An Alternative Interpretation of *Preideu Annwfyn*, lines 23-28

The following lines are taken from the third *awdl* (lines 23-28) of the Book of Taliesin poem *Preideu Annwfyn*, in which a raid on the Otherworld by Arthur is narrated by the legendary Taliesin figure:

> *Neut wyf glot geinmyn kerd glywanawr.*
> *yg kaer pedryfan ynys pybyrdor*
> *echwyd amuchyd kymyscetor*
> *gwin gloyw eu gwirawt rac eu gogord.*
> *Tri lloneit prytwen yd aetham ni arvor.*
> *namyn seith ny dyrreith ogaer rigor.*[1]
>
> I'm splendid of fame: songs are heard
> in the four quarters of the fort, stout defence of the island.
> Fresh water and jet are mixed together;
> sparkling wine is their drink, set in front of their battalion.
> Three full loads of Prydwen we went by sea:
> save seven, none came back from the Petrification Fort.[2]

The given translation is that of Marged Haycock, and most recent commentators on the poem have broadly followed her in interpreting this passage.[3] In particular, the stanza as a whole is usually taken as a description of an Otherworld fort whose name derives from Latin *rigor* ('stiffness, inflexibility, rigidity, numbness')[4] and in which fresh water and jet are mixed together, presumably to produce fire (illuminating the wine, in line 26?) as is described in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*.[5] However, whilst the above is certainly a very credible reading, it is not the only possible translation of this passage; the purpose of this article is to demonstrate that not only does an alternative interpretation exist, but that it is at least equally as appropriate and legitimate as the above one.

Such an alternative interpretation has its origins in the uncertainty that exists over the meaning and origins of several of the words contained in lines 23-8. First is the name of the fort, *kaer rigor*. Although Haycock has suggested that seeing it as derivative of Latin *rigor* gives 'tolerable sense',[6] she also notes that Latin *frigor*,

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[1] *LlyfrTaliesin*, NLW Peniarth MS 2, f. 26r.8-13 (55.8-15). I should like to gratefully acknowledge here the encouragement provided by Marged Haycock.

[2] *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, edited and translated by Marged Haycock (CMCS: Aberystewyth, 2007), p. 436, building on her earlier translation in Marged Haycock, '"Preiddeu Annwn" and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983-4), 52-78 at p. 62.

[3] For example, Andrea Budgey, '"Preiddeu Annwn" and the Welsh Tradition of Arthur', in *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples*, edited by Cyril J. Byrne, Margaret Harry and Pádraig Ó Siadhail (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Saint Mary's University, 1992), pp. 391-404 at p. 401; Sarah L. Higley, 'The Spoils of Annwn: Taliesin and Material Poetry', in *A Celtic Florilegium. Studies in Memory of Brendan O Hehin*, edited by Kathryn A. Klar, Eve E. Sweetser and Claire Thomas (Lawrence: Celtic Studies Publications, 1996), pp. 43-53 at p. 51.

[4] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 72; Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879), s.v. *rigor*.

[5] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 72; *Legendary Poems*, p. 445; *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, translated by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 320 (XVI.iv.3)

[6] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 72

frigus (*frigoris*), 'cold, coldness',[7] has been offered as a valid alternative root by Patrick Sims-Williams;[8] indeed, this interpretation of *kaer rigor* has been adopted by John T. Koch in his recent translation of *Preideu Annwfyn* ('the Frigid Fort').[9] Second is the question of the meaning of the whole of line 25. There could easily be a learned reference here to Isidore of Seville's account of the strange properties of jet, if *echwyd* is taken as 'water, fresh water' and *muchyd* as 'jet'. Nevertheless, it is equally legitimate to take the former as meaning 'noon, noonday' and the latter as 'jet-black'.[10] Such an interpretation has been supported in the past by Kenneth Jackson, amongst others, and would give something like 'in the four corners of the fort… noonday and jet-blackness are mixed together': that is to say, this Otherworld fortress existed in some sort of permanent twilight.[11]

Given that both readings of these passages appear to be valid, we naturally need to look for grounds on which to discriminate between them. The usual translations do have several points in their favour, chiefly that a learned reference to Isidore of Seville would be an appropriate one for the legendary Taliesin persona narrating the poem to make, and that a translation of *kaer rigor* as the 'Petrification Fort' may reference the uncommunicative guardians of an Otherworld fort who appear in the next stanza of *Preideu Annwfyn* (line 32).[12] Nonetheless, although we should acknowledge these strengths, it can be maintained that the arguments in favour of the alternative translations outlined above are potentially more powerful.

