'Ecclesia Britoniensis' was published only in *Estudios Mindonienses* 2 (1986) the diocesan magazine of the bishopric of Mondoñedo and Ferrol. *EM* is an excellent journal that carries quality academic articles, but it is sometimes quite a challenge to find it in Spanish libraries, never mind further afield. Consequently even specialists in early Medieval History have sometimes never heard of the colony.
This situation may have been eased with the publication of García y García's *La Historia de Bretoña*. The book is not about the colony as a whole, but about the small village Bretoña described above. However, in the first third of the book the author deals very concisely with what we know of the early history not just of the village, but of the whole British settlement in Galicia. (Historians of the colony have a rather unhealthy obsession with the village of Bretoña often acting as if it were the only British centre in Spain. There are, in fact, over twenty names in 'Brit' or 'Bret' in the Iberian Peninsula place-names usually supposed to denote British settlements most of these in the north-west.) For those familiar with García y García's writing there is little to learn here as many of the arguments and much of the text have been recycled from the seminal article that I have already had cause to mention. But for those not lucky enough to have read his work, especially for those living outside Spain, the publication of this book is an invaluable opportunity to catch up.

I noticed one or two mistakes worth mentioning for future editions. There is an error in the dating of the VIII council of Toledo that took place in 653 not 633 (p16). There are also some mangled footnotes on p17. (Footnotes are less plentiful here than in the original piece that appeared in *Estudios Mindonienses*). Then, as is often the case with books conjured up from a miscellany of articles there are lacunae. I missed references to some of the earliest records of the village that appear in the charters of the monastery of Villanueva de Lorenzana. There is no mention, in the early portion of the book, of the hamlet of Obispado that is the only real proof that the village was once the seat of the British bishopric (Obispado probably meant 'the bishop's seat'). There is also little room to discuss the ancient dykes that surround Bretoña. Digs in the 1970s suggested that the original Britons had inhabited a pre-existing hill-fort. This of course has parallels in Britain (Cadbury, Congresbury) as well as elsewhere in Galicia. However, I know of no other example where an important ecclesiastical centre was based in such a fort. (Seeing the dyke in relation to the site of the original church I found myself thinking of the circular bounds that are sometimes found around churches in Cornwall, Wales and Ireland.)

These small details apart this is an excellent book. As someone who already knows most of the literature on the settlement in Galicia I valued it especially for its elucidation of a point that had previously been obscure to me. In the past while reading García y García's works on the colony I had asked myself how a professor at Salamanca who specialises in medieval canon law had become interested in an obscure movement of peoples in the Dark Ages. The *Historia de Bretoña* satisfied my curiosity. As the preface and a passionate dedication explain the author was born and raised in Bretoña. The book was partly written for his fellow Bretoñans; each family in the village has received a free copy. It is to the author's great credit that, diffused widely, it will also have a more 'serious' role as a useful starting point for early-medieval historians and Celticists interested in the British colony in Spain.


Reviewed by Keith E. Ward, The George Washington University

Part historical survey, part social analysis and a pleasure to read overall, Ronald Finucane's new book is a significant resource for those interested in children, family and lay devotion in the Middle Ages. Finucane focuses his study on the miracles attested to contemporary saints on behalf of children (and their families) from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. In all, a total of 600 cases drawn from eight miracle collections provide the primary evidence of childhood accidents, illnesses and deaths connected to saintly intercession. Finucane explicitly avoids miracle stories involving "mythical" saints such as St. George, favoring "individuals whose deaths and cults were recorded by contemporaries in the central and later Middle Ages" (Finucane, 3). One such individual is Thomas Cantilupe, bishop of Hereford, who died in 1282 and was canonized in 1320. Papal inquisitors met in London and Hereford in 1307 to investigate the miracles attributed to Cantilupe, and Finucane provides a translation of part of their report in the Appendix.

Beginning with an exploration of the miracles surrounding childbirth and postpartum dangers, Finucane goes on to present an almost dizzying array of data on childhood accidents and illnesses involving saintly intercession. As readers might expect, the vast majority of Finucane's 600 cases end happily: a drowned child recovers after its mother promises to offer a wax votive at a particular saint's tomb, for example. Thankfully, 'The Rescue of the Innocents' does not bog down in thauromatrical explanations. Finucane gracefully announces at almost every turn that questions of reality must not impinge upon what these cases can tell us about the social and emotional lives of medieval families. If anything, Finucane has so much ground to cover that one wishes he could slow down more often and discuss some of the cases in greater detail. When he does so, as in the drowning and resuscitation story of young Joanna of Marden, the parental expressions of grief and faith show us that even widespread infant mortality during the Middle Ages did not harden families to loss.

The 600 cases are divided according to geographical location, with 311 coming from northern European sources and 289 from southern collections. Such a division may seem arbitrary, but the utility of collecting two masses of data instead of...
“this saint's stories” or “French stories” proves its worth at the study's conclusion. Finucane finds, for instance, that accidents affect northern children at a rate 4.5 times greater than their southern counterparts. Finucane suggests that this may be due to more widely ramified kinship structures in Italy and southern France, which keep children under a greater number of watchful eyes. Whatever the conclusion, the value of Finucane’s work is reflected in the scope of raw data it provides, arrayed in several graphs and tables. These data mark the starting point for further analysis, and argue why The Rescue of the Innocents should take its place as a standard work on children, families and popular devotion in the Middle Ages.

Elizabeth O’Brien, Post-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Burial Practices Reviewed, BAR British Series 289 (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges and Archaeopress, 1999), viii + 204 + 198(unpaginated) ISBN 1 84171 1187 £51.00 in the UK

Reviewed by Helen Conrad-O’Briain, Trinity College Dublin

The title of this solid addition to the BAR series does not do justice to its contents. It is rather a comprehensive review of burial practices and structures from the re-emergence of visible burial in the British archaeological record in the third century BC to the late seventh century AD, including Ireland as well as Britain. Dr. O’Brien conducts this review in a manner as useful to literary scholars or historians as to archaeologists, as accessible to students as to their instructors. She supports her text with a series of excellent descriptive tables and distribution maps. A good table and a good distribution map immediately convey the norm and focus anomalies, apparent or otherwise. These maps and tables, in tandem with a straightforward, no-nonsense prose style, allow her to review a thousand years of archaeological and literary evidence in less than 200 pages. From orientation to articulation, from grave goods to markers, it is difficult to think of any recorded aspect of burial which she does not identify and discuss, briefly, but always to the point. This, even with its extensive and wide-ranging bibliography, however, represents only about half of the volume; it is followed by a gazetteer which more than doubles (2273 versus 1106) the entries in Meaney’s 1964 Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites.

After a brief introduction covering the scope of her study, methodology, and the character and quality of the evidence, O’Brien turns in her first chapter to the observable structures and practices of the British and Romano-British burial (orientation, body articulation, etc), giving equal weight to the persistence of older, local traits and to the appearance of new, probably imported, customs. Chapter three offers a concise outline of the connections linking Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England and Gaul in the seventh century. Chapter four collects the contemporary written evidence for burial practices, real, imagined or reconstructed. Both the penitential and legal material, as well as the even more parlous literary references, are handled with sensitivity to the peculiar character of individual sources.

As British and Roman and Anglo-Saxon practices appear in late Roman, sub-Roman and Anglo-Saxon contexts (chapters 2 and 5), the dead become in O’Brien's text a mirror of population movement and social change as the nearly universal indigenous crouched inhumation recedes before a variety of practices until a new universal norm, developing from later Roman practice, of WE supine un-accompanied inhumation, is established after 700. It is clear the author believes that the burials in many parts of Britain over this period demonstrate a continuity of population and a pattern of co-existence and assimilation, but her extrapolations are never polemical or dogmatic. She relies on the persuasive power of her evidence at all times.

