

The Legend of St Brendan

*A Comparative Study of the Latin
and Anglo-Norman Versions*



J.S. Mackley



*Et beras in mari que gressu atendo dante. Atendo mi
Larum di aqua utendo. Quis mors dala. ob. CCO.
menantibus respon. ob eris fato sic q. creper.*

The Legend of St Brendan

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Anglo-Norman Versions

By

J.S. Mackley



B R I L L

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Cover illustration: “A whale mistaken for an island.” Sailors moor their boat and build a fire on its back, but when it senses the heat, it plunges to the depths taking men and vessel with it. It also entices small fish into its mouth and swallows them.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.N. <i>Voyage</i>	The Anglo-Norman <i>Voyage of St Brendan</i>
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series.
Heist, V.S.H.	W.W. Heist, ed., <i>Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae</i> (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965).
L.I.S.	Charles Plummer, ed., <i>Lives of Irish Saints</i> . 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922).
<i>Navigatio</i>	<i>Navigatio sancti Brendani abbatis</i> .
Plummer, V.S.H.	Charles Plummer, ed., <i>Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae</i> , 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).
Selmer	Carl Selmer, ed., <i>Navigatio sancti Brendani abbatis</i> (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959; repr. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1989).
<i>VB</i>	<i>Vita Brendani</i> .
Waters	E.G.R. Waters ed., <i>The Anglo Norman Voyage of St. Brendan by Benedeit</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).

I have used the following translations of the *Navigatio*:

Denis O'Donoghue, *Lives and Legends of Saint Brendan the Voyager* (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1994); originally published as *Brendaniana: St Brendan the Voyager in Story and Legend* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1893).

John O'Meara, *The Voyage of Saint Brendan: Journey to the Promised Land* (Mountrath, Portlaoise: The Dolmen Press, 1978); repr. in W.R.J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess eds., *The Voyage of St Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002). 26–64.

Quotations from the Bible have been taken from *Biblia sacra vulgatae editionis* (Paris: Sumptibus P. Lethielleus, 1891).

INTRODUCTION

The aims of the study

During the Middle Ages, one of the most popular narratives was the story of St Brendan's journey across the ocean, witnessing many marvels, before reaching the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*—the Promised Land of the Saints. The narrative captured the imagination of many generations. Indeed, its account of the Atlantic influenced Spanish and Portuguese navigators, and St Brendan's Island (still associated with the 'eighth' island of the Canaries) appeared on maps in the Middle Ages.

The earliest version of the voyage tale of Brendan is the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* (probably dating from the ninth century), although the oldest version of the voyage itself is in the *Vita Brendani*. The earliest vernacular translation is the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan*, which dates from the beginning of the twelfth century.¹ Previous analyses of the texts have focused on the sources for the voyage and dating the texts. The present study varies in two ways: primarily, it examines the use of the fantastic, which I shall define as a gradual introduction of apparently supernatural elements which are initially explained as plausible. The use of the fantastic is integral to the narrative and it is used in a manner that is common in the medieval milieu; as a model it allows criticism to overcome the dichotomy between 'real' and 'imaginary' detail that has hampered study of this text. My study also provides a detailed comparison of the two versions and considers the impact that the two narratives would have had on what is my understanding of the perceived audiences of these two versions.

Tzvetan Todorov's structural approach to the fantastic will be the starting point of my analysis of both versions of the Brendan narrative.² We will take as our starting-point his contention that, in order to

¹ The editions used are Carl Selmer, ed., *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis from Early Latin Manuscripts*, Publications in Mediaeval Studies, 16 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), and E.G.R. Waters, ed., *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan by Benedic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).

² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973). I am limiting myself to Todorov's study of the fantastic. Todorov is the acknowledged expert on this subject.

remain believable for as long as possible, the fantastic in literary texts ‘may be represented as a rising line which leads to the culminating point...most authors try to achieve a certain gradation in their ascent towards this culmination, first speaking vaguely [about the supernatural], then more and more directly’.³ This is how both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* are structured. Their structure considers the two versions of the Brendan legend as works of fiction. However, locations in the ocean between Ireland and North America correspond with the details in some of the encounters. *Færejar*, the Old Norse name for the ‘Faeroes’, for example, translates into English as the ‘Island of Sheep’. This suggests that when the narratives mention giant sheep on an island, they are reporting potentially recognisable landmarks in the North Atlantic, possibly through reports from well-known pilgrim routes. It is a reasonable conjecture, then, that these features, along with the popularity of the *Navigatio*, led cartographers to include St Brendan’s Isle on early maps. Other features cannot be so positively identified because the author has shrouded the location in symbolism.⁴ For example, the description of the mouth of hell could correspond to a volcano (perhaps Hekla in Iceland).⁵ For interpretation of these descriptions we rely on more recent scholarship.