Looking first at each of the alternative readings in isolation, two points can be made. One is that a translation of *kaer rigor* as 'the Frigid Fort' or similar would accord with documented concepts of the Otherworld/hell. *Annwfyn* is treated as another name for hell in *Preideu Annwfyn* – it is referred to as *vffern*, 'hell', in line 20 – and the idea of a cold hell was certainly present in medieval Wales; furthermore, in Breton tradition hell itself was referred to as *an ifern yen*, 'cold hell', and in Irish texts an entrance to hell and/or the Otherworld was considered to be located in the cold far-north.[13] Indeed, the evidence for some Hiberno-Latin literary influence on *Preideu Annwfyn* means that such Irish concepts of the location of hell may have a relevance

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[7] Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, s.v. *frigor*, *frigus*.

[8] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The evidence for vernacular Irish literary influence on early medieval Welsh literature', in *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe. Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, edited by Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 235-57 at p. 244.

[9] John T. Koch and John Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age. Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe & Early Ireland & Wales* fourth edition (Celtic Studies Publications: Aberystwyth, 2003), pp. 309-11 at p. 310; Thomas Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), p. 59.

[10] *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* s.v. *echwydd*, *muchudd*.

[11] Kenneth H. Jackson, 'Arthur in Early Welsh Verse', in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, edited by Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 12-19 at p. 16; Roger Sherman Loomis, ''The Spoils of Annwn': An Early Arthurian Poem', in Roger Sherman Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1956), pp. 131-78 at pp. 136, 165; *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend*, edited and translated by Jon B. Coe and Simon Young (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1995), p. 137.

[12] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 72

[13] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 72; Joseph Vendryes, 'L'enfer glacé', *Revue Celtique*, 46 (1929), 134-42; Alan Macquarrie, 'Anaon', in *Celtic Culture, A Historical Encyclopedia*, edited by John T. Koch (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 51; John Carey, 'The Sun's Night Journey: A Pharaonic Image in Medieval Ireland', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 57 (1994), 14-34 at pp. 15-16. It should be noted that the description of *kaer rigor* in line 24 as *ynys pybyrdor* also has a possible alternate translation, the 'isle of the flaming door'; if adopted, it would imply that the entrance to hell was located at *kaer rigor*, cf. *Preideu Annwfyn* line 20, a relevant point in the above context. See on this reading of line 24, Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 71; Higley, 'Spoils of Annwn', p. 51; Carey, *Ireland and the Grail*, p. 82.

here which could go beyond the merely comparative.[14] The second is that an interpretation of *echwyd amuchyd kymyscetor* as a reference to the Otherworld fortress of *kaer rigor* existing in a kind of permanent twilight fits with hints, which Roger Loomis long ago drew attention to, that the Otherworld was dimly lit in some tales of Welsh origin.[15] As such, both of these alternate translations would appear to have a reasonable context in insular traditions about the Otherworld and hell.

These translations of line 25 and *kaer rigor* may also work well together and enhance the coherence of the stanza as a whole. It can be legitimately asked whether *kaer rigor*, as 'the Frigid Fort', might not actually have been conceived of as located in the cold far-north, paralleling the medieval Irish texts which place the door or entrance to hell there.[16] Such a notion is certainly not implausible, and if adopted then the translation of *kaer rigor* as 'the Frigid Fort' would be supported by (and in turn support) translating line 25 as 'noonday and jet-blackness are mixed together'. Although this might be seen as a simple reference to the Otherworld being dimly lit, it could also be read as a description of the conditions in such a far-northern frozen Otherworld fortress. Of course, for this to be the case it would require that the author of *Preideu Annwfyn* was familiar with such conditions in the real far-north, in particular the phenomenon of the 'midnight sun', that Arctic peculiarity whereby around mid-summer the sun never fully sets and around mid-winter it never truly rises, giving rise to what was described by one medieval traveller as a 'perpetual twilight'.[17] The question must therefore be, is this likely?