This extrapolation of a living society from burial of the dead is formidable tool. If the grave is a true reflection of life, a pattern of a persistent minority of pagans among a presumed Christian majority in British areas of control is suggested by the occasional appearance of crouched burials. In the same way, an indication of individual Anglo-Saxons living among majority British/Romano-British populations lies in a scattering of burials accompanied by knives or other characteristic grave goods, for example at Cannington (Gazetteer 606). In the chapter covering the emerging political geography of the Anglo-Saxons, a similar pattern is observable, but with the older British or Romano-British patterns and peoples persistin among the new majority rites. Burial types suggest not only the persistence or assimilation of the older population, but also distinctions among the new-comers, including Scandinavian and Frankish affinities.

Chapter five, the heart of her review, is broken up by political/geographical areas, beginning with Bernicia and moving steadily south and west. While hers is an overview and at an overview's pace, she lingers, as at Yeavering, when the material warrants it. O’Brien’s treatment of East Anglia and Mercia allow the reader to place Sutton Hoo, so oft treated in isolation, into a context. Her careful collection of examples of 'sentinal burials' will be of great interest to Beowulf scholars, particularly in the light of Robinson's The Tomb of Beowulf.
As Dr. O'Brien's archaeological career began, and has largely continued, in Ireland, an appendix covering the salient features of Irish practice of the same period follows the first chapter. She looks with particular interest at the Irish influence on the developing burial rite of Anglo-Saxon England. This is, however, only after she has noted the influence of Romano-British practice on Irish burials. Furthermore, in chapter six she treats a number of burials in Ireland which must be described as 'characteristically Anglo-Saxon'. Despite documentary evidence for Anglo-Saxons in Ireland, there is always a certain amazement outside of strictly archaeologica circles to find that burials in the Anglo-Saxon manner occur in Ireland. Their implications are yet to be fully appreciated, but O'Brien has drawn together all the material necessary to begin their assessment.

There are very few places where one can fault this book. A paragraph or two in chapter four on the episcopal and royal burials at Canterbury, which appear to be in the forefront of emerging European-wide high status practice, although slightly off the main thrust of the study, would have been welcome. But there can be only one real complaint against an otherwise excellent BAR volume: the lack of an index. Hopefully, when it reaches a deserved second edition, the publishers will acknowledge that need.

This review was revised by the author on February 21, 2001.


Reviewed by Helen Conrad-O'Brien, Trinity College Dublin

Professor Richter's title immediately calls to mind Levison's magisterial England and the Continent in the Eighth Century, and understandably raises expectations that it will do for the seventh century Irish what Levison did for the eighth century English. Unfortunately such a book still eludes both author and reader. Ireland and her Neighbors in the Seventh Century seems rushed and unfinished. The text lacks that final authorial tightening that would have placed the final sentence in the discussion of the Amra Choluimbe Chille (pp. 54-6) in the synopsis of the poem rather than floating like an afterthought at the section's end. The index misses obvious entries: there are, for example, no entries for scripts or scriptoria or individual manuscripts. There are inexplicable absences too from the otherwise admirable bibliography. Saenger's Space between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading (1997) is ignored in favor of his articles. Picard's 1982 article on the Schaaffhausen manuscript of the Vita Columbae is missing (despite a discussion of the manuscript, pp.175-6), as are articles by Harvey (1987 and 1989) and Swift's Ogham Stones and the Earliest Irish Christians (1997) which cast light on the 'prehistory' of the seventh century. Topics are taken up and summarily put aside. Why does the question of Greek merit only (p. 191) 'this cannot be dealt with here, but can be stated that the more seventh-century Irish exegesis is studied at a deep level, the more light will be shed on this area' without a mention of Berschin (1988)? Why is the discussion of natural law and the bonum naturale, which Richter rightly sees as a characteristic Irish concern, couched in such general terms, dismissing the complexities of Augustine, and not bothering even to name Lactantius? O'Corráin, Breatnach and Breen's (1984) Peritia article, far more than a 'first step' in understanding the use of theology to preserve the validity of the native law, is relegated, to a bare, almost off-handed, footnote (p.34, n.65).

These topics are at least addressed, but where is any discussion of the development of insular miniscule, arguably a far more important cultural vehicle than the Irish half uncial? Why does the author rather allow himself to be drawn into exalting Irish scholarship at the expense of the Anglo-Saxon (e.g. pp. 106, 140-1, 186) as if praise of either must always involve some loss of esteem by the other? Every caveat he applies to Bede, is after all applicable to all his authors, Irish and English.

It is for an author to decide what does and does not go into a book, what is relevant and irrelevant to his argument. In a relatively short review, a negative reviewer must appear to be placing undue emphasis on a few points of personal interest. Others might draw attention more positively to his treatment of the Irish active among the English and the English peregrini in Ireland (pp.89-121, 37-56). But how is the reader to react at page 205 to the assertion 'it is remarkable that the issue of the Easter date should develop into a question of right or wrong belief as such'? Such a lack of historical imagination and refusal to take seriously the theological implications which the participants sincerely believed at the heart of the controversy only leaves the reader at a loss to understand the author's engagement with his subject.

Reviewed by Dr Dominic Janes, King's College, University of London

This volume is a festschrift and, as such, it shares the inherent strengths and weaknesses of that genre. The 'grey eminence' in the background may focus the minds of the contributors so as to produce a coherent volume. Or it may not. Goffart's best known work, echoed in the title of the present volume, is probably his Narrators of Barbarian History (1988). This keystone of his reputation has led many of the contributors to the current volume to consider issues of source criticism and interpretation. Amongst the big names which receive discussion are Cassiodorus, Gregory of Tours, Fredegar and Lupus of Ferri'res. But the essays in this collection range much more widely, bringing in issues from historiography (Reynolds) to reception of the early medieval past (Brown).

The key point to make is that the contributors include a considerable proportion of 'big hitters' and the essays are of a generally high quality. There is a slight whiff of the airing of old laundry about some of the contributions, but then a festschrift is probably not the best place to make radically new statements. Nevertheless, Reynolds provides a good summary of the collapse of belief in simplistic racial understandings of the age of the migrations. Gillet provides an useful reading of Cassiodorus' Variae as a literary model. James brings out interesting issues of ethnic identity, whilst Heinzelmann clarifies the religiously centred nature of the History of the Franks.

Muhlberger presents a useful survey of the attitudes of writers from the fifth to the seventh centuries, whilst Wood and Murray give much more targetted discussions of the Life of Columbanus and Fredegar respectively. Murray, incidentally takes a much more amusing and effective pot shot at nineteenth-century German attitudes than does Reynolds. Wickham presents a characteristically social-class based piece whilst Nelson sticks unashamedly to royalty. Collins offers textual criticism of the edition of the Annales Regni Francorum, while Bachrach takes liberties with Charlemagne.

Noble brings the Carolingian Renaissance in general, and Lupus of Ferri'res in particular, down to earth. Sullivan has a go at the enigmatic ninth century plan of St Gall, whilst Allen and Constable introduce little known texts. The collection is completed by Shatzmiller on Jewish pilgrimages and Brown on early modern debunking of the supposed origins of the French.