The possible parallels with actual places, such as the association of the Faeroes with the Island of Sheep, do not hinder a study of the fantastic in these two versions. The *Navigatio* was not intended as a geography of the North Atlantic Ocean: it lacks the details that one would expect to find in such writings, for example, the descriptions surrounding incidents in Dicuil’s *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, which discuss previous experiences and philosophies concerning such locations. As we will see in chapter 1, the *Navigatio* was composed for three distinct ecclesiastical audiences—the brethren of a monastery dedicated to

Since he wrote his study, there have been many modern hypotheses concerning ‘fantasy’. Indeed, Martin Gray has suggested that it covers ‘the most playful kind of imagining, divorced from any contact with the real world of things and ideas’ in Martin Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harlow: Longman York Press, 1992), p. 116. Such a definition is inappropriate for this discussion.

³ Todorov, citing Penzoldt in *The Fantastic*, pp. 86–87. See my discussion of Todorov’s categories in chapter 2 on pp. 70–76.

⁴ For the discussion on how the author has shrouded natural exotica with supernatural imagery see chapter 4.

⁵ Glyn S. Burgess, ‘The Use of Animals in Benedeit’s Version of the Brendan Legend,’ *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 31–32.

Brendan; the pilgrims that the monastery hoped to attract, and for the edification of the wider monastic community—who may well have heard travellers' tales to islands in the Atlantic, but the narrative itself remains an allegory for spiritual life and an observation of monastic hours and feast days.⁶ The fact that there are realistic details concerning locations and topography in the *Navigatio*, and some of these aspects have been enhanced and extended in the A.N. *Voyage*, serves to breathe authenticity into the narratives. The realistic elements at the beginning of the *Navigatio* serve to present the audiences with a recognisable environment and therefore, they would find the opening of the narrative more credible. The nature of the fantastic, which forms the core of this study, is to bring the audience to a moment where they are unsure whether or not what they witness is true. By reaching this 'hesitation', the audience are potentially receptive to the didactic message presented in the two versions. It follows that the mixture of realistic elements with supernatural and marvellous events will increase each audience's uncertainty as to whether the events are plausible or not.⁷

Summary of the narratives

The common elements in the two narratives of the *Voyage of Brendan* are roughly characterised by the events in the *Navigatio*.⁸ The narrative

⁶ These audiences will be discussed in more detail on pp. 17–18; 31–42.

⁷ When using the term 'supernatural', I mean any element that is above the laws of nature. The supernatural defies natural explanation. In literature, the supernatural refers to events that do not conclude with a realistic solution. If an apparently supernatural event is explained, then, according to Todorov's model (discussed on p. 73 below), it becomes categorised with the 'uncanny'. Conversely, the 'marvellous', according to Todorov, is when the supernatural events are accepted without question. In literature, these events will receive no explanation. These definitions differ from the pure fantastic (which is a meridian line on Todorov's model). The moment of the fantastic requires an active participation on behalf of each member of the audience when they 'hesitate' in order to determine whether the events that they have witnessed are supernatural or not. Once they have ascertained that the event is plausible, it becomes categorised as 'fantastic-uncanny', whereas if it transpires that the event contains supernatural elements, it is instead categorised as 'fantastic-marvellous'. The fantastic is the moment of doubt that the audience feels when they endeavour to determine whether or not the events with which they have been presented are realistic.

⁸ These differ considerably from the Latin and Irish *Life of Brendan*, and certain later vernacular adaptations of the *Navigatio*, for example, the Dutch and German versions, where there are only a handful of scenes that are recognisable from the *Navigatio*, for example, the Island fish and the encounter with Judas Iscariot. Furthermore, the

describes how Brendan, an abbot of three thousand monks, is inspired by Barrindus, a fellow abbot, to visit the Promised Land of the Saints.⁹ Brendan selects fourteen monks as his crew, although three late-comers implore that they should also travel. Brendan agrees, but cautions them that they will not complete the journey. These ‘supernumerary’ monks leave the crew at key moments during the two versions of the narrative.

Brendan’s cyclical voyage lasts for seven years, during which time he returns to locations at principal dates in the liturgical year. These locations include: a deserted citadel; an island of giant sheep; a ‘moving island’ which transpires to have been an enormous fish (*Jasconius*); an island of birds which are the terrestrial forms of neutral angels; and the holy community of Ailbe. One scene that is omitted from the A.N. *Voyage* is the Island of the Three Choirs where, in the *Navigatio*, the inhabitants sing psalms and incessantly move around the island.

