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#### THE GODODDIN IN ARMES PRYDEIN

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# 1. The Anapaestoid Tradition

At last year's meeting of the Celtic Studies Association of North America, some poems in *The Black Book of Carmarthen* were shown to have had a pitch-based "anapaestoid" meter that was highly regular.<sup>1</sup> While one poem (at least for the first half) maintained a pitch-based anapaestic trimeter, the other four poems had a trimetrical line of "hyperanapaests" – feet with three nontonic syllables followed by the one tonic syllable. The first two feet rhymed internally, while the third foot rhymed externally but contained a syllable that repeated the internal rhyme. For example, line 36 of *I Hywel Ap Goronwy* follows the hyperanapaestic trimeter as follows (with the micron representing phrase nontonic syllables and the macron phrase tonic syllables):<sup>2</sup>

Ryuel dywal vrien haval. arial vytheint.

While this pitch-based anapaestoid meter runs counter to the traditional view of Welsh poetry, it really should come as no surprise. These poems were evidently transmitted from the Old Welsh period in which ultimate pitch was the phonologically pertinent accent, if not the only accent.<sup>3</sup> That poets should base their meters on the natural structure of the language is not only unsurprising, but it seems almost painful obvious.

Moreover, as demonstrated at an earlier conference of CSANA,<sup>4</sup> the *cynghanedd* metrical pattern was also quite clearly based upon the ultimate pitch accent that survived beyond Old Welsh, to be joined by the largely penultimate stress accent pattern. If we base the meter on the stress accent, as the Welsh poetic tradition requires, we end up with four complex accentuation rules, among which two rules serve as exceptions to another and yet another rule is an exception to the exceptions – all of which can be overridden by a general "fault."<sup>5</sup> If, on the other hand, we base the meter on the pitch accent, we find that there is only one, simple, straightforward accentuation rule that applies without exception.

# 2. CNB Meter in Armes Prydein

Let us now turn our attention to the monument of Old Welsh poetry, Armes

*Prydein* 'The Prophecy of Britain'.<sup>6</sup> According to Sir Ifor Williams, the basic metrical pattern of *Armes Prydein* was *Cyhydedd Naw Ban* 'the nine-peak line' (henceforth CNB).<sup>7</sup> This meter consists of five syllables in the first half-line and four in the second, as we find, for example, in line 1, as follows (with the colon added to show the caesura):

# Dygogan awen : dygobryssyn.

The CNB meter traditionally accounts for only 92 of the 199 lines, or just 46%. When we take into account the recently discovered mesotomic syllables, however, we can increase the number of CNB lines by 24, up to 58%. If we include the lines brought closer to the CNB meter by virtue of the mesotomic syllable, we can add four more lines, for 61%.

Briefly, a mesotomic syllable is an extralong syllable which is obstructed medially by a consonant. It occurs in what appears to be two syllables with the same vowel and with the same degree of nontonic pitch. For example, line 2 of *Armes Prydein* is as follows:

## maraned a meued : a hed genhyn

The word *maraned* [marane $\delta$ ] 'treasure' has what appears to be two identical vowels of the same nontonic quantity before the tonic syllable. Wherever this occurs and the line contains one syllable too many, the meter is fully restored if we consider such sequences to be extralong syllables "cut through the middle" by a consonant (hence the term "mesotomic"). Thus, *maraned* would consist of two syllables *mara* [mara] and *ned* [ne $\delta$ ]. Indeed, other metrical phenomena also corroborate the existence of extralong, medially constrained syllables in Welsh.<sup>8</sup>

Even when we take into account the mesotomics, epenthetics, nonsyllabics, and other such devices that support the CNB meter in *Armes Prydein*, there are still quite simply too many lines that violate this meter. Apparently, there is something else at work in the long vaticinatory poem.

## 3. Anapaestoid Meter in Armes Prydein

As suggested in the conclusion of last year's paper, the thing that is competing with the CNB meter in *Armes Prydein* is an anapaestoid meter from an earlier source that was incorporated by the poet. This anapaestoid meter consisted of two pitchbased anapaests followed by a hyperanapaest, and it maintained the exact same rhyme scheme as the poems noted in *The Black Book of Carmarthen* – the first two feet with internal rhymes and the third foot with an external rhyme and a repetition of the internal rhyme.