As I think you can appreciate from this catalogue, the purchaser is offered plenty for their money. There is sufficient breadth in this collection to ensure that you are almost bound to find several fascinating and interesting sections of material. To my mind this easily compensates for the slightly haphazard feel of the assemblage. Walter Goffart is an important historian and it is pleasing to record that the collection dedicated to him is significant in its own right.


Reviewed by Rebecca Umland, University of Nebraska at Kearney

In this study, the author begins with a brief introductory chapter which posits that the enormous popularity of the legendary Arthur in the chronicle and romance traditions is the reason why many historians have refused to believe he ever existed. The second chapter, "The Documents," reviews various mentions of Arthur or of events and places associated with him: saints' lives, genealogies, chronicles and "histories," romances, as well as fragmentary writing at archaeological sites. Castledon largely re-treads old territory here, finding little else to hang his hat on than the two events that have traditionally provided the parameters of Arthur's life: the battles of Badon and Camlann. In this chapter, and throughout his book, the author claims that Geoffrey of Monmouth deserves more credit as an historian than he has thus far enjoyed.

Chapters three and four, "The Archaeology" and "Arthur's Britain," survey in detail historical evidence uncovered and major hypotheses advanced regarding the "dark age" period in which the probable dux bellorum upon which the king of the romance tradition is based. The archaeological material is engaging, but the conflicting theories about where such a historical figure might have maintained his base of operation remains unresolved. Also interesting is Castledon's discussion of centers of trade and culture that recent discoveries have uncovered. Although these chapters are intended
to provide a context in which to place a historical Arthur, they demonstrate how unfeasible it is to ascertain facts with any certainty: the period of Britain's history after the Romans left remains, for the most part, a mystery, because of the ensuing political and cultural chaos, exacerbated by the Celtic practice of oral history. Trustworthy written records are rare.

Admitting these difficulties, in his ensuing chapters the author nonetheless makes bold assertions about Arthur's identity, base of operation, death, and burial site. Relying heavily on the work of Geoffrey Ashe, Castleden argues for a Cornish Arthur rather than a Welsh or Scottish one, citing, among other evidence, the plethora of place names and folklore from Cornwall associated with the legendary king. In his chapter, "Camelot," the author further avers that Tintagel is the site upon which the Grail Castle of romance is based, and that Camelot is not a place at all; rather, he speculates, it represents "an iron age name for the king's military headquarters, and as a mobile royal standard."

Chapter seven, "The Death of Arthur" claims that the battle of Camlann, which reportedly brought about Arthur's demise, occurred in northwest Wales. Castleden further argues that it was not Mordred but a ruthless king named Maelgwn who ambushed and defeated Arthur. He then posits that Arthur, badly wounded, was taken by his surviving men to Whithorn, an Irish monastery, where he either died, or recovered to spend the remainder of his life as an exiled king and contemplative. Avalon, then, is Whithorn. When he died, Arthur was placed in a special grave at the monastery; however, when it was excavated, the grave was empty. Castleden suggests the body was later removed to a more memorable site, but he cannot identify where it might be.

This study concludes with three appendices: two that offer genealogies and a final one that discusses briefly the possible implications of the discovery by the archaeological team from Glasgow University of the much debated Arthnou Stone at Tintagel.

To construct his theories, Castleden relies upon every conceivable source of information from antiquity to the present. The major difficulty with this work is that it fails to make distinctions between claims that are reliable, solidly researched, and well-formulated, and those that have no basis in fact. The reader can turn to a footnote and find that an assertion is derived from a dubious source, such as an anonymous article published in an early nineteenth-century journal. Those interested in the issue of Arthurian origins will find that the book advances provocative theories, some of which are stranger than fiction, but it fails to shed new light through old windows. Readers whose interests lie closer to the Arthur of romance and legend may well prefer to leave Arthur in the rich, warm realm of imagination, so that he may remain the once and future king.


Reviewed by Dr Dominic Janes, Department of History, King's College London

Putting together an encyclopedia which aims to include syntheses of the latest scholarship is always going to be a difficult task. Indeed, Lapidge, in his preface tells us that the first attempt to produce such a volume for early England failed in the mid-90s. This was perhaps because of its comprehensive scope, perhaps because the editors had underestimated the amount of energy which would be required to see it through to completion (p. xii). Luckily for students of this subject the project was revived and, courtesy of four editors and 150 contributors, has now been completed.

The first thing to say about this compilation is that the scholars involved include a good selection of the top names in the business. The editors, Lapidge, Blair, Keynes and Blagg have written most of the entries between them. However, such luminaries as Richard Abels, Martin Blackburn, Michelle Brown, Rosemany Cramp, Richard Gameson, Philip Rahtz, David Rollason, Leslie Webster, Ian Wood, Patrick Wormald and Barbara Yorke make contributions. And this is not to denigrate the scholarship of the other contributors, which seems to be of a generally high standard.

If I have a substantial quibble it is with the illustrations which are a little perfunctory. The editors have made some effort with these pictures, but there is still a sense in which the book is being powered primarily by text-based scholars. The format is stoutly conservative -no discursive picture essays here! That aside, this is a very useful volume for anyone interested in early England. Originally only available in hardback (at a very high price!) this important reference work has now been issued in paperback. Lets hope that the binding is strong because my volume is bound to see plenty of use in the coming years.

The performance of Gregorian chant has seen a renaissance in the previous decade, due to the success of a number of CD's devoted to this genre, and the reemergence of the chant tradition in the Catholic Church. The rebirth of this unique repertory as a religious, concert, and listening phenomenon has introduced a whole new generation, as well as an older appreciative generation, to its mysteries and powers. Although this book was written to assist modern-day listeners and performers in the history and performance of Gregorian chant, much of the information can assist the medieval scholar in an understanding and appreciation of chant and liturgy in both the medieval and modern worlds.

Crocker is no stranger to the study and scholarship of chant. He is one of the giants in medieval musicology, having written the definitive book on the medieval sequence (*The Early Medieval Sequence*, University of California Press, 1977). It is therefore surprising to see such a personal yet informative presentation of this topic written for the appreciative yet uninitiated listener of Gregorian chant. Crocker immediately begins from scratch in this book, explaining that "understanding how Gregorian chant can be both remote and at the same time familiar is the principal concern of this book" (p. 5). He spends time in the explanation of terms such as cult, rite, and liturgy, and places Gregorian chant in its medieval spatial and religious constructs. Through the use of actual chant examples, which are included on the accompanying CD, Crocker attempts to explain the rhythmic pulse, history, performance, and liturgical placement of chant in the Christian liturgy. It is no mean feat: trying to explain the intricacies and mysteries of Gregorian chant to the modern-day, uninitiated listener requires language and vocabulary that is geared towards this type of audience. Crocker does a magnificent job early on to elaborate on his personal experiences both listening to and performing chant, and how these experiences went beyond scholarship and book learning to move towards that mystical and wonderful encounter with the "other" that we have all felt occasionally throughout our lives. Crocker provides not only an understanding of the spatial movement of chant through time, but attempts to show this through graphs that assist the reader to "imagine" this spatial movement. Eventually, Crocker moves from the explanation and performance of chant itself, to its place in the Christian liturgy and the many different types of chant that were available during the Middle Ages. The accompanying CD also assists in this explanation, by providing examples of each of the different types of chant, as related to its liturgical placement and function. Finally, Crocker includes explanations and definitions of all of the different types of chant on the accompanying CD in an appendix.