Pliny, from whom much medieval geography derives, certainly knew of the Arctic peculiarity of the midnight sun (and noonday night), though he seems uncertain about what this meant in practice.[18] Similarly it is alluded to by Isidore of Seville in his widely used *Etymologies*[19] and by Bede, both of whose works are implicitly and explicitly referenced in the *Book of Taliesin* poems.[20] Indeed, the latter – writing in the early eighth century – appears to not only derive his knowledge of Arctic solar peculiarities from classical sources, but also from actual travellers who had visited the region, referring in his *In Regum xxx Quaestiones* to 'the stories of the elders and the men of our time who come from these regions' and saying of the peculiarity itself that these men 'see it happen'.[21] Similarly by the late eighth century at the latest, Irish sea-farers and writers were aware from personal and reported experience of the unusual light conditions in the far-north too, with Dicuil relating that some clerics who had

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[14] See Sims-Williams, 'Irish literary influence', pp. 243-47 and John Carey, *Ireland and the Grail* (Celtic Studies Publications: Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 85-86 on Irish influence, although we should be wary of making too much of this.

[15] Loomis, 'Spoils of Annwn', p. 165; Roger Sherman Loomis, 'King Arthur and the Antipodes', in Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 61-76 at pp. 66-67, 73.

[16] Carey, 'Sun's Night Journey', pp. 15-16; see note 13, above.

[17] As described by the medieval northern traveller, Jacobus Cnoyen: E. G. R. Taylor, 'A Letter Dated 1577 from Mercator to John Dee', *Imago Mundi*, 13 (1956), 56-68 at p. 57. On Cnoyen, who seems to have lived in the mid-fourteenth century, see also Wim van Rooij, 'Schepen achter de horizon. Jacob Cnoyen uit 's-Hertogenbosch over koning Arthur', in *Hoort Wonder! Opstellen voor W. P. Gerritsen bij zijn emeritaat*, edited by Bart Besamusca, Frank Brandsma and Dieuwke van der Poel (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000), pp. 19-24.

[18] For an analysis, see Ian Whitaker, 'The Problem of Pytheas' Thule', *The Classical Journal*, 77.2 (1981-82), 148-64 at pp. 153-54.

[19] *Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, p. 294 (XIV.vi.2)

[20] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 56; *Legendary Poems*, passim.

[21] *Bedae Venerabilis. Opera. Pars II. Opera Exegetica 2*, edited by David Hurst (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), p. 317. See Fabienne Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest. Imaginary Geography and Sense of Space in Old English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 128-29 for discussion and translation.

visited Thule (Iceland) in around A.D. 795 had told him that, for the days around midsummer, the sun did not truly set but instead hid itself as if behind a small hill, so that there was no darkness at night and a person could even pick lice from his clothes in the resulting half-light.[22] In confirmation of an early insular awareness of the phenomenon we can finally cite the late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon churchman Ælfric, who not only refers to this but claimed to have observed something like it himself, saying that to the north the nights are light in summer 'as if it was dawn all night long, just as we ourselves very often saw'.[23]

It consequently appears that the learned author of *Preideu Annwfyn*, whenever he was writing, could have been aware of the midnight sun/noonday night in the far-north, and potentially also that this produced not true daylight but rather a strange twilight.[24] This is particularly the case given that not only do travellers to and from the far-north appear to be visiting the British Isles from at least the early-eighth century, as noted above,[25] but there is also evidence for the circulation of Bede's writings and some Hiberno-Latin texts in early medieval Wales, not least from *Preideu Annwfyn* itself and a number of the other Book of Taliesin poems.[26] As such, the idea that the translations of *kaer rigor* and *echwyd amuchyd kymyscetor* argued for here might actually support each other and together reflect a concept of a far-northern frozen Otherworld island-fort does not seem impossible by any means.