At this point, let us distinguish between the B Poet, who wrote the vaticinatory poem in CNB meter around A.D. 930, and an earlier A Poet, who wrote a quite different type of poem in the mixed anapaestoid meter just described. In incorporating the A Poet's work, the B Poet was faced with the task of eliminating one syllable per line – preferably in one of the first two of the A Poet's metrical feet, as that would create a CNB line. In so doing, however, he would have left many remnants of the rhyme scheme – two internal rhymes with a repetition.

Such remnants do in fact abound. For example, lines 150 and 151 show the rhyme scheme quite clearly, with the first revealing an elimination in the second foot and the second in the first foot. In each case, the affected foot loses its rhyme, which is preserved in the other foot and within the third foot, as follows:

$rewiny \underline{awt} \cdot y \text{ gat : } rwycc \underline{awt} \text{ lluyd.}$		<u> </u>	
Dybi · o Alclut : gwyr drut diweir	~ _		

One of the clearest indications of this incorporation involves the mesotomic syllable. Evidently, the A Poet had no such device, for each and every time mesotomy occurs in a reconstructable line, the restitution of the "extra" syllable results in the full restoration of the mixed anapaestoid meter. For example, line 2 (noted above) is fully restored in both rhyme and meter, as follows:

maran<u>ed</u> a meu<u>ed</u> a h<u>ed</u> genhyn

#### 4. Isolating the A Poet's Work

When we go through *Armes Prydein* and separate out the lines that show varying degrees of faithfulness to the A Poet's anapaestoid trimeter, we obtain some rather striking results. These can be seen in the appendix, in which the lines have been rendered in an awkward but precise translation *per* half-line. The awkwardness results from the need to look at each half-line independently, since we do not know ahead of time which lines and half-lines may end up as more or less typical of the A Poet's work. Those lines that are most likely to be from the A Poet are in boldface, those that are likely to be from the A Poet are in italics, and those that show some

possibility of containing something from the A Poet are marked with daggers.

The first thing we notice when we contrast the marked lines with those in regular font is that all mention of Wales and the Welsh disappears. As Sir Ifor Williams noted, the B Poet was indeed a "monk of south Wales"<sup>9</sup> and was limited in the breadth of his geographic knowledge. When we examine the place names in the A Poet's work, we see that there is a very broad geographic knowledge, but also that the focus of attention is in the North.

To be sure, there are references that should have alerted us to this geographic focus all along. For example, in line 78 we see that there will be an expedition against the "Men of the South," who collect taxes. Clearly, an invasion of non-British territory from Wales would not be have been carried out to the south, but to the east. On the other hand, people in the north would most certainly have gone on a campaign to the south.

Another geographic problem that proves to be quite important in reconstructing the A Poet's work is in lines 10 and 11. Here, amongst reference to such peoples as the Men of Ireland, the Gaels of Man and Scotland (i.e. Dalriada), and the Men of Strathclyde, we find in the B Poet's rendition *Cornyw* 'Cornwall'. If, however, we restore the more probable *Cornowys* 'Cornovii', we not only correct the rhyme, the meter, and the ending in one fell swoop, but we solve the geographic dilemma as well. Correcting the B Poet's geographic ignorance by reversing the first two words and correcting Cornwall to Cornovii, we end up with the lines that are now geographically, metrically, phonetically, and grammatically correct, as follows:

> Iwerdon Gwydyl Mon a Phrydyn. Cornowys a Chludwys eu kynnwys genhyn.

Men of Ireland, Gaels of Man and Scotland, Men of Cornovia and Strathclyde, their welcome with us

As we go through the poem this way, the A Poet's work becomes increasingly more definable. All references to prophecy fall by the wayside. The A Poet was not writing a vaticinatory poem. Moreover, all religious references other than common expressions and oaths likewise disappear. The A Poet, unlike the B Poet, was no monk.