This type of book, geared towards the interested layperson, has been needed for a long time. Crocker does an admirable job in the beginning of the book, providing a personal background to his lifelong interest in Gregorian chant. The vocabulary early on in the book maintains its focus towards the layperson; unfortunately, given the complex vocabulary and syntax involved in Gregorian chant performance and explanation, as the book progresses it becomes more and more technical, and perhaps loses its focus towards the interested layperson and moves towards the interested medieval historian/scholar. This is no fault of Crocker's, although the average layperson may become bored or uninterested in the extensive discussions and explanations of liturgical placement and historical backgrounds surrounding chant traditions, including Solesmes. In any case, the accompanying CD is of immense value to Crocker's explanations, and should be played whenever discussion is given in the text. A wonderful book on Gregorian chant for both layperson and scholar alike.


Reviewed by Dr. Brad Eden, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

This book is an exploration of the spiritual dimension of music from a Celtic perspective. It is an interdisciplinary study in the phenomenology of religion, with music as its focus. It is not a study from a Celtic folklorist's perspective. The references used in this study are taken from the medieval Irish period, and no oral folklore narratives from more modern times are included. The book's primary perspective is to examine what the early Irish seem to say or imply about music as revealed in their surviving literature; it is not a musicology or music history analysis. The focus of the book is not on the actual music or the performance of Celtic music during the medieval period (which is very sparse indeed); the author attempts to investigate the meaning and content of the Celtic people's religious and spiritual language, behaviour and expression, as it relates to music, especially its sacred dimensions or otherworldly aspects.

The author has selected eight major categories of early medieval Irish literature up to the end of the twelfth century to draw upon for her research. These categories are: mythological cycle tales and sagas, *dindshenchas* (place-lore poems), Ulster cycle tales and sagas, cycles of the kings literature, *echtra/immrama* literature, excerpts from the *Acallam na Senorach* ("Colloquy of the Ancients), early Irish poetry, and saints lives written in Old/Middle Irish. The author has then
The fact that at the recently held 11th International Congress of Celtic Studies (Cork 1999) four papers alone were
dedicated to the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* 'The Voyage of Saint Brendan' (henceforth NSB), gives ample evidence of
the interest in this fascinating Middle Latin text, as well as in the genre of early Irish voyage literature, of which NSB is a part,
as a whole. But despite this interest scholarship in the field has been largely hampered by the unsatisfying accessability
of a good deal of the secondary literature. To remedy the lack of a critical study encompassing all aspects of the genre,
at the occasion of a conference in Maynooth (June 1995) the idea was born to put together a guide to these tales and
their background with representative selections of seminal studies, spanning nearly a century of scholarly work. The
result is the volume *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, edited by Jonathan Wooding, lecturer at the
University of Wales, Lampeter and himself a specialist in the field for many years.

In the Introduction (pp. x-xxviii) Wooding gives a survey of the history of scholarship, what the beginnings of the voyage
tales may have been and what contributed to the voyage tales in their formation into a genre in its own right in Irish
literature. This is followed by a concise sketch of the tales' literary criticism. A list of the voyage tales, editions and
translations sums up the introduction. As to Michaela Zelzer's new edition of NSB, mentioned on page xxv, I can now report that it is planned to appear in 2002 (pers. comm.).

All articles in this volume have been re-set. The original page count is not indicated. At times the re-setting has been done too carelessly. In the original of James Carney's 'The Earliest Bran Material' (1976) italicised letters were used for the diplomatic edition of the Old Irish text *Imbaccaldam* on page 178 ff.; in the present volume everything has been reset in plain letters (pp. 77 ff.). As a consequence a good deal of the expansions and abbreviations is no longer recognisable as such. Most annoying to a scholar of Irish is the silent omission of the punctum delens over lenited f and s. The last word of stanza 3 on page 181 of the original reads *máfríth* [punctum delens over the f]; an r has been forgotten in *máfríth* in the process of re-setting (p. 79). The original article will still have to be consulted for quotations.

The editor decided only to include items in English, depriving himself of the opportunity to reprint important contributions like Carl Selmer's *Die Herkunft und Frühgeschichte der Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (1956). Though understandable in view of a readership primarily intended to be of English mothertongue, it seems that this self-restriction also induced the compilers of the bibliography (pp. 255-271) to the sloppiness of passing over a couple of non-English studies, which undoubtedly would have merited mentioning there: for example Paul Grosjean's (Analecta Bollandiana 78, 1960, 454-459) and Paul Tombeur's (Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire 39, 1961, 1040-1042) reviews of Selmer's edition of NSB; or Gabriele Socher's (1990) philological thesis Textkritische und sprachliche Untersuchungen zur Navigatio Sancti Brendani unter Berücksichtigung dreier Wiener Handschriften, Wien.

The re-printed articles are chronologically ordered, starting with Charles Plummer's 'Some New Light on the Brendan Legend' of the year 1905 (pp. 1-14). A series of articles examines the historical, theological and legal background of medieval Irish seafaring: William Flint Thrall 'Clerical Sea Pilgrimages and the *Imrama*' (pp. 15-21); Mary E. Byrne 'On the Punishment of Sending Adrift' (pp. 22-26); and more recently Thomas Charles-Edwards 'The Social Background to Irish *Peregrinatio*' (pp. 94-108).

A large portion of the book is devoted to the motives of the voyage tales and their literary interrelations with each other and with other texts. Mario Esposito identified 'An Apocryphal »Book of Enoch and Elias« as a Possible Source of the Navigatio sancti Brendani' (pp. 27-41), Ludwig Bieler contributed 'Two Observations Concerning the Navigatio Brendani' (pp. 91-93). Colin A. Ireland draws attention to 'Some Analogues of the Old English Seafarer from Hiberno-Latin Sources' (pp. 143-156). Other articles are John Carey's 'The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition' (pp. 113-119) and 'Ireland and the Antipodes: The Heterodoxy of Virgil of Salzburg' (pp. 133-142), and Dorothy Ann Bray's 'Allegory in Navigatio Sancti Brendani' (pp. 175-186). Séamus Mac Mathúna *Contributions to a Study of the Voyages of St Brendan and St Malo* (pp. 157-174) attempts to establish the relation of some voyage episodes in the *Vita Brendani* and the *Vita Machutis* 'Life of St. Malo'. J.J. O'Meara's 'In the Wake of the Saint: The Brendan Voyage, an Epic Crossing of the Atlantic by Leather Boat' (pp. 109-112) (*Times Literary Supplement*, 14. 7. 1978) used the publicity of Tim Severin's adventurous journey across the North Atlantic in a leather boat to draw a wider audience's attention to the original text of NSB.

James Carney's important 'Review of Navigatio sancti Brendani Abbatis' (pp. 42-51), hitherto not easily accessible, sparked off a controversy with Proinsias Mac Cana about the native or Christian origin of the genre. Of Mac Cana's three articles on the subject one, 'The Sinless Otherworld of Immram Brain' (pp. 52-72), has been included in the present volume. Unfortunately the other two: 'Mongán Mac Fiachna and Immram Brain' (1972) and 'On the Prehistory of Immram Brain' (1975) had to be left away, obviously because of the restricted space. Still, 'The Earliest Bran Material' (pp. 73-90) by James Carney has been reprinted.

