The Arthur of 'Culhwch and Olwen' as a figure of epic-heroic tradition

Article

Published Version

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See Guidance on citing.

Publisher: University of Reading

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

The Arthur of 'Culhwch and Olwen' as a Figure of
Epic-Heroic Tradition[1]

The Welsh tale Culhwch and Olwen is the oldest Arthurian tale that
has been preserved in the manuscripts.   The extant redaction has been dated
to the second half of the eleventh century but its orthography, vocabulary,
syntax, and, moreover, certain stylistic and narrative features, suggest that a
written version of parts of it may have existed a century earlier. [2]   The tale
deserves the interest of the student of Arthurian literature as it represents
Arthurian tradition before the great developments which are seen in the
Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth and in continental Arthuri-
an literature.

There are however some complicating factors. Perhaps the most
serious obstacle for the student of Culhwch and Olwen is the isolated position
of the text.   Apparently in Welsh scribal tradition the recording of prose
started centuries later than the recording of poetry, and as early Welsh poetry
is never narrative, this means that none of the early heroic-epic literature of
Celtic Britain has reached us. [3]   Culhwch and Olwen is not only the oldest
Arthurian tale extant, but also the oldest - or at least the most primitive - of
the eleven Welsh prose tales commonly known under the name Mabinogion.
It is true that there are a great many allusions to a body of narrative literature
before Culhwch and Olwen but these scattered remarks cannot give us a co-
herent picture, only some tantalizing glimpses. [4]

How is the term epic used in this article?   As Celtic narrative
tradition is from its first written beginnings in prose - verse-elements occur
only at moments of great intensity [5] - I call those prose tales epic which pre-
serve memories of persons and events of a famous past in a literary form. The
restriction 'in a literary form' is important: an epic tradition cannot be ex-
pected to give a record of historical fact.   Epic tales provide their audience
with examples of behaviour; their aim is to educate as well as to entertain.

Another obstacle is the fact that Arthur, besides being the protagonist
of a literary cycle, was probably also a historical character and, what is more,
a historical character of a period which has left us hardly any genuine histori-
cal documents.   Therefore every inquiry into the early Arthurian material
tends to start with the historian's question: What is history and what legend?
The answer is that precious little in these texts can be regarded as historical
evidence. [6] But what about the much larger part that is thus labelled as
legend?   Where the domain of the historian ends that of the student of
literature begins, and it seems to me that his specific task should start with

the question, what exactly is meant by the term <u>legend</u>?

<u>Culhwch and Olwen</u> has all the trappings of a narrative text which stems from an oral background. Some of its parts are told quite elaborately, while others - not only its ending but also the various quests undertaken by Arthur and his warriors in search of the objects required by Olwen's father - are reduced to mere summaries and in some cases even to a dry enumeration of facts. Moreover it uses elements characteristic of the repertoire of the oral story-teller such as set descriptions for typical scenes and stereotyped pieces of dialogue. [7]

Scholars in Western Europe have long tended to associate oral story-telling with the 'folk', with simple people and children, because when, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Romantic movement became interested in oral traditions, this was all that was left in our urban and bourgeois societies. Until very recently little attention has been paid to the fact that there are periods and places where such a literature is produced for an aristocracy. The existence of a traditional aristocratic literature depends on one condition: there must be a professional class of highly trained performers/composers.

This reminds one of ancient Greece. But there is no need to go so far. Right on the other side of the Irish Sea the Irish medieval manuscripts have conserved an old aristocratic-pagan literature which is at the same time aristocratic-heroic and aristocratic-intellectual. [8] In its oral stage this literature was transmitted by a learned class of a highly privileged position, the so-called <u>filid</u> (sg. <u>fili</u>), who were not only the composers of panegyric verse but also the custodians of the traditional lore in all its aspects: history (including genealogy), law, toponymy, saga and so forth. In native Irish learning verbal associations played an important role: etymological speculation and punning were not only used as mnemonic devices but also as instruments of inspiration and as means for the obtaining of (new) knowledge. [9]

Was there anything comparable on the British side of the Irish Sea? In trying to answer this question we must not only take account of the fact that the Irish manuscript material is so much more extensive than that of Celtic Britain but we must keep in mind that there is another fundamental difference between the two islands. Both have a common cultural background, but whereas one is conservative, the other is dynamic. [10] Ireland, which until the Scandinavian invasions had a relatively undisturbed existence, could preserve much of its early culture. Celtic Britain, on the other hand, was from the Roman period onward in direct contact with a succession of foreign invaders and therefore went through periods of great change. Yet although the body of texts preserved in the Welsh manuscripts is at the same time more

limited and more modern, it contains traces of an older stratum which, to-
gether with the supplementary evidence of the Irish sources, enables us to
piece together a fuller picture of the early traditions of Celtic Britain.