After completing the seven-year voyage, Brendan and his monks find a Crystal Column in the ocean and they travel to an erupting volcano where they see the mouth of hell. The final encounters, and the last lessons to be learned on the journey, are with the worst and best examples of humanity: Judas Iscariot and a pious hermit called Paul. Having learned the diverse secrets of the ocean, Brendan and his monks are guided to Paradise where they are told that the land will become known to future generations.¹⁰ They are instructed to return home. Shortly after their return to Ireland, Brendan dies.

Dutch and German versions do not present a *gradual* introduction to the fantastic, but simply present a montage of marvellous imagery.

⁹ In the *Navigatio*, Barrindus inspires Brendan to find Paradise, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan seeks out Barrindus for information after having decided to travel to the Otherworld. Barrindus also inspires Brendan in three versions of the *Vita Brendani*: *VB4*, *VB5* and *VB8*. The name of the saint is spelled ‘Barrinthus’ in Selmer’s edition of the *Navigatio*, ‘Barinz’ in A.N. *Voyage*. Irish texts spell it ‘Barrfind’ and ‘Barrind’. I have standardised the spelling to ‘Barrindus’—the form favoured by the majority of the manuscripts; see James Carney, ‘*Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* (Review),’ *Medium Aevum* 22 (1963), 37–44, p. 38.

¹⁰ Cf. Deuteronomy 34:4.

Methodology

Before embarking on my comparison of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the first chapter will look at the conditions of authorship and the audiences for both versions, as well as Brendan's heritage and the sources of the *Navigatio*. The subsequent literary analysis of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* is in three chapters. This discussion is structured around Richard Illingworth's observation that the A.N. *Voyage* is divided into three sections of similar lengths, which contain recurrent themes. Chapters 2–4 contain a detailed comparison that examines what can be understood in both versions, both thematically and structurally, with what I term in this study as 'the fantastic'.

The *Navigatio* is unique in genre terms and the A.N. *Voyage* builds on this uniqueness in being itself a unique work in structural terms. A study of the texts therefore requires a unique hermeneutic. Both versions begin with entirely plausible events that gradually take on supernatural overtones and these events may or may not receive a plausible explanation as the narrative progresses. My reading of the *Navigatio* applies Todorov's definition of the fantastic as a means of discussing the deliberate foregrounding of the narrative in the plausible. The gradual introduction of uncanny elements allows the audience to become acclimatised to suggestions of the supernatural (rather than the sudden introduction of the 'Other' coming into a safe environment) prior to the moment of 'hesitation'.¹¹ This moment is when the audience cannot determine whether the events with which they have been presented are plausible or supernatural, and is how Todorov describes the 'pure fantastic'. If the event subsequently has a plausible explanation then it moves into the category of 'the uncanny'; however, if it receives a supernatural explanation, then it becomes categorised as 'the marvellous'. The fantastic is the moment when the audience

¹¹ Although Todorov limits his study to the nineteenth-century Gothic novel, his theories have already been applied successfully to other historical literature, such as Brooke-Rose's reading of Dante and *Piers Plowman*, which shows that Todorov ideas concerning the fantastic exist as an 'element outside of the narrow historical period to which he assigns it'. Todorov focuses on the nineteenth-century Gothic novel because of the taboos of the time and that the sub-genre of the fantastic has been replaced by psychoanalysis. Indeed Brooke-Rose concludes that 'the fantastic as defined by Todorov [is] a modern development...of medieval allegory', this is discussed in Christine Brooke-Rose, 'Historical Genres/Theoretical Genres: A Discussion of Todorov on the Fantastic,' *New Literary History* 8 (1976), 145–158, pp. 150, 155, 156.

wavers between belief and disbelief. However, Todorov's model ends with a discussion of the marvellous—overtly supernatural events—and the final scenes of both versions of the Brendan narrative contain elements that are beyond human understanding. Therefore, modifications to Todorov's model include a first category of 'the mundane' (for the historical details at the beginning of the narrative—Todorov's first category is that of 'the uncanny') and a further category of 'beyond comprehension' (Todorov's final category is for 'the marvellous'—overt supernatural elements). With these modifications, Todorov's study of the fantastic provides an excellent framework for a comparative analysis of these two versions of the Brendan legend.