In this latter respect, the very end of the poem is quite telling. As Rachel Bromwich so elegantly translates in lines 197 to 199, the B Poet was appealing to God for the final victory: In straits it is the heavenly fortress (?) and my God who is (leader): He will not die, He will not escape, He will not retreat, He will not fade, reject, nor waver, nor (will He) diminish.<sup>10</sup>

When we compare this with the corresponding, inelegant translation in the appendix, however, God simply becomes the high king who neither dies, nor escapes, nor will flee, nor rejects, nor wavers, nor diminishes – traits one would seek in a high king, or *dux bellorum*. Such a concept would have been totally foreign to the B Poet not only because he was a monk and was intent upon the religious significance of the victory, but also because he came from a time and a place in which the very concept of a high king elected to lead allied troops into battle would have been utterly unknown, if not unthinkable.

# 5. The Council of the Gododdin

So what is happening in the A Poet's work? In line 15, we find ourselves in a council of war of the Men of the North. Moreover, the mead and/or ale is flowing, as we see from line 8 (reinforced later in line179). The word *gwehyn* in line 8 was problematic for Sir Ifor Williams (prompting a note), because the literal meaning of

'to drain (water), pour it out, empty, exhale, breathe out' did not make sense in the B Poet's context. In the A Poet's context, on the other hand, the drink is indeed being poured out like water, the flagons emptied completely.

Continuing throughout the poem, we find not a prophecy of the fate of Britain, but the mead-induced boastings of warriors in a council of war prior to a major campaign. They are bragging about how they will defeat the enemy in a scene quite reminiscent of the council of war described in *Canu Aneirin* 'The Song of Aneirin' before the disastrous Battle of Catraeth around A.D. 600.<sup>11</sup>

So who called this meeting? Returning to lines 10 and 11, we find an impressive list of guests, as noted above. Further as we have seen in line 15, these are all Men of the North. When we look around this grand company, we notice only one major nation among the Men of the North missing – the Gododdin, or Votadini. Quite obviously, they are not missing at all, but it is they who called the council. This is why they are not listed among the guests, for they are in fact the hosts – those giving welcome in line 11.

What we find in the A Poet's work, then, is a council of war called by the Gododdin in order to choose a high king – a *dux bellorum* – for an expedition against the South. This council of the Gododdin and their allies no doubt survived in the

literature of the North carried to Wales along with *Canu Aneirin* and other works because it provided insights into an important historical event. As we shall discuss below, this could have been Catraeth itself or a final campaign that was intended to avenge the deaths of those who fell at Catraeth.

When the B Poet came across it in his monastery in South Wales though, the content certainly seemed to support the vaticination he intended. He thus incorporated the work rather faithfully – sometimes too faithfully for his CNB meter. He added and embellished to the point that the expeditionary campaign became an integral part of the prophesied recapture of Britain.

### 6. Conclusion

There are many more important and interesting aspects of the A Poet's work, and these are discussed in a more lengthy treatise in progress. All of the evidence, however, indicates that there was indeed an A Poet who was describing a council of war among the Gododdin and their allies.

As for just who these particular Gododdin were, there are two possibilities. On the one hand, our South Welsh monk may have come across an alternative version of events from those in *Canu Aneirin*; or indeed, the poem could have originally been part of *Canu Aneirin* itself. On the other hand, it may also have been a council of latter Gododdin intent on exacting vengeance for the death's of their predecessors. While the fall of Edinburgh in 638 could suggest that these be the sons of those killed at Catraeth, the loss of the capital would not necessarily have ended the warrior class or their ability to call a council.

The regularity of the anapaestoid meter suggests perhaps a subsequent generation. The Late Brythonic of the earliest parts of *Canu Aneirin* probably did not have the same ultimate pitch accent. In the excellent reconstruction of that work by John T. Koch,<sup>12</sup> however, we do find lines quite close to the anapaestoid trimeter of the A Poet. For example, we find the following lines from "GODOĐIN, BREITHYELL VANAŴYT, CATVANNAN":<sup>13</sup>

> Caïọc connimîat, | coûlat | ruït, rüthr erïr | ïn-epïr | pan·lithûït, ï·ammot | haï·bü not | haï·catûûït. Guell-gûraït | ï·armaïth: | nï·cilîuït. Rac bodin | Guotodin | guotechûït, hïtr compell | ar·breithgell | Manaûûït. Nï·nodi (. . .) na·sceth na·scuït. Nï·gellir ounët ro-maïthpuït, rac ercït Catmannan catûûït■

If we acknowledge a rather blatant scribal error in the first line, we find that the meter of the first six lines reconstructed by Professor Koch is almost identical to the meter of the A Poet, maintaining the mixed anapaestoid trimeter and missing only the repetition of the rhyme in the third foot. As he suggests a dating of the composition or its early revision as contemporaneous with very early Old Welsh,<sup>14</sup> we might likewise suggest a similar date for the composition of the A Poet's work.