At first sight, turning from the Irish fili to his British counterpart,
the bardd, we seem to be dealing with a functionary of a different sort. The
highest class of the native intellectuals, the pencerdd, concerned himself
with praise-poetry only. The narrative tradition - in prose - was left to a
man of a lower standing, the so-called cyfarwydd. There are however allu-
sions to an earlier situation when the two functions were not so strictly
separated. [11]

The evidence suggests that the narrative tradition of Celtic Britain
was at its height in the ninth century. [12] Ifor Williams has convincingly
demonstrated that, despite some differences, this tradition had much in common
with early Irish narrative literature. [13] The extant tales, although they were
only written down after a long period of degeneration, still have certain
characteristics which show that behind them there lies a learned tradition
comparable to that of the Irish filid: their love of catalogues, of punning, of
place-lore, of etymological speculation, not to mention their expert handling
of the legal vocabulary.

All these elements of learned provenance are amply represented in
Culhwch and Olwen. There has been much speculation about the kinship of
this Arthurian tale with Irish narrative tradition; in the course of my research
I have been led to the conclusion that one of the causes for this kinship was
the presence of comparable classes of tradition-bearers in the warrior aristo-
cracies on either side of the Irish Sea.

As has been said above, Culhwch and Olwen has features which
point to an oral existence of parts of the tale. An oral literature is a priori
a traditional literature which means that it is built of traditional elements. [14]
Therefore, if we limit ourselves in our inquiries into a text of this sort to an
inventory of its traditional themes and motives, we stop at its surface: we
concentrate on the mould into which the material has been cast and forget to
look at the material itself.

For many years now the commonly accepted interpretation of
Culhwch and Olwen has been that of a combination of two international
themes. The first, the theme of the 'Jealous Stepmother', tells how Culhwch's
stepmother places the young man under a destiny that he shall never get a
wife unless he obtains Olwen, the daughter of a certain Ysbaddaden. The
second, the tale 'The Giant's Daughter', also known as 'Six go through the
World', tells how Arthur of Britain wins this girl Olwen for his first cousin

Culhwch by accomplishing the tasks set by her father Ysbaddaden. In this perspective the Arthurian element has been seen as a secondary feature, something superimposed on the tale itself. [15]

This approach is typical for the folklorists of the historic-geographic school. One of their primary aims is to classify a given text according to the international systems of classification introduced by scholars like Aarne and Thompson, and to achieve this they have to lay bare the underlying structure by stripping the text of its individual traits. We must not forget however that the abstract scheme thus established is above all a tool of modern scholarship and one that hardly exists in the minds of the bearers of a living tradition. [16]

If we look at Culhwch and Olwen as a part of early Welsh literature it is precisely the Arthurian element which appears as the real nucleus of the tale. Firstly: although the opening sections and the very abrupt ending point to Culhwch as the protagonist, the tale as a whole is strongly dominated by the figure of Arthur, Culhwch's first cousin. As far as Culhwch himself takes part in the events - from his setting out from his father's court to his appearance as suitor at Ysbaddaden's fort - his conduct is in accordance with Celtic heroic convention, but then he disappears completely from the scene until the final episode. Secondly: with one possible exception - the occurrence of the name Culhwch in a poem of the ninth century [17] - all the allusions and parallels in early Welsh literature to persons and events in Culhwch and Olwen bear on the Arthurian sections of the tale.