The fantastic depends on a 'hesitation'. In the two versions of the Brendan narrative, this hesitation carries a hagiographic or didactic message; it is a momentary wavering on the threshold of belief and incredulity. It allows a message to be presented in a comforting way and offers a discursive space to uphold morality. Marvellous imagery has the potential to detract from the message and it is a departure from what is real and normal. Yet, with the correct grounding in the mundane at the beginning of the text, and with the gradual introduction of the uncanny (where apparently supernatural events receive a plausible explanation) and the fantastic, the introduction of the marvellous does not necessarily imply an overload of incredulity. Instead, it serves to keep the audiences' attentions and allows them to consider fears and anxieties, in this case concerning the nature of salvation and damnation, through literature, rather than confronting them directly.

The two versions of the narrative discussed here are representative of a shift in genre: they represent the purest ecclesiastical and literary forms of the aspects of the legend of Brendan that are concerned with the voyage, rather than the hagiographic events in Brendan's life, as presented in the *Vita Brendani*. The *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* concentrate on the representations of the fantastic imagery and how it can be used to persuade the audience of the narratives' didactic message. As the A.N. *Voyage* is the earliest vernacular version of Brendan's voyage, it does not suffer from too much corruption from other stems of the vernacular reworking of the Brendan narrative. Both versions demonstrate the gradual introduction of the supernatural that Todorov argues is a necessary condition in order to generate the fantastic.

In order to make the narratives credible for as long as possible, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* introduce the elements of the fantastic gradually 'first speaking vaguely, then more and more directly'

about the elements that are potentially supernatural in origin.¹² This is achieved by first grounding each narrative in what each audience would find familiar around them and by giving plausible explanations to encounters that initially appear supernatural. However, even in the most mundane scenes in both versions each audience can detect a sense of the uncanny.¹³ The progression from the familiar to the fantastic-uncanny is the subject of chapter 2.

Another means through which the two versions of the narrative establish the fantastic is by refusing to confirm whether or not an event is supernatural, or by describing a supernatural occurrence as commonplace. This relief from the fantastic allows each audience time to process the imagery with which they have been presented, before applying the next category indicated by Todorov's model (the 'fantastic-marvellous') which can be applied to the narrative. The *Navigatio* also includes scenes in which there is limited fantastic imagery. Such scenes are not covered by Benedeit, the author of the A.N. *Voyage*, and act as a hiatus from the marvellous. This is the subject of chapter 3.

Todorov's model provides a useful springboard for discussion for the first two thirds of both versions. However, it is important to remember that the original audiences would have had an ardent faith in the religious message that both versions convey. To this extent, the final lessons of faith have been placed in a category *beyond* the marvellous (as it appears in Todorov's model). In both versions of the narrative these lessons are presented in the allegorical forms of the extremes of nature (depicted as the sacred and demonic) and the extremes of humanity (the damned and the saved—Judas and Paul) before the final description of Paradise itself. This is the subject of chapter 4.

¹² Todorov, citing Penzoldt, p. 87.

¹³ Sigmund Freud's essay on 'The "Uncanny"' is widely regarded as a comprehensive study of the subject and is the foundation of my analysis of notions of the uncanny within the genre of the fantastic; see Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' trans. James Strachey, *Art and Literature*, Pelican Freud Library, vol. 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 339–76. The uncanny has also enjoyed a fresh examination (most particularly through the discussion of topics that Freud is unwilling to confront) in Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). Royle's monograph on the uncanny examines areas that are both covered and omitted by Freud, in the light of present-day literary analysis and contemporary events.

A previous study of ‘Elements of the fantastic’ in the Brendan narrative

Although my study is concerned with the elements of the fantastic in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* (as outlined above), I am not the first to approach this aspect of the tale, notwithstanding the literal interpretation. In 1986, Pierre Bouet published a monograph entitled *Le Fantastique dans la littérature latine du Moyen Age: La Navigation de saint Brendan*.¹⁴ This slim volume contains a selection of extracts from the *Navigatio* in Latin, along with the corresponding passage from the A.N. *Voyage* and a translation of each into French. Each extract also contains a simplified text (in Latin) and a brief section entitled ‘Éléments pour un commentaire’ in which the author considers what he judges to be the key aspects of the encounter. Bouet’s approach is to discuss these scenes, mostly from the latter half of the text, using the translations as a means of linguistic and thematic study.¹⁵

Other scholarship

Comparatively recent scholarship on Brendan can be divided into analyses of manuscripts, sources, dates, themes, structure and translations. The catalogue of manuscripts that was begun in Selmer’s edition of the *Navigatio* was recently published by Giovanni Orlandi in a Critical Bibliography of manuscripts and studies of the Brendan legend;¹⁶ further work on the *stemma* of the text is being undertaken by Michaela Zelzer.¹⁷ Influential articles that consider source material include David Dumville’s study of the definitions of *Echtrae* and *Immrama* and Séamus Mac Mathúna’s discussion of the relationship between the *Navigatio*

¹⁴ Bouet, *Le Fantastique dans la littérature latine du Moyen Age: La Navigation de saint Brendan (œuvre anonyme du IX^e siècle)*, recherche pédagogique (Caen: Univ. de Caen, 1986).