In 'Two Approaches to the Dating of Navigatio Sancti Brendani' (pp. 120-132) David Dumville uses a genealogical argument to date the composition of NSB before the year 786. I myself proposed a date of ca. 825 (David Stifter (1997), *Philologica Latino-Hibernica: Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, Thesis, Wien, 109-110), based on apparent textual correspondences of some island descriptions with passages in Dicuil's *Liber de Mensura Orbis Terrae* and on NSB's possible provenance from the Carolingian Empire. Dumville's and my proposals do not necessarily contradict each other: the Middle Latin text may well have received its final shape, together with some adaptations concerning the contents, at the beginning of the 9th century on the Continent, based on an older 'Proto-Navigatio' (probably in Latin, but perhaps in Old Irish) from Ireland. Séamus Mac Mathúna mentions a similar idea (p. 158). This theory finds some support in Michaela Zelzer's observation in Frühe irische Amerikafahrten und monastische Reform (Wiener Humanistische Blätter 31 (1989), 66-87), that monastic traits apparent in certain episodes of NSB could be linked with the Benedictine reform movement of Benedict of Aniane under the rule of Louis the Pious (814-840 AD). In this context I must say, that on the whole the NSB's Continental connections have been somewhat neglected in the present volume, which lays its main stress on the text's Irish background.
The last three articles are original contributions to the volume. Kevin Murray discusses in 'The Role of *Cuilebad in *Improm Snéogusa 7 Maic Riagla* (pp. 187-193) the motif of a token as proof for the veracity of the Otherworld Voyage, exemplified by the flabellum (the liturgical fan, Irish *cuilebad*) of Colum Cille. Thomas Owen Clancy stresses in 'Subversion at Sea: Style, Structure and Intent in the *Imprama* (pp. 194-225) the penitential character of the voyage tales. He concentrates on their individual structures, on their different styles and on the purposes underlying the texts. He sees in them tales about the saving of souls which use a voyage on the sea as the means of redemption. To examine the relationship between NSB and historical monastic voyaging between ca. 560 and 800 AD is the goal of Jonathan Wooding in 'Monastic Voyaging and the *Navigatio* (pp. 226-245). He argues that historical peregrinations of Irish settlers to the Faroes and to Iceland in the 8th century are reflected in the narrative and played a rôle in the development of the voyage motif in the Brendan legend out of its Hiberno-Latin precursors.

In an appendix Karen Jankulak gives a 'Translation of Selected Passages from the History of Enoch and Elia, Satirical Verses concerning St Brendan and Nikolaus de Bibera, Carmen Satiricum' (pp. 246-250). Regrettably Jankulak confines herself to translating those Latin passages that Mario Esposito (see above) quoted in his article, written at a time when a scholar could still expect his audience to be able to read Latin. Of the satirical poem on St. Brendan, which has 52 lines in the original (printed in: Charles Plummer (1910), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Volume II, 293-294) Jankulak, closely following Esposito, offers only a selection of 12 verses. It would not have inflated the size of the book overly to have included the other 40 lines as well. Jankulak’s translations are not always reliable: 'accedant scire volentes’ (p. 41, l. 1556) does not mean ‘[if] those wishing to know should draw near [they say]’ (p. 250), but rather ‘let all those who want to know draw near’; ‘simply terrestrial [life], land’ (p. 249) is a fanciful translation of ‘*terra nuda*’ (p. 40, l. 39), which correctly should be ‘bare land, uninhabited land’.

A bibliography ends the book (pp. 251-277). Although about 750 (!) titles are collected here, this is only a fraction of the scholarship dedicated to Irish voyage literature, and, as already noted above, much deserving recognition and inclusion has been omitted. Of monographical studies concerning NSB I can mention for example Dominique Daly (1905) *The Legend of St. Brendan*, *Celtic Review* 1; Dora Faraci (1988) *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* and Its Relationship with Physiologus*, *Romanobarbarica* 11; or recently Anthony Harvey, Jane Power (1997) *Hiberno-Latin scaltae*, *Ériu* 48. Of texts neighbouring the voyage genre Georg Schade’s (1869) edition of *Visio Tnugdali*, Halle; and Jean-Michel Picard (1989) *The Vision of Tnugdali*, Dublin could have been added. Kim McCone’s (2000) *Echtrae Chonnlai and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Notes, Bibliography and Vocabulary*, Maynooth Medieval Irish Texts I, Maynooth has appeared too recently (summer 2000) for the present bibliography, yet it must not go unmentioned in a discussion of voyage literature, especially the lengthy chapter on ‘Some questions of context and interpretation’ (pp. 47-119). It is to be expected that these books and more will be included in the Brendan-bibliography put together by Glyn Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (*’The Legend of St Brendan a critical bibliography*, Dublin), due to be out early in 2001.

To sum things up, it can be said that the present volume is a highly readable and useful book for all those who want to get a first overview over the scholarship on early Irish voyage literature, and yet at the same time a very valuable book also for those who have already taken their first steps into the genre on their own, as it assembles studies which until now had been widely scattered and were often published in obscure places.

The following words from Ireland's glossarial index are not found in DIL:

The following words from Ireland's glossarial index are not found in DIL:

The book opens with an introduction (1-59), where the general background of wisdom texts, affinities regarding style, contents and attitude are discussed in great length (1-20). An important section is devoted to the MSS (20-34). For the present edition Ireland has examined thirty-three MSS from the 12th to the 19th centuries which he divides into four groups. His descriptions of the MSS are not only important for the edition at hand, but they are also useful to students of the Old Irish Triads. As long as no modern edition of these is available (though it has been promised by Fergus Kelly in his Guide to Early Irish Law, Dublin 1988, 284) the description of MSS of Briathra Flainn Fhína maic Ossu is also a helpful supplement to Kuno Meyer's list of Triads-MSS (Kuno Meyer, The Triads of Ireland, Dublin 1906, v-vii).

Another large section deals with questions of dating, title, ascriptions and the audience of the composition. Because of the lack of historically sound external evidence, arguments for the dating of the text have to be found within its language. The language of the text turns out to agree to the standards of Classical Old Irish, with nothing suggesting a date later than the mid-ninth century, but also no linguistic details which confirm a late seventh-century date. Such a date, however, would be necessary to ascribe the composition to king Aldfrith personally. Dr. Ireland concludes that 'the ascription of these Old Irish maxims [in two MS families] to Flann Fína mac Ossu is a manifestation of the esteem accorded to this king of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria by subsequent Irish learned circles' (56). In the MS family labelled L our text bears the title Senbríathra Fithail 'Old Sayings of Fithail', the legendary poet and judge Fithal being awarded the merit of its composition.

After a short statement about the method of editing (56-59) the main text of Briathra Flainn Fhína maic Ossu follows. The critical edition of the maxims itself takes up only 33 of the more than 250 pages of the book (61-93), a fact which is evidence of the meticulous work Dr. Ireland has done as a whole. The three-word maxims are organised in seven paragraphs, ordered according to their headword. This structural principle follows the usage in the MSS. For example §1 has all sayings starting with the verb ad-cota 'attains, results etc.', §1.3 for instance going Ad-cota ciáll cainchruth 'Good sense results in fair form', and §1.48 Ad-cota léigend libru 'Learning gives rise to books.' The maxims are not divided equally among the paragraphs: the longest paragraph, §6, consists of 102 sayings, the shortest, §2, of only seven. A detailed apparatus is found at the bottom of each page.

The very detailed notes to the individual maxims take up pages 95-161. Dr. Ireland discusses questions of the text constitution and grammatical problems in due depth. As regards the contents, he frequently points out parallels within the text itself and in other wisdom texts, but he limits himself to the Irish tradition. It would have been interesting if Ireland had sometimes also drawn the reader's attention to the wider European tradition. For example §1.3 mentioned above (Ad-cota ciáll cainchruth 'Good sense results in fair form') echoes the sentiment of Latin mens sana in corpore sano 'A sound mind in a sound body' very closely.