The Arthur of Culhwch and Olwen functions as a typical Celtic overlord. [18] He is penn teyrned yr ynys honn, 'the sovereign prince of the Island of Britain': not a ruler with central power, but a primus inter pares whose authority is acknowledged by the other princes. The hospitality of his court, the right of the craftsman to be admitted without restriction, the nightly gatherings in his hall - all this shows striking similarities to the way of life depicted by the early heroic epic of Ireland. The relation between Arthur and his leading hero Cei is paralleled by the relation between Conchobar, the king of the Irish Ulster cycle, and his great champion Cù Chulainn. Both Cù Chulainn and Cei, with their magico-heroic qualities, are traditional Celtic warriors. In our tale, Cei is still the exemplary hero who is prepared to defend the people under his protection until his own death. That he uses guile to overcome his opponents is compatible with the heroic code of honour. [19] Arthur's warband (teulu) consists of famous warriors and of sons of the noble families from all parts of Celtic Britain. Quite a few of these names are known from other early texts, e.g. the Gododdin. That there are, moreover, a number of fighters from other lands among Arthur's warriors, fits into our picture of the native chieftain who tried to strengthen his warband to the best of his abilities. [20]

The Arthur of Culhwch and Olwen, who has the authority to summon the troops of the whole island of Britain, reminds one of another famous leader of a coalition in early Welsh literature, the northern prince Urien of the praise-poems by Taliesin. [21] Like Urien, Arthur has a double task: not only the defence of the realm against enemies from without, but also against threats from within. Our tale alludes to several internal conflicts in which Arthur acts as peace-maker. [22] Keeping in mind the fundamental difference between an epic tale and a historical record, we might even detect in the Arthur of Culhwch and Olwen some echoes of the historical Arthur who, as our knowledge of Dark Age Britain suggests, 'played some part in the task of defending and reorganizing the island in the troubled period when Britain had lost the protection of the Roman legions, and when it was both divided internally and suffering from foreign enemies'. [23]

I have arrived at the point where I should like to propose the following interpretation of our tale: Culhwch and Olwen consists of a series of originally independent Arthurian adventures, the majority of which stem from native epic-heroic tradition. This Arthurian material, with some later accretions, is brought together within the framework of the story of Olwen's wooing by Culhwch – this framework being formed by a combination of the stepmother-theme with the theme of the quest for the bride. The fusion of the Arthurian episodes with the story of the wooing has only been partly realized, which is attested by the fact that Culhwch, the suitor, is not once mentioned during the accomplishment of the tasks set by Olwen's father. [24]

As is only to be expected, the fusion of the two elements resulted in a necessary modification of both. On the one hand, the Arthurian material has been 'romanticized'. Our attention is focused no longer on the heroic exploits themselves but on the winning of the anoetheu, the various objects requested by the father of the bride. So the main objective is no longer the subjection of the dangerous outlaw Dillus but the procuring of the leash made out of his beard [25]; not the expulsion of the destructive monster, the boar Trwyth, from the island of Britain, but the conquest of his tusks which are needed to make a comb and shears for Ysbaddaden. [26] The influence of the new setting on the Arthurian episodes manifests itself further in the burlesque treatment of some of the events [27] and in the interpolation of elements from popular story-telling, for instance, the obtaining of the flax for Olwen's veil with the help of the grateful ants, or the visits to the oldest animals. (But please note how carefully Arthur himself is kept away from encounters of this kind. [28])

On the other hand, the story of the wooing, whatever its origin and relative age, has been drawn into the Arthurian orbit. Even before the actual

beginning of the tale the bride's father, Ysbaddaden, reveals himself as a direct opponent of the sovereign prince of the Island of Britain by killing the numerous brothers of Goreu, another first cousin of Arthur's. [29]   His defiance of Arthur's authority reaches a climax in his statement that Arthur is under his hand, in other words a vassal of his. [30]

In this context even the stepmother-theme obtains a special meaning. After Culhwch's refusal to marry her daughter, the stepmother, by swearing her destiny on the young man, tries to prevent him from taking a wife and thus to deprive him of the possibility of having an heir.   So by winning Olwen for his cousin, Arthur defends the dynastic interests of his family. [31]

For the interpretation of Culhwch and Olwen two questions are of foremost importance: (1) who performs the tasks set by the bride's father, and (2) what are these tasks?

In answering them, scholars have tended to focus their attention on the two enormous catalogues which together take up more than a quarter of the extant text of the tale: the roll-call of Arthur's warriors and the list of the conditions named by Ysbaddaden.

I have discussed these two enumerations more fully elsewhere [32], so here I can be brief.   The longer I have been working on these lists and on related material, the more I have become convinced that they are a typical product of the native intellectual tradition.   Even in conservative Ireland learned catalogues, with their tendency to become more impressive, could absorb material from widely divergent sources (in this process association, verbal and otherwise, played a great role).   This also happened to our two lists: a large part of their content represents later accretions.