One final argument can be offered in support of both the proposed translations and the above interpretation of these, and this stems from a consideration of the nature of the poem as a whole. As has often been observed, *Preideu Annwfyn* is a highly allusive piece: it does not seek to provide a coherent narrative of an Arthurian raid on the Otherworld, but instead alludes to a number of pre-existing stories and episodes which must have been 'part of the audience's mental furniture' – as Haycock puts it –

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[22] *Dicuili Liber de Mensura Orbis Terrae*, edited and translated by J. J. Tierney (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967), pp. 74-75 (vii.11-13). That there were Irish churchmen living on Iceland before the Norse arrived there in the ninth century now seems reasonably clear. Not only do we have Dicuil's testimony, perhaps Bede's, and the statements to this effect from the *Landnámabók* and *Íslendingabók* – see Gwyn Jones, *The Norse Atlantic Saga* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 9, 102, 114 – but there also now appears to be some archaeological evidence for this too: Kristjàn Ahronson, 'Further evidence for a Columban Iceland: Preliminary results of recent work', *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 33.2 (2000), 117-24; Kristjàn Ahronson, 'The crosses of Columban Iceland: A survey of preliminary research', in *Vínland Revisited. The Norse World at the Turn of the First Millennium*, edited by Shannon Lewis-Simpson (St John's, Newfoundland, 2004), 75-82.

[23] *Ælfric's De Temporibus Anni*, edited by Heinrich Henel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 48-50 (vi.17-19); Michelet, *Creation, Migration, and Conquest*, p. 131.

[24] See generally Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', on the author of *Preideu Annwfyn*'s learning and how this was essential to the character of the legendary 'Taliesin'. On the date of this poem, see John T. Koch, '*gwyδanhor, gwyδyanhawr, clywanhor*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 31 (1984), 87-92; John T. Koch, 'The Celtic Lands', in *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research*, edited by Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 264-65; John T. Koch, 'Preiddiau Annwfn', in *Celtic Culture, A Historical Encyclopedia*, edited by John T. Koch (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2006), p. 1456; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 54-55. Cf. Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 57; *Legendary Poems*, p. 434.

[25] See also the ninth-century visit of Ohthere to King Alfred's court, recorded in *The Old English Orosius*, edited by Janet Bately (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 13.

[26] See footnote 14, above, on *Preideu Annwfyn*; another early Welsh work which shows evidence of influence from Hiberno-Latin texts is the early ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, §§13-15: Sims-Williams, 'Irish literary influence', pp. 246-47. On Bede in Wales, see *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads*, edited and translated by Rachel Bromwich, second edition (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1978), p. 279, and the Book of Taliesin poem *Kadeir Kerrituen*, line 37 (*nyt wy dyweit geu llyfreu beda*, 'the books of Bede do not tell lies'): *Legendary Poems*, pp. 318, 326.

in order that they could have understood the poem and enjoyed it to the full.[27] The most frequently discussed of these is a story of an Arthurian raid on the Otherworld to capture a magic cauldron, which appears to underlie the second *awdl*. Confirmation of the existence of such an Arthurian tale outside of *Preideu Annwfyn* has often been sought and found in the closely analogous account of Arthur's expedition to Ireland to seize a cauldron, which is narrated and referenced in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, *Tri Thwls ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain*, and the twelfth-century place-name *Messur Pritguenn*.[28] In the same manner, a story about an expedition to rescue a prisoner called Gweir appears to underlie the first *awdl*, and the independent existence of such a tale is confirmed by a reference to Gweir as one of the 'Three Exalted Prisoners of the Island of Britain' in Triad 52, where he is collocated with both Mabon – who is rescued by Arthur in *Culhwch ac Olwen* – and Arthur himself.[29]

Although attention has tended to focus on the above two tales, this should not however be taken to imply that such originally independent stories and episodes do not underlie the other *awdlau* too. So, the reference to *yr ych brych*, 'the Speckled Ox', in the fifth *awdl* ought to be considered another allusion to a pre-existing Arthurian story: this gigantic and presumably Otherworldly beast is also mentioned in the Triads and, most significantly, in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, where its capture and yoking is one of the tasks that Arthur must achieve.[30] Similarly, the references in the sixth *awdl* to a silver-headed animal and *kaer ochren* may well be another allusion to a pre-existing Arthurian tale, if the reasonable connection that has been made between this stanza and *Cad Achren* – a conflict whose cause was two animals stolen from *Annwn*, a greyhound and a white roebuck – can be sustained.[31] *Cad Achren* appears in the late manuscript Peniarth 98B as an alternative name for *Cad Goddau* (the 'Battle of the Trees'),[32] and this does indeed appear to have been associated with Arthur in some way. In the Book of Taliesin poem *Kat Godeu*, which is concerned with this battle, Arthur is named once, when 'druids' or 'sages' or commanded to *Darogenwch y Arthur*; the text here could mean either that they should prophecy 'of Arthur' or 'to Arthur', but it seems more likely that they are to prophesy to him and that he was therefore present.[33] Furthermore, near the beginning of the poem the 'lord of Britain' (*Prydein wledic*) is mentioned in the context of the battle – the poet claims to have sung before him 'in the van of the tree battalion/battle of the branchy trees' (*Keint yg kat godeu bric*) – and Haycock has argued that this should probably be understood as