Five appendices are added to the main text. Appendix 1 ('§8 Cía fégam ránac') and 2 ('§9 Secht co-m-ar-thai déc') are editions of two short gnomic texts, appendices 3-5 are dedicated to dip-1omatic editions and collations of the most important MSS of Briathra Flainn Fhína maic Ossu.

A long bibliography and a glossarial index conclude the book. Some words, so far not taken into account by the Dictionary of the Irish Language (DIL), have been added to the Old Irish lexicon by Ireland's edition. It might have been useful to the reader if these words had been specifically noted. A few examples from the letters G, I and L shall suffice. The following words from Ireland's glossarial index are not found in DIL:

- gnáthaire f. 'lingering about, hanging around' §4.10 (a variant reading for the slightly better attested gnáthaige 'frequency, wont'; however given the weak attestation in only one MS, the question should be asked if gnáthaire is but a misspelling for gnáthaige).

- immattrab n.? 'living hemmed in; being surrounded' §6.34 (a non-trivial compound of imm- and attrab 'act of taking possession; dwelling').

- lántech n. 'a complete refusal, a full rejection' §6.83 (though a trivial compound of lán 'full' and etech 'refusal', it could well have been included in DIL's long list of lán-compounds).
In some cases entries to existing words in DIL can be modified, provided Ireland's suggestions are correct:

- **greifel** 'staggers (a horse ailment)' in DIL, but more general 'disorder, confusion, chaos' according to Ireland and other authorities he cites in the note to §6.79.
- **irach** 'bountiful' §2.6 might (!) provide another instance.
- **ledb** 'strip of skin or leather; weal' in DIL; Ireland proposes the meaning 'remnant' for §6.2.
- **liamain**: Ireland treats liamna in §1.8, found in a single MS, as the i-stem acc. (sg. or pl.?) of liamain 'reproach, slander'. DIL only quotes forms which point to a a-stem inflection of the verbal noun of liid 'to charge, to accuse'. Again the meagre attestation makes one hesitant about accepting the proposal.
- **lugae**: DIL only quotes examples of the phrase lugae dige 'lack of drink, thirst'. Ireland proposes for §6.2 an instance of lugae without a qualifying genitive in a more general meaning 'yearning; want, deficiency'.

In conclusion it can be said that this book, the result of many years of work by Colin Ireland, proves to be a very felicitous and highly recommendable edition of a text belonging to a hitherto somewhat neglected corner of the Old Irish literary tradition.


Reviewed by Dr. Brad Eden, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This second edition of Collins' book has an entirely new chapter on Spain after the Arab conquest, as well as a significantly expanded section on the Ottonian Empire. First edition mistakes, such as the deletion of references to the entirely spurious *Life of Rimbert* by Anskar, have been corrected. Recent scholarship in all of the chapters has been included, where appropriate.

Collins does a wonderful job of providing comments on the primary research sources for each of the areas that he discusses, while still supplying expert opinion and comment on scholarship in areas that are deficit in primary sources yet rich in theory and discussion. A very nice chart of the chronology of main events from 238 A.D. 1000 A.D. prefaces the introduction, while extensive notes and a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, as well as each chapter, can be found at the end. Collins takes the reader through the end stages of the Roman empire and emperors, through the division of the Roman empire into Eastern and Western halves, and the various kingdoms/ethnic groups that arose to form the eventual countries of modern Europe. While doing this, he provides some interesting commentary on specific personalities and situations of interest during this time period.

The fascination with all things Roman, even after the disintegration of the Empire itself in the fifth century, marked most of the changing landscape and political structures throughout late antiquity and the "Dark Ages." Even when frontier societies and barbarian groups encountered "civilized" areas of the old Roman Empire, they often tried to incorporate Roman traditions and social structures into their political system, in order to provide authenticity and continuity. This was picked up and incorporated into the early organization of the Roman Catholic Church, which during this period successfully emerged as the heir to the power of the apostles, through the linking of Roman Empire and Christian dogma and tradition to the city of Rome itself. As such, Collins spends much time in weaving through the intricacies and intrigues that developed in the economic, social, and political arenas of this time period. I was especially impressed with the objectivity and historical realism that he provided on topics that have been or are controversial, without becoming overly critical or opinionated in his comments. A very good resource and research tool for scholars and amateurs alike of this historical period.


Reviewed by L. Swain, Western Michigan University.

"Celtic Christianity" is a popular term and its use actually justifies Ian's Bradley's book, *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams*. It has long been taught in popular circles that the Celtic church was more spiritual, more focused on nature, and of course, "saved civilization" in the words of recent popular book. Ian Bradley examines various revivals
of interest in the Golden Age of Celtic Saints and what motivates those revivals and how renewed interest in the Celtic past informs the reader as much about those interested in the saints as it does about the Celtic saints themselves.

Bradley treats his subject chronologically. He discusses six different periods of Celtic revivalism which focused on the saints. He begins his study during the period 664-800 CE, a period marked by hagiography of Irish saints and the eventual reception of Roman forms of liturgy, tonsure, and Easter calculation. The next wave of revival Bradley dates to 1070-1220, a period of principally Welsh and Cornish emphasis on their Celtic past in light of the Norman Conquest. The third period appears rather long to be called a "revival" spanning six centuries from 1250 to 1800. But this third period does include the Reformation when at least in England the Celtic and early Anglo-Saxon saints were put into service in favor of both sides as exemplars of the true faith. The fourth period of revivalism is the late nineteenth century, an era marked not only by interest in Celtic saints but in all things Irish including some interesting works on Druids. The fifth period covers most of the twentieth century from 1900-1960, and the final period he calls "the current revival."

Bradley's book suffers from some artificial problems. It is difficult to discern in many ways just how the late nineteenth century revival is different at 1900, for example, constituting a "new" revival. Another, and more important difference, is that Bradley focuses on Irish Christianity more so than Celtic Christianity. While there is certainly overlap between these two designations, the latter is a much larger category involving Romano-British Christianity, Welsh, Cornish, the church in Ireland, as well as those Irish foundations on the continent and in England. His discussion of this earlier period in particular is in need of perspective. He focuses on the "big three" of Patrick, Brigit, Columba which to some degree is justifiable considering the attention which these three received. However, he fails to set these three, and other early Celtic saint's lives in the overall Christian production of saints lives during this period. The production of a saint's life involving a Celtic saint was really no different than the production of a saint's life involving a non-Celtic saint. In any case, since what he discusses is the norm for the church at this period, it is difficult to accept his characterization of the period as a "revival" of Celtic saints. He also fails to note the opposite affect that the Irish were having on the continent where some of the key figures such as Columbanus, whom he barely mentions, who created a legacy that was respected long after his death. Nor does Bradley deal with the Irish monastic rules that earned the reputation for instilling holiness because of their harshness.

Even in his dealings with Bede he needs some degree of perspective and adjustment. He states that Bede is overly positive about Ireland, and to a degree he is quite correct. But what he fails to note is that not all Celts fare well in Bede's treatment. Although later Bradley cites Patrick Wormald to the effect that Augustine of Canterbury comes off very poorly in comparison to the Celts in Bede's telling of the tale of Augustine's Oak, (HE 2.2) he fails to note that the Britons are castigated in an aside by Bede on their date of Easter, and that Augustine has the last divine word: a prophecy of doom which Bede points out came true. Thus the conclusion of the whole episode illustrates Augustine's divine mandate in contrast to the Britons, an important point which Bradley misses in his treatment of Bede and the Irish church.