So let us turn to the tale itself.   Who performs the tasks that are actually treated in the narrative parts of Culhwch and Olwen?   The first thing that strikes us - it has been mentioned earlier - is the total absence of the suitor, Culhwch.   Secondly: none of the two dozen of folktale helpers that have found a place among the more than 220 names of the roll-call of Arthur's warriors is ever mentioned outside this list.   All the quests are either accomplished by Arthur who - with one exception - appears as the commander of the troops of the Island of Britain and as such shows much strategic insight [33] or by the famous heroes of his court under the leadership of Cei.   The names of these heroes belong to the literary tradition of Celtic Britain, which is corroborated by the fact that they also occur in other Welsh texts of the pre-Norman period: in the early poetry - for example in the Gododdin, in the so-called 'Stanzas of the Graves', in the Arthurian poems Pa gur and Preiddeu

<u>Annwfn</u> – and in the 'Triads of the Island of Britain'. [34]

What are the tasks these people perform? Here again there are two things which should be noted. As said before, the episodes dealing with the accomplishment of the tasks are given as a sort of summaries. And compared with the sophistically logical order of Ysbaddaden's enumeration they seem to follow each other in an arbitrary way. Concerning the latter: from the manner in which Arthur regularly consults with his men which of the objects to seek next, it may be concluded that the sequence of the adventures is dictated by the chances reality offers.

The majority of the quests are directly connected with the conquest of three tusks which are necessary to make the razor, comb and shears needed by Olwen's father to prepare himself for his daughter's wedding-feast, and, as becomes apparent at the end of the tale, Ysbaddaden's combing and shaving is nothing but a preliminary to his killing. To obtain these tusks monstrous animals which threaten the land with destruction must be overcome. [35] In the course of their efforts Arthur and his warriors also liberate the realm of other enemies such as the outlaw Dillus who challenges Arthur's order by not submitting to his authority. [36] Most of the adventures have parallels in the early Irish epic. To give just a few examples: the killing of Wrnach and the destruction of his fort in the first of the quests can be compared with the class of Irish sagas called <u>togla</u> (sg. <u>togail</u>) 'destructions' or <u>oircne</u> (sg. <u>orgain</u>) 'plunderings, killings' [37]; the fierce combat between Arthur's warriors and the men of Diwrnach in the latter's house reminds us of similar scenes in the Welsh <u>mabinogi</u> of <u>Branwen</u> and in the Irish saga <u>Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó</u>, 'The Story of Mac Dathó's Pig'. [38]

Is there not however a serious contradiction? On the one hand Arthur is depicted according to the convention of the heroic tradition of Celtic Britain as a battle-leader who has assembled around him a great many names from this same tradition. On the other hand not one of the combats he and his warriors engage in is directed against one of the historical enemies of Celtic Britain. How are we to understand this discrepancy which manifests itself not only in <u>Culhwch and Olwen</u> but in all Welsh Arthurian texts of the pre-Norman period which have reached us? [39]

One of the characteristics of Celtic epic literature is that there is no sharp line between the world of the humans and the 'other'-world. [40] Turning to Ireland we see a hero like Cù Chulainn fighting not only against the armies of Connacht and their allies but also against all sorts of beings with supernatural qualities. [41] At bottom we are dealing here with a primitive epic dominated by magical beliefs in which the land has not only to be protected against human aggressors but also against the powers of primeval chaos lurking on the fringes of the inhabited world. [42]

Annwfn – and in the 'Triads of the Island of Britain'. [34]

What are the tasks these people perform?   Here again there are two
things which should be noted.   As said before, the episodes dealing with the
accomplishment of the tasks are given as a sort of summaries.   And compared
with the sophistically logical order of Ysbaddaden's enumeration they seem to
follow each other in an arbitrary way.   Concerning the latter: from the man-
ner in which Arthur regularly consults with his men which of the objects to
seek next, it may be concluded that the sequence of the adventures is dictated
by the chances reality offers.