[27] Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 55; see also, for example, Budgey, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 392; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, p. 55.
[28] See Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 57-59; Koch, 'Celtic Lands', pp. 256-57; *Culhwch and Olwen. An edition and study of the oldest Arthurian tale*, edited by Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), pp. lviii-lix; Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 55.
[29] *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 140, 377; Budgey, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 393; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 55-56, 165-67.
[30] *Culhwch and Olwen*, line 593; *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 117-18; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 60-61, 159-60. Although this task is one of those that the author of *Culhwch* does not choose to tell the full tale of (he only narrates ten of the forty tasks), Bromwich and Evans have suggested that stories may well have existed for many of these untold tasks, similar to those found in *Culhwch*: *Culhwch and Olwen*, p. li.
[31] Budgey, 'Preiddeu Annwn', pp. 396-97; Haycock, 'Preiddeu Annwn', p. 75; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, p. 63. Cf. *Legendary Poems*, p. 448.
[32] *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 207.
[33] *Legendary Poems*, §5.239; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *The Arthur of the Welsh. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, edited by Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 51-52.

a reference to Arthur too.[34] Finally, a few lines later we are told that the Otherworld fortress under attack in this battle was called *Kaer Nefenhir*.[35] The significance of this lies with the fact that that the name *Kaer Nefenhir* only occurs once more, in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, when Arthur's porter lists *Caer Neuenhyr Naw Nawt* ('the fortress of Nefenhyr of the Nine Teeth') as one of the places that Arthur has conquered in the past, something which strongly suggests that *Cad Goddau* was indeed considered an Arthurian conflict, and that Haycock's identification of Arthur as the *Prydein wledic* who was at the head of the army of trees in *Kat Godeu* is sound.[36]

In the context of the above, it is perhaps significant that there does in fact seem to have been a tale of Arthur conquering the cold far-north. One of the chief witnesses to this is the *Leges Anglorum Londoniis Collectae*: this briefly relates how Arthur conquered the whole of the Arctic far-north, including Greenland, Lapland and the North Pole.[37] Although the *Leges* was composed *c.* 1210, the closely related but fragmentary *Insule Britannie* (the earliest manuscript of which dates to *c.* 1200) indicates that this concept of Arthur probably ante-dated both the composition of the *Leges* and the thirteenth century.[38] The other important evidence for the existence of such a tale is the lost text known as the *Arturus Gesten* or *Gestae Arthuri*, which now only survives in extracts copied by the geographer Gerard Mercator from a lost mid-fourteenth-century work by Jacobus Cnoyen, which in turn paraphrased the *Gestae Arthuri*.[39] From what survives of it in Mercator's transcription of Cnoyen's Dutch,[40] this text would seem to have told the tale of Arthur's conquest of the far-north and included episodes in which he encountered 'little people', giants and cities in the lands immediately around the North Pole, before launching two expeditions against

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[34] Marged Haycock, 'The Significance of the 'Cad Goddau' Tree-List in the Book of Taliesin', in *Celtic Linguistics. Readings in the Brythonic Languages*, edited by Martin J. Ball, James Fife, Erich Poppe and Jenny Rowland (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1990), pp. 297-331 at p. 298; Sims-Williams, 'Early Welsh Arthurian Poetry', p. 52; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, p. 64.

[35] *Legendary Poems*, §5.41-44.