Nor does Bradley speak of the early part of Bede's History of the English Church and People. In the first chapters of his history, Bede relates stories about the Romano-British church, including the story of St. Alban, the first British martyr. Bede's treatment of these matters would illustrate Bradley's point well, but he seems to prefer to focus on specifically Irish elements rather than "Celtic" Christianity. In a later period, Bradley also fails to mention the Irish scholars who were part of the Carolingian courts, and the views taken of them at the time and later which might also constitute part of one of his revival periods.

While it is apparent that I have taken some exception to Bradley's treatment in these early chapters, not all is gloomy. As the book progresses toward the modern period Bradley is on firmer ground. His discussions in particular of the last three chapters covering the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are excellent surveys of the motivations and methodologies of these periods, including the important note that none of these movements focused in any way on the Celtic languages and instead dealt with the literature in translation. He also discusses these last three revivals against the background of theories of nature and race of the nineteenth century as well as "romanticism" which pervaded nineteenth century literature.

Bradley's style is easy to read and in spite of my reservations very informative. In each chapter, many of the important texts are referred to and relevant scholars cited so that Bradley also provides the service of a bibliographer in the field. His analysis of the motivations behind each of the "revivals", including the early period, appear to me to be quite sound. The index, while not as thorough as one would like, is nonetheless adequate enough to find the majority of desired subjects. A short bibliography is also helpful, although it would have been even more helpful to include everything cited in the footnotes in the bibliography as well, especially editions of primary works. But Bradley's book is nonetheless useful and informative. My own recommendation however is that it not be read by beginners in the field, but by those who have at least some knowledge of the field first because the early chapters in the book do require some adjustment.

Reviewed by Dr. Brad Eden, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This book provides a unique new approach to the examination of early medieval architecture from the edict of Milan in 313 A.D. to the gradual demise of the Romanesque style around 1200 A.D., by focusing on issues and themes related to the subject rather than on a chronological sequence of dates and developments. Many quotations from ancient sources are included, which provide some insight into the background and history related to the construction and creation of medieval buildings. Major architectural innovations featured in the narrative are the medieval castle, the church spire, and the monastic cloister. In addition, the text makes reference to specific examples of early medieval architecture that are included as color photographs in the book, making the book much more readable and usable from the standpoint of the average reader.

Chapter 1, The Christian Basilica, focuses on the importance of the Roman basilica as the blueprint for early church architecture. Chapter 2, The Carolingian Renaissance: the Basilica Transformed, relates Charlemagne's importance in architectural developments during the ninth century, specifically regarding the transept, the crossing tower, and the westwork. The development of galleries is also discussed. Chapter 3, Symbolic Architecture, deals with how the sacrament of baptism influenced early medieval church design, specifically in the construction of rounded churches and vaulted chambers. Chapter 4, Secular Architecture in the Age of Feudalism, examines the construction of castles and keeps, especially the two distinct architectures of medieval halls. Chapter 5, Patron and Builder, provides some context on who exactly planned, built, and led construction efforts during this time period. The shipment of masonry from various sources is an especially interesting topic on which Stalley provides some insight. Chapter 6, Art and Engineering, discusses the innovation in tower and turret building that surfaced during this time period, why the interest and surge in their construction, and the development of groin and barrel vault architecture to deal with structural pressure. Chapter 7, Architecture and Pilgrimage, is an enlightening discussion of how the economics and politics involved in the cult of relics affected church architecture, especially in regards to crypts. The development of the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela and the related pilgrimage routes is focused upon. Chapter 8, Architecture and Monasticism, provides insight into the building of Cluny III, and the development of the Cistercian order and their ideas regarding church architecture. Chapter 9, The Language of Architecture, discusses a number of architectural revolutions in the eleventh century, namely the compound pier, roll mouldings, windows and doorways with recessed orders, the engaged shaft, wall arcades, arcaded galleries and passageways, as well as a wealth of applied ornament. Finally, Chapter 10, Diversity in the Romanesque Era, provides insight on the diversity of architectural construction which took place during the twelfth century, and examines various cathedrals and churches in different localities. A short epilogue, bibliography, timeline, and index round out a well executed and informative survey of the development of early medieval architecture.


Reviewed by Clarissa Aykroyd, Victoria, BC

Prior to the release of *The Isles: A History*, Norman Davies's most recent book was a tome entitled *Europe: A History*. Ambitious titles, but a reading of *The Isles* confirms that Davies is largely equal to the massive task of writing a history of the British Isles, which spans prehistoric times to the present. Despite many flaws, some of them easily avoidable, 'The Isles' is a fascinating narrative.

Davies has based his work on several main theses, with varying degrees of effectiveness. It is hard to argue with his contention that the Isles have always been more tied to the rest of Europe than their inhabitants like to admit. When he offers a monk's account of the coronation of Henri Plantagenet and then says "The idea that English history can be separated from French history in this period is an illusion" (330), the reader is not likely to forget the point. Davies also shows great skill and perception in wittily dissecting the views of the English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish on themselves. Frequently, he does so by quoting songs and poems which most clearly reflect the ideologies of the people behind them. Still, because Davies obviously considers himself a very impartial historian, it is amusing to hear occasional echoes of the "Britain should be supreme" view in his own writing; for example, when he remarks: "From start to finish, the birth of the USA was the product of incompetence and culpable stupidity. It need never have happened. But it did" (716).
Above all, Davies brings the complex maze of English history to life through the use of well-written anecdotes and loving examination of the small details of life. He discusses the coinage of early British tribes with great precision, remarking on their "exquisite artistry" (73); a gripping account of the ill-fated New Caledonia endeavour in Darien (662-681); and a brief but illuminating glimpse of the British withdrawal in 1997 from Hong Kong: "Elgar’s 'Nimrod' was played. The last Governor wept. They were treated to a grand review by the largest fleet of British ships to sail the China Seas since the fall of Singapore. The next day, the last Governor was carrying his own cases at Heathrow and looking for a taxi" (912). It is details such as these which make the casual reader want to delve deeper into history.

The most controversial of Davies's historical approaches may be his attempt to be "as precise as possible about nomenclature" (xli). Davies argues that ongoing confusion about when and how to use names such as "Britain," "England" and "United Kingdom" has for centuries obscured the fact that today's British Isles have housed multiple, shifting kingdoms and peoples. He is right in saying that the reality is far more complex than the popular perception, but his attempt to consistently call people and places by the names of their times sometimes backfires, not least because it is impossible to be consistent in this regard.

It is reasonable to call the Norman and Plantagenet kings by the French forms of their names--indeed, this technique serves as a constant reminder of the centuries-long Frenchness of the ruling class in the Isles--but Davies's invented place names for the prehistoric and ancient times are questionable. He argues that "[the somewhat mythological ring of invented names is a small price to pay if one is to avoid the cardinal sin of anachronism" (10), but perhaps he rates his own abilities too high if he believes himself capable of completely avoiding an anachronistic view of history, and his choices of place-names often seem arbitrary. For example, speaking of a group of cliffs, is it really so certain that "they [prehistoric peoples] would have called them the Eight Sisters" (11)? Furthermore, these names make it difficult for the average reader--who may not even be a resident of the Isles--to recognize the locales to which he refers. However, this problem is somewhat rectified by the presence of an appendix which matches the invented names with their modern equivalents.