The majority of the quests are directly connected with the conquest
of three tusks which are necessary to make the razor, comb and shears needed
by Olwen's father to prepare himself for his daughter's wedding-feast, and, as
becomes apparent at the end of the tale, Ysbaddaden's combing and shaving
is nothing but a preliminary to his killing.   To obtain these tusks monstrous
animals which threaten the land with destruction must be overcome. [35]   In the
course of their efforts Arthur and his warriors also liberate the realm of other
enemies such as the outlaw Dillus who challenges Arthur's order by not submit-
ting to his authority. [36]   Most of the adventures have parallels in the early
Irish epic.   To give just a few examples: the killing of Wrnach and the des-
truction of his fort in the first of the quests can be compared with the class of
Irish sagas called togla (sg. togail) 'destructions' or oircne (sg. orgain)
'plunderings, killings' [37]; the fierce combat between Arthur's warriors and the
men of Diwrnach in the latter's house reminds us of similar scenes in the Welsh
mabinogi of Branwen and in the Irish saga Scēla Mucce Meic Dathó, 'The
Story of Mac Dathó's Pig'. [38]

Is there not however a serious contradiction?   On the one hand
Arthur is depicted according to the convention of the heroic tradition of
Celtic Britain as a battle-leader who has assembled around him a great many
names from this same tradition.   On the other hand not one of the combats
he and his warriors engage in is directed against one of the historical enemies
of Celtic Britain.   How are we to understand this discrepancy which manifests
itself not only in Culhwch and Olwen but in all Welsh Arthurian texts of the
pre-Norman period which have reached us? [39]

One of the characteristics of Celtic epic literature is that there is no
sharp line between the world of the humans and the 'other'-world. [40] Turning
to Ireland we see a hero like Cù Chulainn fighting not only against the armies
of Connacht and their allies but also against all sorts of beings with super-
natural qualities. [41]   At bottom we are dealing here with a primitive epic
dominated by magical beliefs in which the land has not only to be protected
against human aggressors but also against the powers of primeval chaos lurking
on the fringes of the inhabited world. [42]

This still leaves us with the intriguing question why Celtic Britain, which must have lost these archaic beliefs so much earlier than Ireland, should have had such a strong predilection for just this kind of ficticious enemies, above all in the Arthurian texts.

It seems to me that the answer should be sought in the special circumstances in which the Arthurian legend developed. Celtic scholars agree that the enormous loss of British-speaking territory to the advancing Angles and Saxons must have had a devastating effect on the oral traditions of the warrior aristocracies of great parts of the island. Although some of the material was relocated in Wales and in the South-West, the original local connection – so fundamental in insular Celtic tradition – was irretrievably lost. In the case of the Arthurian legend, for reasons we can only guess, the disintegration of the early heroic epic was countered by an upward movement. During this new growth the gaps in the shattered remnants of the old tradition were filled with ficticious elements from various sources. The Arthur of the pre-Norman Welsh literature that has come down to us does not appear as a heroic figure of a famous but distant past like the Irish Conchobar, but as a figure of growing 'national' significance who defends the realm against every conceivable aggressor, past and present (and in later times even future). The beginnings of this process date back to about the same period as the emergence of another important genre of Welsh literature, the poetry of vaticination, and the impact of these political prophecies – and of the intellectual climate which produced them – on the development of the Arthurian legend should not be underestimated. The ficticious opponents of this younger epic, enemies of the type of Ysbaddaden and of the boar Trwyth, because they were free of historical associations, had the advantage that they could be used as symbols for each new aggressor Celtic Britain had to deal with in the course of the centuries. The historical allusions that have been detected in Culhwch and Olwen [43] seem to support the view that this sort of 'equation' really took place.

Both these problems – the relation between the pre-continental phase of the Arthurian literature and the Welsh political prophecies as well as the historical allusions in Culhwch and Olwen – are part of the many white patches on our map of the Arthurian world that yet need to be filled in. Their investigation will contribute to a new understanding of the figure of Arthur and the traditions which developed around him.

DORIS EDEL,
UTRECHT.

NOTES

1. This paper was read at the 13th Arthurian Congress, Glasgow, 1981.
    For a much fuller discussion of the insular Celtic background of
    Culhwch and Olwen see Doris Edel, Helden auf Freiersfüssen.
    'Tochmarc Emire' und 'Mal y kavas Kulhwch Olwen' – Studien zur
    frühen inselkeltischen Erzähltradition, Amsterdam 1980.

2. For this date see The Mabinogion. A New Translation by T.P. Ellis
    and John Lloyd, Oxford 1929, I, 161f. (= Ellis/Lloyd); The
    Mabinogion, translated by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, London
    1949, p.IX (= Mabinogion).

3. See Ifor Williams, Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry, Dublin 1944,
    pp.17ff., 22ff., and lecture two (= Williams, Lectures). Proinsias
    Mac Cana spoke of a 'vacuum in Welsh literature' in Branwen,
    Daughter of Llŷr, Cardiff 1958, p.1.