We can only surmise that if the battle planned in the council of war was not Catraeth, it was just as disastrous, leading or contributing to the general exodus from the North. The insights we gain from reconstructing this poem are thus quite significant. Indeed, they shed a bit more light on the period of time we at least used to refer to as the Dark Ages.

# APPENDIX

Boldface = most likely Italics = likely Dagger= possible

Suggested corrections to text in braces {}.

Line	English (literal translation per half-line)
1	muse prophesies foretells
2	treasure and wealth and peace to us
3	and extensive lordship and generosity of leaders
4	and after domestic turmoil in every place
5	brave men in battle, immovable warriors
6	swift in battle, stubborn defence
7	warriors as far as Caer Weir, (he) scatters foreigners
8	(they) make rejoicing, having emptied
9	and reconciliation of the Cambrians and the men of Dublin
10	{Men of Ireland, Gaels of Man and Scotland}
11	Men of {Cornovia} and Strathclyde, their welcome with us
12	remnants will be Britons after prevailing
13†	long was prophesied, time will come
14	princes and nobles taking possession of them
15	Men of the North in council round about

16	in the contour of their wange and of the otter.
16	in the center of their vanguard of the attack
17	Myrddin prophesies, these meet
18	on {the River of Death} henchmen of the great king
19	and although it be by right death will be their booty
20	with one desire of intent, they will meet in battle
21	henchmen their taxes collect
22	in treasuries of the Cambrians, there was not (one) who would pay
23	it is a noble man who says this
24	(he) would not come and pay in slavery
25	great Son of Mary who (is the) Word, when not burst forth
26	against the lordship of the Saxons and their arrogance
27	far away be those scoudrels of Vortigern
28	there will be driving of foreigners into exile
29	no one will receive, does not have land
30	they do not know why they wander in every river
31	when they had bought Thanet by deceit of skill
32	as Hors and Hengys were in power
33	their gain was from us ignobly
34	by virtue of death, slaves of the crown
35	great intoxication follows a drink of mead
36	need follows the death of many
37	sorrow follows the tear of women
38	grief erupts illegitimate lordship
39	sorrow follows a world gone awry

40when were the scoundrels of Thanet our princes41Trinity wards off blow that is intended42to destruction of the land of Britons, and Saxons in settlement43(no) sooner was their departure into exile44than Cambrians came into homelessness45great Son of Mary who (is the) Word, when will they not burst forth461Cambrians against the shame of lord and chieftain47protectors of clients, rightly they lament48one faction of one council, they are one way49it was not for the pride that they did not speak50but to save shame that they did not reconcile51to God and David, they commend themselves52payment (he) avoids, deceit to the foreigners53they make shame, the need for a home54{Britons} and Saxons, they meet55to destroy each other on the bank and attack56from a great land of a great warrior, when they contest one another57and on the hill, blades and battle shouts and thrusting58and on the Wye, words against words for the bright waters59and banner drops, cruel attacks60and like martens, Saxons they fall61{the protectors} of clients, united they array62vanguard on rearguard of pale faces, they are encircled63henchment earning their treacher, as they cut them down		
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	61	{the protectors} of clients, united they array
63 henchment earning <i>their treacher, as they cut them down</i>	62	vanguard on rearguard of pale faces, they are encircled
	63	henchment earning their treacher, as they cut them down