¹⁵ The extracts contained in Bouet’s volume are as follows: the Deserted Citadel; Jasconius (the island fish); the combat of sea monsters; the attack of the griffin; the communion of fish; the Crystal Column; the Smithy of Hell; the damnation of a supernumerary and, finally, Paradise.

¹⁶ Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan: A Critical Bibliography* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2000).

¹⁷ Some of Zelzer’s preliminary observations for her critical edition can be seen in Michaela Zelzer, ‘Philological Remarks on the so-called *Navigatio s. Brendani*,’ *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 337–50.

and comparative episodes in the *Immrama*.¹⁸ This relationship was also discussed in Clara Strijbosch's comparative study of the *Navigatio* and the Dutch and German versions of the legend.¹⁹ Scholars, including David Dumville and Jonathan M. Wooding have considered the grounds for determining the date of the *Navigatio*.²⁰ The relationship with the *Navigatio* and the early Irish monasticism has been discussed by Cynthia Bourgeault, Dorothy Bray, John Anderson and Patricia Rumsey.²¹ Anderson suggests that the narrative is a description of the life of contemplation and spiritual prayer, rather than a geography of the North Atlantic, and should not be considered as proof of a pre-Columbian discovery of America, a suggestion that has been posited by, amongst others Geoffrey Ashe, and the practicalities demonstrated by Tim Severin.²² Scholars have also addressed individual scenes and elements of the various versions: of particular interest to this current study is Richard Illingworth's discussion of the structure of the A.N. *Voyage* and Robin Jones's observation that the narrative contains romance elements for courtly society, rather than a hagiography.²³

Of principal value to scholars of the Brendan legend are the recent translations of the Latin and vernacular versions, edited by Ray Barron

¹⁸ David M. Dumville, 'Echtrae and *Immram*: Some Problems of Definition,' *Ériu* 27 (1976), 73–94; Séamus Mac Mathúna, 'The Structure and Transmission of Early Irish Voyage Literature,' *Text and Zeitgefö*, ed. H.L.C. Tristram, *Scripta Oralia*, 68 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1993), 313–57; *immrama* are Irish voyage tales; see my discussion on pp. 55–59.

¹⁹ Clara Strijbosch, *The Seafaring Saint: Sources and Analogues of the Twelfth Century Voyage of St Brendan* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).

²⁰ David M. Dumville, 'Two Approaches to the Dating of "Nauigatio Sancti Brendani",' *Studi Medievali* 29 (1988), 87–102; Jonathan M. Wooding, 'The Date of *Nauigatio S. Brendani abbatis*' (forthcoming).

²¹ Cynthia Bourgeault, 'The Monastic Archetype in the *Navigatio* of St Brendan,' *Monastic Studies* 14 (1983), 109–22; Dorothy Ann Bray, 'Allegory in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*,' *Viator* 26 (1995), 1–10; John D. Anderson, 'The *Navigatio Brendani*: A Medieval Best Seller,' *Classical Journal* 83 (1987–88), 315–22; Patricia M. Rumsey, *Sacred Time in Early Christian Ireland* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

²² Geoffrey Ashe, *Land to the West: St Brendan's Voyage to America* (London: Collins, 1962); Timothy Severin, *The Brendan Voyage* (London: Hutchinson, 1978).

²³ R.N. Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan* by Benedeit,' *Medium Aevum* 55 (1986), 217–29; Robin F. Jones, 'The Precocity of Anglo-Norman and the *Voyage of Saint Brendan*,' *The Nature of Medieval Narrative*, eds Minnette Grunmann-Gaudet and Robin F. Jones, vol. 22, *French Forum Monographs* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum Publishers, 1980), 145–58.

and Glyn Burgess.²⁴ There has also been a facing-text prose translation of the Anglo-Norman version published by Ian Short and Brian Merrilees. This edition provides a useful introduction to the narrative and some of the wider context.²⁵ Clearly, when there is a linguistically accessible and affordable volume of translations (with introductory essays) available, there is potential for opening up Brendan scholarship to those that might have been prevented from studying the texts through linguistic difficulty. Quite apart from this, the future for Brendan scholarship remains bright: Clara Strijbosch and Giovanni Orlandi arranged a conference focusing on the *Navigatio* and its vernacular versions in 2002, the proceedings of which, *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, were edited by Burgess and Strijbosch were published in 2006.²⁶

Most of the *immrama* (with which it is useful to compare the *Navigatio*) have not been edited in over a century.²⁷ It would be useful to have a single volume to make these texts available to modern scholars.²⁸ Future analysis of the fantastic in this text would profitably be pursued into other versions of the narrative, in particular the Middle Dutch *De Reis*

²⁴ W.R.J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess, eds, *The Voyage of St Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002); revised paperback version, 2005.