[36] *Culhwch and Olwen*, line 126; see further on this passage Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 64-65 and O. J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 16. Nefenhyr, without the *caer*, is mentioned as a heroic comparison in a poem of Prydydd y Moch, see *Legendary Poems*, p. 170. The connection between *Kat Godeu*'s *Kaer Nefenhir* and *Culhwch*'s *Caer Neuenhyr Naw Nawt* is further supported by the fact that in *Kat Godeu* the name *Kaer Nefenhir* was immediately followed by the word *naw* ('nine'), but this word was then deleted: Haycock, 'Cad Goddau', p. 298.

[37] For text, see F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, three volumes (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1898-1916), III, p. 659; Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Nauigations etc.* (London: Bishop, Newberie and Barker, 1599), I, pp. 2-3 includes a translation of the passage. See also F. Liebermann, *Über die Leges Anglorum saeculo XIII. Ineunte Londoniis collectae* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1896); F. Liebermann, 'A Contemporary Manuscript of the 'Leges Anglorum Londoniis Collectae'', *English Historical Review*, 28 (1913), 732-45; and Lynette Muir, 'King Arthur's Northern Conquests in the *Leges Anglorum Londoniis Collectae*', *Medium Ævum*, 37 (1968), 253-62.

[38] This text and its relationship to the *Leges* is discussed in Muir, 'King Arthur's Northern Conquests', pp. 257, 259; for a translation, see *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, translated by Francis J. Tschan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 228-9.

[39] See Taylor, 'A Letter', for a critical text and translation of the letter from Mercator to John Dee into which was copied Cnoyen's text. It is also discussed at length in Muir, 'King Arthur's Northern Conquests', pp. 257-60. Although Cnoyen uses the former Dutch name for the Arthurian text in question, most commentators have preferred the name *Gestae Arthuri*, as used by Dee and Mercator, both of whom may have read the *Gestae Arthuri* itself: Muir, 'King Arthur's Northern Conquests', p. 258. For convenience, this usage is adopted here too.

[40] The manuscript of this letter is slightly fire-damaged, but the missing lines can now be supplied from Dee's recently discovered Latin translation and abbreviation of the letter, included in his *Brytanici Imperii Limites* of 1578: John Dee, *The Limits of the British Empire*, translated by Ken MacMillan and Jennifer Abeles (Westport: Praeger, 2004), pp. 83-85.

the Pole itself. The date of this *Gestae Arthuri* is naturally uncertain given how little of it survives, but its tale accords well with the allusions in the *Leges* and it seems most likely that either the lost *Gestae Arthuri* was the source of the *Leges* or both derive from a common source written in the twelfth century.[41]

The early existence of a story in which Arthur attacked the Arctic far-north cannot, of course, prove that *kaer rigor* and *echwyd amuchyd kymyscetor* must be translated and interpreted as they have been here. However, it does give us an additional reason, beyond those discussed previously, to believe that such a translation and interpretation would be appropriate. In sum, it can be said that the meaning of the third *awdl* of *Preideu Annwfyn* is perhaps not as certain as the consensus of most recent translations suggests it is. Whilst there is nothing incredible in the usual rendering of this *awdl*, there are other translations which are equally legitimate. Deciding between these is problematical, given the allusive and often obscure character of *Preideu Annwfyn*, but there are solid arguments that can be advanced in favour of the translations adopted here. Indeed, it is possible that these translations may actually support each other and offer the prospect of seeing the third *awdl* as more of a coherent whole than has been the case previously, even potentially possessing the same sort of analogues in Arthurian tales and allusions as can be found for the other *awdlau* of *Preideu Annwfyn*.

[41] See Muir, 'King Arthur's Northern Conquests', pp. 259-60; the *Gestae Arthuri* must have been composed at some point before *c.* 1360, as Muir points out. If we follow Taylor, 'A Letter', p. 65, then the second scenario for the relationship between the *Leges* and the *Gestae Arthuri* would be the correct one; she thought that the latter must post-date Marco Polo, due to the mention of the 'province of Bergi' by Cnoyen close by a reference to the *Gestae Arthuri*; however, it is not entirely clear from the text that this name actually derived from the *Gestae Arthuri* rather than being Cnoyen's own addition: James Robert Enterline, *Erikson, Eskimos, and Columbus: Medieval European Knowledge of America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 56. It is perhaps worth asking here whether the reference by Arthur's porter – *Culhwch and Olwen*, lines 118-120 – to an adventure in which twelve hostages were brought back from Scandinavia might possibly be another reflection of this tale?