64	their army soaked in blood about them
65	others on their feet, they flee through the forest
66	through the fortress of the city, the foxes they route
67	war without return to the land of Scotland/Britain
68	back by a decisive hand, like sea they slip away
69	henchmen of Caer Geri, bitterly they lament
70	some to valley and hill, they do not deny
71	to {the river of Death} they did not come (to) good fortune
72	sorrow (is) taxes they collect
73	twenty-nine hundred men, they advance
74	great mockery, save four they do not return
75	disaster for their wives whom they tell
76	their tunics full of blood that they wash
77	{the protectors} of clients, reckless of life
78	Men of the South, their taxes they fight for
79	keen sharpened blades, completely they kill
80	there will be no gain for the physician for what they do
81†	the armies of Catwaladyr, brave they come
82	may the Cambrians attack, battle (is) what they make
83	inescapable death may they seek
84	in the end (for) their taxes, death (is) what they make
85	others on slopes, may they pierce
86	forever their taxes, they do not collect
87	in forest, in field, [in dale,] on hill

88	a candle in darkness that travels with us
89	Cynan in vanguard in every attack
90	Saxons, not Britons, lamentation (is) what they sing
91	Catwaladyr with spear by the chieftain
92	with skill completely seeking them out
93	when they fall, their people across their border
94	in sorrow and red blood on the cheeks of foreigners
95	at the end of every repulse, of (every) brave foray
96	Saxon straightway to Winchester (?), as quickly as possible they flee
97	happy are Cambrians, when they say
98	the Trinity delivers from the late troubles
99	Dyfed does not tremble, nor Glywyssyng
100	let there be not praise of the henchmen of the great king
101	nor of the champions of Saxons, though they be boastful
102	let there be no enjoyment of intoxication with us
103	without paying from destiny, as much as they obtain
104	from orphan sons and others left destitute
105	through the intercession of David and the saints of Britain
106	to the River Ailego, there retreat the foreigners
107	muse prophesies, the day comes
108	when men of Sussex may come to one council
109	one faction of one council for torching Saxony
110†	the hope of shame on our fair ones' battle
111	and a journey for foreigners, and daily flight

112(he) does not know where concealment (he) makes; where he (goes) wher113†let them attack, braying like a bear from a mountain114to pay vengeance (for) the blood of their companions	re to be
114 to pay vengeance (for) the blood of their companions	
115 there be spear-thrusting, earnest, devoid of passion	
116 may kinsmen not save, body to opponent	
117 there be head split open without brains	
118† there be wives widowed and horses riderless	
119 there be dreadful <i>wailing for the waste of warriors</i>	
120† and a multitude of wounded hands, though strewn by armies	
121 the expedition of death, it meets	
122 when corpses may stand before their enemies	
123 there is avenging the tax in daily payment	
124 in frequent <b>expeditions for deceitful armies</b>	
125 Cambrians prophesy, through battle	
126 <b>readily unanimous</b> , with one voice and mind	
127 Cambrians prophesy (determine) the order of that battle	
128 and many people of the land, they gather	
129 with the holy banner of David which they raise	
130 Irish lead by bleached linen	
131† and the tribes of Dublin, with us they stand	
132 when they come to the battle, they will not refuse	
133 they ask the Saxons what they seek	
133       they ask the Saxons what they seek         134       how much their claim of the land that they possess	

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136	where are their people, what vale when they came
137	that time of Vortigern, with us they oppressed
138	there is obtaining by right patrimony of our people
139	or privilege of holy saints they had trampled down
140	or the laws of holy David they had broken
141	Cambrians guard themselves when they come face to face
142	may foreigners not go from the pinacle (where) they stand
143	until they may pay sevenfold (as) payment (for) what they have done
144	and certain death in payment of their injury
145	there is paying from the coward (to) {the great Hero's friends}
146	the four years and four hundred
147†	brave men of long hair, masters of blows
148†	from exile Saxons from Ireland will come
149	will come from Leg a rapacious fleet
150	there will be destroying in battle, there will be rending of armies
151	will come from Dumbarton daring faithful men
152	to exile from Britain, noble armies
153†	will come from Britanny, a splendid company
154†	warriors on war-horses, does not spare his enemy
155†	Saxons from every place, the disgrace will come to them
156†	their age died, (they) have no country
157	death will happen to the black company
158	sickness that flows and no salvation
159	after gold and silver and adornments