4. These allusions have been discussed by Rachel Bromwich, 'The
    Character of the Early Welsh Tradition', Studies in Early British
    History, ed. H.M. Chadwick and others, Cambridge 1954, pp.111ff.
    (= Bromwich, Welsh Tradition).

5. Myles Dillon, following Ernst Windisch, saw in this mixture of saga
    with verse a forerunner of an epic literature composed entirely in
    verse: 'The Archaism of Irish Tradition', Proceedings of the British
    Academy, XXXIII, 1947, 253-5 (= PBA). For the opposite view
    that this mixture of prose with verse belongs to a period of degenera-
    tion, see C.M. Bowra, Heroic Poetry, London 1952, p.15.

6. For instance, Thomas Jones, 'The Early Evolution of the Legend of
    Arthur', Nottingham Mediaeval Studies, VIII, 1964, 1-21 (= Jones,
    Legend); Kenneth H. Jackson, 'The Arthur of History', Arthurian
    Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. R.S. Loomis, Oxford 1959,
    pp.1-11 (= ALMA).

7. For examples see Edel, index s.v. 'Stereotype Erzählelemente'.

8. A.M.E. Draak, Ierse Letterkunde als toetssteen, Amsterdam 1946,
    p.9. In this context the term literature has a wider meaning than in
    its modern sense.

9. For this see Edel, part three, especially pp.210f., and index s.v.
    'Wortspiele'.

10. This same contrast which D.A. Binchy noted between Irish and Welsh law (see e.g. 'Archaisms in Celtic Law-Books', Transactions of the Philological Society, 1959, pp.16f.) is also evident between the literatures of the two islands.

11. For a discussion of the relation between the two functionaries see Bromwich, Welsh Tradition, pp.128-35; idem, Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads, Cardiff 1978[2], pp.LXXXIIIf. and 527 (= Bromwich, Triads); Proinsias Mac Cana, The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland, Dublin 1980, pp.16-18, 132-41. Both authors refer to the well-known passage in the 'Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi' where Gwydion together with some companions, all in the guise of bards, arrives at the court of Pryderi and states that it is his privilege as pencerdd to entertain the royal gathering with story-telling (cyfarwyddyd) the first night of their stay (Mabinogion, pp.56f.).

12. Bromwich, Welsh Tradition, p.128.

13. Williams, Lectures. Earlier a similar view has been taken by Cecile O'Rahilly, Ireland and Wales. Their Historical and Literary Relations, London 1924, chap. 3. See also Edel.

14. Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1960, p.220.

15. Bromwich, Welsh Tradition, p.106. For a survey of the folkloristic approach see Edel, pp.62ff.

16. Alan Bruford, 'Gaelic Folk-Tales and Mediaeval Romances', Béaloideas, XXXIV, 1966, 238ff., who also refers to traditional Hungarian story-telling.

17. Jones, Legend, p.19; Edel, pp.148f.

18. For this and the following see Edel, pp.160-64 and 157f.

19. Bowra, pp.100-02.

20. The Poems of Taliesin, ed. Ifor Williams, English version by J.E. Caerwyn Williams, Dublin 1968, p.LVI.

21. He is also mentioned in the Historia Brittonum, c.63. See Bromwich, Welsh Tradition, pp.84f.

22.   The conflict with Hueil son of Caw (Mabinogion, p.103); Arthur's
        vengeance of Cei's slaying (ibid., p.104); the fight between Gwythyr
        son of Greidawl and Gwyn son of Nudd over Creiddylad, Gwythyr's
        betrothed (ibid., p.107 and pp.128f.). For a discussion of the epic-
        heroic background of these conflicts see Edel, pp.168-71.

23.   Jones, Legend, pp.3f.

24.   Edel, pp.91f.

25.   Mabinogion, pp.127f.; see below, n.36.

26.   Mabinogion, pp.134f. In regard to the boar hunts, there is a cer-
        tain amount of confusion between the enumeration of the marriage
        tasks by the bride's father and their accomplishment later on.
        Ysbaddaden wants three tusks in order to have three objects made:
        firstly the tusk of Ysgithyrwyn Chief Boar (i.e. a razor) wherewith
        to shave himself, and secondly the comb and shears that are between
        the two ears of the boar Trwyth (i.e. the two tusks) wherewith to
        dress his hair (ibid., pp.116f.). But in the performance stories,
        after the winning of Ysgithyrwyn's tusk, Arthur's heroes take all
        three objects from Twrch Trwyth: in the Severn the razor and the
        shears, in Cornwall the comb. For a discussion of the boar hunts
        see Edel, pp.190-9.