²⁵ Ian Short and Brian Merrilees, *Le Voyage de Saint Brendan*, éd. bilingue, texte, traduction, présentation et notes (Paris: Champion Classiques, 2006). This publication is a revised and expanded edition of the earlier publication *Le Voyage de saint Brendan par Benedeit*, Bibliothèque Médiévale 1652 (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 10/18, 1984). A prior edition was published with notes in English as Ian Short and Brian Merrilees, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979); before this edition the scholar of the Anglo-Norman version would have had to use the edition by E.G.R. Waters.

²⁶ Clara Strijbosch and Glyn S. Burgess, eds, *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

²⁷ Published as Whitley Stokes, 'The Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Riagla,' *Revue celtique* 9 (1888), 14–25; Whitley Stokes, 'The Voyage of Máel Dúin,' *Revue celtique* 9 (1888), 447–95; Whitley Stokes, 'The Voyage of Máel Dúin (suite),' *Revue celtique* 10 (1889), 50–95; Whitley Stokes, 'The Voyage of the Húi Corra,' *Revue celtique* 14 (1893), 22–69; Kuno Meyer, ed., *The Voyage of Bran, Son of Fébal, to the Land of the Living: An Old Irish Saga*, 2 vols (London: D. Nutt, 1895–1897). The Voyage of Máel Dúin was more recently published as H.P.A. Oskamp, *The Voyage of Máel Dúin* (Groningen: Wolters-Nordhoff Publishing, 1970).

²⁸ See, however, A.G. van Hamel (ed.), *Immrama*, Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series X (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1941; repr. with supplementary bibliography and bibliographical notes, Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 2004). This version contains the original Irish texts, but no translations.

van *Sint Brandaan*.²⁹ The Dutch version contains a constant stream of marvellous imagery, and makes no attempt to ground the narrative in the plausible, unlike the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. There are other vernacular translations of the *Navigatio* that are more faithful than the A.N. *Voyage*, for example the French prose translation and some Italian versions.³⁰ However, as Waters observes, Benedeit has an ‘independent attitude’ when translating the *Navigatio* by excising excessively ecclesiastical material and by elaborating scenes containing fantastic imagery. It is this comparison of the elements of the fantastic in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* that is so fascinating.³¹

²⁹ H.P.A. Oskamp, ed., *De Reis van Sente Brandane* (Zutphen: NWJ Thieme & Cie, 1972). For sources and analogues of the Dutch and German versions see Strijbosch, *Seafaring Saint*.

³⁰ For further discussion see Renata Anna Bertoli, *La Navigatio Sancti Brendani e la sua fortuna nella cultura romanza dell’età di mezzo*, Biblioteca della ricerca, medio evo di Francia, 4, 2nd ed. (Fasano: Schena editore, 1993). See also Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan: A Critical Bibliography*, pp. 73–75.

³¹ Waters, *Voyage*, p. ciii.

CHAPTER ONE

ST BRENDAN: THE MAN AND THE MANUSCRIPTS

Part One

The authors and manuscripts of the *Navigatio* and the
Anglo-Norman *Voyage*

Introduction

This chapter will consider what can be deduced concerning the authors of the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* (hereinafter referred to as the *Navigatio*) and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan* (hereinafter the A.N. *Voyage*) based on the textual evidence and the manuscript traditions. This chapter also considers what can be determined about the possible audiences of both versions, based on the approximate date of composition and the form and genre of each of the narratives. Although touching upon some of the fantastic imagery within both versions, this chapter is principally concerned with establishing the framework of the legend of Brendan, the literary and cultural context and the historical evidence concerning the composition, and the audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*.

The second half of the chapter addresses the evidence concerning the ‘historical’ details from the legendary life of Brendan. This is based on the information provided in the early Irish annals and the hagiography presented in the seven different versions of the Latin and Irish lives of St Brendan, the *Vita Brendani* and the *Betha Brénnaid*. These narratives differ greatly from the two versions of the Brendan narrative that will be compared in this study, although some of them have become conflated with the story of his journey. They offer a valuable insight into the development of the legend, especially in comparison with other seafaring saints and the traditions of pilgrimage and exile.