<b>6</b>	
160	may a hedge be their refuge in return for their bad faith
161	may sea, may anchor be their councillors
162	may blood, may death be their company
163	Cynan and Catwaladyr, brave in hosts
164	there is praising until Judgement Day, fate will come to them
165	two stubborn lords, deep their council
166	two conquerors of Saxons from the side of the Lord
167	two noblemen, two generous (ones) of a land of cattleraiders
168	two fearless ready (ones), one fate, one faith
169	two defenders of Britain, splendid hosts
170	two bears who do not make shame daily standing at bay
171	Druids prophesy, great that will be
172	from Mynaw to Britanny, in their hands it will be
173	from Dyfed to Thanet, it will be theirs
174	from the Wall to the Firth of Forth, to their estuaries
175	spreads their lordship across the Echwyd
176	back to the tribes of Saxons it will not be
177	may Irish return to their friends
178	may Cambrians rise up, a brave company
179†	hosts at ale and the clamor of warriors
180	and the princes of God (who) kept the faith
181	Men of Wessex to every fleet, clamorous it will be
182	and the concord of Cynan with his companion
183	there will not be a calling of tribes as warriors

184	but (as) scoundrels of Catwaladyr, his hucksters
185	the descendent of a Cambrian, merry (and) effusive that will be
186	concerning the oppressors of the island, a swarm it will be
187	when corpses may stand before their enemies
188	up to the River Sandwich, blessed it will be
189	foreigners starting out to exile
190	one after another to their friends
191	Saxons at anchor, daily to (the) sea
192	venerable Cambrians will be victorious until Judgement Day
193	may they not seek a sorcerer nor a greedy poet
194	the prophecy of this island, except for this will not be
195	we beseech to (the) Lord who created heaven and earth
196	may David be the leader of the warriors
197	in the straights of the fortress of heaven, it is for God
198	who neither dies nor escapes nor will flee
199	nor will fade nor rejects nor wavers nor diminishes

# NOTES

<sup>1.</sup> See Toby D. Griffen, "Anapaestoids in Welsh Poetry," joint meeting of the Celtic Studies Association of North America and the University of California Celtic Colloquium, May 1998, Los Angeles [available on the internet at http://dubricius.net]. On the *Black Book*, see especially A.O.H. Jarmon (ed.), *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1982)

2. That is, the primary pitch accent, or intonation, of a phrase — compare T. Arwyn Watkins, *Ieithyddiaeth: Agweddu â'r Astudio Iaith* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), pp. 29-31. The following line is from Jarmon, *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*, p. 51.

3. Of course, the entire controversy on the Old Welsh accent assumed that there was a pitch accent on the ultima, whether or not there was a stress accent as well – see, for example, T. Arwyn Watkins, "The Accent in Old Welsh — its Quality and Development," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 25 (1972), 1-11; also, Toby D. Griffen, "Epenthesis and the Old Welsh Accent Shift." *Studia Celtica* 26/27 (1991/92), 163-74, which contains a review of the literature. The routine assumption of this accent can be found in such articles as Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Emergence of Old Welsh, Cornish and Breton Orthography, 600-800: The Evidence of Archaic Welsh," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 38 (1991), 20-86.

4. Toby D. Griffen, "A Single Accent Rule for *Cynghanedd*," joint meeting of the Celtic Studies Association of North America and the University of California Celtic Colloquium, May 1996, Los Angeles. A more extensive article on the subject can be found in "A Single Accent Rule for *Cynghanedd*," *Journal of Celtic Linguistics*, in press.

5.Eurys I. Rowlands, *Poems of the Cywyddwyr: A Selection of Cywyddau c. 1375-1525*, (Dublin, 1976), p. xxviii-xxix.

6. Ifor Williams (ed.), *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain*, English Version by Rachel Bromwich (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1972).

7. Williams, Armes Prydein, p. lii.

8. These are treated together and in detail in Toby D. Griffen, *Phonetic Regularity in Welsh Poetry* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, in press).

9. Williams, Armes Prydeini, p. xxvi.

10. Williams, Armes Prydein, p. 15.

11. Ifor Williams, Canu Aneirin (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1938).

12. John T. Koch (ed.), *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997).

13. Koch, The Gododdin of Aneirin, p. 54.

14. Koch, The Gododdin of Aneirin, p. 178.