With all the skill and enthusiasm which has gone into The Isles, it is a pity that it contains some very basic flaws which could have been rectified by a competent editor. Firstly, Davies has an irritating habit of quoting or referring to writers and historians without mentioning their name in the body of the text, thus forcing the reader to turn to the endnotes to find out who the person in question is. Instead of identifying the author of a quotation as merely "a Welshman" (269) or "a distinguished Oxford medievalist" (506), why not say "the Welshman J. Davies" and "V.H. Galbraith, a distinguished Oxford medievalist"? There are countless examples of this habit throughout the text, and it seems to have no advantage and plenty of disadvantages. There are also many bracketed references in the text where the page number is given as "00." Such errors may be corrected in later editions, but they should never have slipped through in the first place. Even worse, there is the occasional basic factual error. For instance, when speaking of the Irish Revival, Davies says: "J. M. Synge (1871-1909) was viciously denounced both by Yeats and Patrick Pearse for his drama 'The Playboy of the Western World'" (970), when in fact Yeats was one of Synge's foremost champions. This may be a minor point, but such an mistake tends to call into question Davies's accuracy in other areas.

Davies concludes his history by looking at the UK's current situation and openly offering his own views: "I happen to belong to a minority who hold that the breakup of the United Kingdom may be imminent. That the United Kingdom was established to serve the interests of Empire, and that the loss of Empire has destroyed its raison d'etre" (1053). However, he expresses optimism about the advent of the European Union, and comments: "Even if Britain were to break up, all that is really valuable would remain" (1055). The last few pages show a well-balanced perspective; at the same time, they are deeply personal--a quality which many books of history lack.

Despite its flaws, 'The Isles' is a book that deserves to be read, because an overview of the entire course of British history can only be useful to anyone with an interest in the subject, and because the author's audacity and enthusiasm are infectious. Davies's iconoclastic perspective gives the reader a fresh view on a complex and enthralling subject. As well, it ensures that we will all be very careful henceforth about our use of the word "British."


Reviewed by Dr. Brad Eden, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

This book is a magnificent compilation of over 800 illustrations and images from the collections of 60 museums and
collections, documenting the era of the Celtic culture in Europe from their emergence during the Halstatt period to the era of Christianization. This comprehensive description of Celtic culture through their own surviving artifacts makes this a highly unique and useful volume for scholars of Celtic culture. A brief yet detailed introduction explains and comments on the materials and artifacts, points out connections, interprets the many drawings and maps, and links the illustrated material to the book *Kelten. Versuch einer Gesamtdarstellung ihrer Kultur* (*Celts: a general survey of their culture*) (2nd ed., Vienna 1997). A detailed index of illustrations is also provided at the end of the volume. The author consulted with over 160 artists and scholars worldwide in the compilation of this book.

This edition uses both German and English languages throughout, including the descriptions of the artifacts. The author even includes a paragraph on the 20th century resurrection of Celtic myths and legends in the comic book *Asterix*, and in the work of J.R.R. Tolkien. The exploration of a wide range of questions and problems makes this book a must for Celtic scholars, while the numerous illustrations and artifacts will appeal to both the scholar as well as the enthusiast of Celtic esoterica. Whether obtained as a coffee-table piece or a scholarly addition to one's library, this is a must-have book for anyone interested in Celtic culture or all things Celtic.


Reviewed by Dr. Brad Eden, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Fay Sampson is a prolific English novelist, whose 26 books thus far have focused on historical events and peoples of medieval Ireland and England. This book is a historical factbook/novel/retelling/commentary on the Anglo-Saxons in England from 460 through 1066. The author has typical chapters on Who are the Anglo-Saxons, The English Conquest, Lindisfarne, Alfred the Great, and the Canterbury Mission, among others. The style of writing is geared towards the English public, who probably know some of this, but the commentary and retelling in the novelist style is meant to provide the history with some "spice" and "flavor." The author obviously knows her history, and her comments and historical storytelling are interesting qualities that are difficult to comprehend from an American perspective. Given that, Ms. Sampson certainly crams a lot of history into 153 pages. Maps of medieval Great Britain and Europe are provided at the beginning of the book, as well as a brief chronology of events. A Further Reading section is given at the end of the book. A good read, and an interesting "novel" approach to the presentation of the history of the Anglo-Saxons in England.

**Film and Television Reviews**


Reviewed by Christopher A. Snyder, Marymount University

Heavenly pyrotechnics and a hammer-wielding saint interrupt a druidic sacrifice of a virgin in the opening scene of *Saint Patrick: The Irish Legend*, a made-for-television movie that aired last March on Fox Family Channel. Though not exactly lifted from Muirchu's seventh-century biography of Patrick, this and many other scenes from the movie do remain true to the spirit of early medieval hagiography. A devout Patrick battling druid/wizards and recalcitrant pagan kings is the Patrick that medieval Irish authors wanted their audiences to know. Why, we may ask, have these modern filmmakers brought us back to the medieval *topoi* constructed around a very real missionary whose own writings are noticeably short on flashy miracles and one-dimensional villains?

In the beginning of the movie we learn the 'truth' about a topic that has baffled Patriciologists for centuries: Patrick's infamous boyhood sin is that he had participated-ecstatically-in a pagan religious ceremony (Samhain). But before his aristocratic Christian parents can find out, young Patrick (played by Luke Griffin) and others from his father's Romano-British estate are kidnapped by Irish raiders and taken back to Ireland. This part of the story follows Muirchu closely, showing a Patrick growing in personal belief eventually able to escape from his Irish master and return to his grieving parents (Alan Bates and Susannah York). The filmmakers follow the hagiographic tradition of having the now zealous Patrick travel to Gaul for ecclesiastic training. After several years a mature, though not adequately educated Patrick (played by Patrick Bergin) petitions the Gallic bishop Germanus to send him back to Ireland as a missionary. He looses
this commission to Palladius, portrayed as an urbane and utterly inept failure who leaves Ireland almost as soon as he lands on the pagan island.

Patrick is now given his chance, but first he must convince the British clergy to accept him. Here we are introduced to Patrick’s nemesis, an invented bishop named Quentin, played conventionally as a haughty British bad guy by Malcolm McDowell (whose on-screen villains have increasingly lost their edge since Caligula). Though Patrick convinces the episcopal council to give him a chance in Ireland, Quentin discovers Patrick’s boyhood sin and attempts to have him recalled. Meanwhile, in Ireland, Patrick is busy driving out snakes and outmaneuvering the High King’s wizards. Through his great faith he is able to work miracles, wield heavenly magic, and overcome the opposition of the British Church. The movie ends with a cameo by God himself, who, doing his best impression of Thomas Cahill, promises Patrick that the Christian seeds he has sown in Ireland will lead to great centers of learning and nothing less than the salvation of Western civilization.

Saint Patrick: The Irish Legend resembles a slew of recent miniseries aired on American network television (most on NBC), like The Odyssey and Merlin, in which the latest computerized special effects are used to recreate the magic of the ancient world. The result is a sort of Digital Age updating of the approach taken in the old special effects laden films of Ray Harryhausen (e.g the Sinbad movies). In none of these films is the acting noteworthy, and in Saint Patrick it may be slightly worse. One gets the feeling that Patrick Bergin and the other principals could have done better had they been given better material. Clearly the producers were aiming at an adventure tale, and emotional introspection would only have slowed down the action.

As an historical film Saint Patrick: The Irish Legend gets mixed reviews. The architecture and costuming are not quite accurate, but then again we know little about the material culture of Britain and Ireland in the fifth century. And while it would have been interesting to see a script that used only contemporary documents of the fifth and sixth centuries (Patrick, Gildas, Constantius, etc.) to recreate life in the Brittonic Age, the filmmakers should be praised for at least making good use of Patrician hagiography. For while we don't exactly see the historical Patricius in Saint Patrick, we do come close to seeing the Apostle of the Irish as those in medieval Ireland would have seen him.