27.   This burlesque treatment which is already strong in the scenes in
        which Dillus is robbed of his beard and Twrch Trwyth of his two tusks
        (for this see above, n.26), reaches a climax in the encounter with
        the Black Witch (gwiddon Gorddu): Mabinogion, pp.135f. The
        Black Witch - like the nine witches (gwiddonod) of Gloucester in
        Peredur, from whom Peredur receives the highest grade of his mili-
        tary training (Mabinogion, pp.198f.) - has a counterpart in the
        warrior women of early Irish saga (see Edel, pp.200-02). But while
        in the early Irish epic with its magical conception of life a figure
        like Scáthach can play an essential part, apparently in Celtic
        Britain, which lost this archaic outlook at a much earlier stage,
        these female warriors soon became obsolete, at least for an aristo-
        cratic audience. Very likely this is the reason why in the episode
        with the Black Witch Arthur appears much less as a figure of epic-
        heroic tradition than in the other performance stories: he is neither
        assisted by the troops of the Island of Britain nor by the leading
        heroes of his court, only by some of his servants.

28. The words of Arthur's men ('Lord, get thee home. Thou canst not proceed with thy host to seek things so petty as these', Mabinogion, p.123) can only refer to the visits to the oldest animals which follow immediately afterwards, because as soon as Arthur gets the information where Mabon is held prisoner, he summons the warriors of the Island of Britain for his liberation (see Edel, pp.186-8).

29. According to our tale and related traditions, the mothers of Arthur, Culhwch and Goreu are sisters: see Bromwich, Triads, pp.365-7.

30. Ellis/Lloyd, I, 209; Edel, p.173. Ysbaddaden might thus even be a forerunner of the challengers of continental Arthurian romance, e.g. of the Red Knight in Chrétien's Perceval, ed. William Roach, Geneva 1959, vv.889-893.

31. Edel, pp.73-75, 151. In the case of Goreu and his numerous brothers, yet another branch of Arthur's family is threatened with extinction.

32. Edel, pp.243-52; Doris Edel, 'The Catalogues in Culhwch ac Olwen and Insular Celtic Learning', Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, (forthcoming November 1983).

33. For the one exception see above, n.27. Arthur's strategic insight is evinced by the pincer movements which he uses on various occasions (see Mabinogion, pp.126f., 134; Edel, pp.188, 198).

34. Translations of these texts are given in Kenneth H. Jackson, The Gododdin, Edinburgh 1969; Thomas Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen "Stanzas of the Graves"', PBA, LIII, 1967, 97-137; Bromwich, Triads. For Pa gur and Preiddeu Annwfn see Kenneth H. Jackson, 'Arthur in Early Welsh Verse', ALMA, pp.12-19; A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Delineation of Arthur in Early Welsh Verse', An Arthurian Tapestry, essays in memory of Lewis Thorpe, ed. Kenneth Varty, Glasgow 1981, pp.7ff., 11ff.

35. Besides the boar Trwyth also the bitch Rhymhi with her two whelps (Mabinogion, pp.126f.).

36. For this interpretation of the Dillus episode and possible Irish parallels see Edel, pp.188f.

37. Mabinogion, pp.122f.; Edel, pp.184-6.

38.　　Mabinogion, p.130; Edel, pp.199f.

39.　　There is in fact only one possible echo of a Welsh text on Arthur as a fighter against the Saxons, c.56 of the Historia Brittonum, behind which Celtic scholars suspect the existence of a Welsh poem with a list of famous battles.　See for this Bromwich, Welsh Tradition, p.124; Jones, Legend, pp.7-10.

40.　　See Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, Dieux et héros des Celtes, Paris 1940, p.3.

41.　　See Edel, pp.106, 140f., 328 n.152.

42.　　A.G. van Hamel, 'The Conception of Fate in Early Teutonic and Celtic Religion', Saga-Book of the Viking Society, XI, 1936, 204-6.

43.　　See Idris Ll. Foster, 'Culhwch and Olwen and Rhonabwy's Dream', ALMA, pp.38f.; Bromwich, Triads, p.CXIV; Edel, index s.v. 'Historische Anspielungen'.