The dates, manuscripts and audience of the Navigatio

As with most medieval texts, no manuscript provides the name of the author of the *Navigatio*. Carl Selmer observes that we can glean something of his reading and qualifications from his work. We can tell, for example, that he was well acquainted with Irish hagiography, including an early version of the *Vita Brendani*, as well as the life of St Ailbe.¹ He would have been familiar with the *echtra* and *immram* traditions of Irish literature, which would have included the *Immram Brain maic Febuil* (*The Voyage of Bran, Son of Febal*).² The author displays an excellent command of theology, history and Latin. However, Selmer's suggestion that a likely candidate for authorship was Israel Episcopus, an Irish exile and author of Latin works in the first half of the tenth century, is unsustainable.³ By Selmer's own admission, the two earliest surviving manuscripts, **Brit. Lib. Add. 36736** in London and **Clm. 17740** in Munich, both dating from the tenth century, belong to two noticeably different families.⁴ Both of these manuscripts were copied in Germany, the former in St Maximin in Trier and the latter in St Mang, Stadtamhof, Bavaria.

The numerous deficiencies in both manuscripts suggest a now-lost source text. Although it is possible for the manuscript tradition to produce two families with defects, Selmer's suggestion that these changes occurred within several decades is a largely rejected because of the nar-

¹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxvii. For a discussion concluding that the *Navigatio* borrowed from the *Vita Brendani* and not vice versa see Mac Mathúna, 'Structure and Transmission,' pp. 318–37. The *Vita Brendani* will be discussed below on pp. 44–50.

² Put simply, *echtrae* (literally translated as 'adventures') are concerned with human entry into the Otherworld, whereas the *immram* (lit. 'rowings about')—penitential voyages—focus on the voyage itself. Wooding suggests that the term *immram* may well be a translation of 'navigatio' into Irish; see Jonathan M. Wooding, 'Introduction to the Latin Version,' *The Voyage of St Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation*, eds W.R.J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), p. 23. For the debate as to whether the *Immram Brain maic Febuil* belongs technically to the *echtra* or *immram* genre, see, for example, Dumville, 'Echtrae and Immram,' 73–94 and Oskamp, *Máel Dúin*, p. 42. The *immram* tradition will be discussed below on pp. 55–59.

³ Cf. Carl Selmer, 'Israel, ein unbekannter Schotte des 10. Jahrhunderts,' *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner-Ordens und seiner Zweige* 62 (1950), 69–86, p. 80. See also Carl Selmer, 'The Beginnings of the St Brendan Legend on the Continent,' *Catholic Historical Review* 29 (1943), 169–76.

⁴ The genealogy of the manuscripts of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* will be discussed in appendix one on pp. 245–55 below.

row time-frame in which the manuscripts would have evolved.⁵ Therefore, Selmer's conclusion (based on a study of eighteen manuscripts) that the *Navigatio* developed from an original Lotharingian manuscript from the first half of the tenth century must also be questioned. Orlandi argues that the missing *ur-text* text was significantly older than the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Navigatio*, probably deriving from the ninth century. He observes that no one has convincingly argued against the fact that the author was an Irishman who travelled to Europe between the ninth and tenth centuries. He further discusses the Irish identity of the author based on the fact that, although the language is different from that which appears in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, the orthographic evidence, grammar and syntax indicates a Hibernistic linguistic tradition. His linguistic analysis confirms the origins of the *Navigatio*: Orlandi holds that the beginning of the narrative is similar to other texts in the *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae*, which were writings by Irishmen for Irishmen.⁶

It is a reasonable conjecture that the *Navigatio* is of Irish provenance on account of the 'Hibernicisms' in the text. This is further supported by the author's concern for genealogical and topographical details and Irish politics.⁷ Orlandi notes that if the author was writing in continental Europe, then he has not thought to clarify that his story is taking place in Ireland, but instead concerns himself with the precise indications of the place of the harvest.⁸ Based on the textual evidence, Carney suggests that the author 'belonged to a monastery and every sentence, every character and every incident reflects Irish monastic society and ideals'.⁹ According to Carney, the tenth century represents the date of the legend's importation from Ireland. Its composition had been a century before and, therefore, also a century before the work of Israel Episcopus. Consequently, it is only possible to *speculate* on the earliest audience of the *Navigatio*. Realistically, the author was living in Ireland

⁵ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxviii; Carney, 'Navigatio (Review)', p. 40.

⁶ Giovanni Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, vol. 1: *Introduzione* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino di Varese, 1968), pp. 138–39.

⁷ Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints: An Introduction to the Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 17; Wooding, 'Introduction to the Latin Version,' p. 15.

⁸ Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, p. 140.

⁹ Carney, 'Navigatio (Review)', p. 41; Michael Lapidge, 'Israel the Grammarian in Anglo-Saxon England,' *From Athens to Chartres, Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought: Studies in Honour of Edouard Jeauneau*, ed. H.J. Westra (New York: Brill, 1992), 97–114, p. 103.

around the start of the ninth century and conveyed to his audiences the elements with which they were familiar: he offers local knowledge and descriptions of the Dingle Peninsula. Based on the writings of Dicuil, and the desertion of the Faeroes, Wooding suggests that the *Navigatio* was not composed before 795, and, based on the manuscript evidence, no later than 950.¹⁰

The two earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Navigatio* offer some clues as to its purpose and genre. The manuscript from the British Library (36736) contains four sections, all of which date from the tenth century. These are: Augustine's treatise against the first letter of John; a note (purported to be by St Clement) concerning the twelve Fridays to be observed annually by Christians; Book Seven of Augustini de Babbismo's commentary *Aduersus epistolam parmeniani* (Against the Letter of Parmenian); and the *Vita Sancti Brendani abbatis*: this last section of the manuscript is actually the *Navigatio* but has been given the title of a *vita*. Thus, although the four sections are of a religious nature (and one would expect nothing less of a manuscript commissioned by a monastery), three of them are commentaries. The *Navigatio* is the only section presented as a hagiography, and this is underscored by the way that in both this manuscript and the Munich manuscript (17740) the Brendan narrative is titled *Vita Sancti Brendani abbatis*; the British Library manuscript (36736) ends *Explicit Vita Sancti Brendam*.

The manuscript from Munich contains items from both the tenth and eleventh centuries. It is described as 'scripta memorabilia' and contains the following sections: *Vita Sancti Brendani abbatis*; *Vita Adam et Aevae*; *Symeonis vita*; *Caesarii omeliae IX ad Monachos*; *Adventus exceptioque corporis B. Benedicti in agrum Floriacensem*; *De vita s. Hieronymi*; and 'Qualiter et quando undeque b. mart. Senesii atque theopontii corpora nonantulae coenobium ducta fuerint'. Thus, four of the sections are of a hagiographic nature, two of the others consider the actions of, or miracles surrounding, saints, while the final section is a book of homilies.

¹⁰ Wooding, 'The Date of *Nauigatio S. Brendani abbatis*' (forthcoming). Wooding further suggests that a single author composed the *Navigatio* around 810 using the *Vita* as his source material [pers. comm.]. I suggest that the author would have also needed extensive knowledge of the Marvels of the East as well as Biblical and Apocryphal material.

The audiences of the Navigatio

Based on the above manuscript evidence, it is a reasonable conjecture that the *Navigatio* developed from the *Vita Brendani* and that the adaptation of the narrative was partially through recopying and partially through a need to reinvent it in order to satisfy three distinct audiences, each of which were based around the monastic community and would be looking for different elements. The first and foremost target audience for the composition is, as O'Loughlin observes of the *Vita Columbae* by Adomnán, the brethren in the monastery. O'Loughlin explains of the *Vita Columbae* that 'it tells [the brethren] of their founder and origins, their heavenly intercessor and role model'.¹¹ The pious life and Brendan's holy deeds, as seen in *VB7* (the *Book of Lismore*), would have been most likely to appeal to those who considered Brendan as a spiritual guardian. However, an unconfated version of the *Vita*, *VB1*, has been much abbreviated and hints at a conflict between piety and the adventure story, as the redactor laments over the marvels that he has been forced to omit.¹²

The second group to whom the *Vita* and the *Navigatio* of Brendan would have been aimed were those pilgrims whom the monastery was trying to attract in order to foster an interest in the cult of Brendan. In medieval Ireland, the term *civitas* was used to mean a major ecclesiastical settlement. These densely populated areas, sometimes of urban status, might include penitents. In addition, monasteries became centres of learning and hostels for Irish pilgrims.¹³ It is cynical, but plausible, to suggest that an exciting story filled with marvellous events would attract pilgrims who brought with them generous donations, as suggested in *VB3*.¹⁴ Yet, one would have thought that, in order to attract pilgrims, the saint's life would also include a tradition of miracles and healing,

¹¹ Thomas O'Loughlin, *Celtic Theology* (Continuum: London and New York, 2000), p. 78.

¹² 'Que autem viderint mirabilia, quanta, ipso orante, evaserint pericula, qualiter cum demonibus ipse congressus sit et victor exstiterit, multosque alios eius actus, compellente brevitatis angustia, preterivimus,' W.W. Heist, ed., *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965), p. 329.

¹³ Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 119–20; Kathleen Hughes, 'The Changing Theory and Practice of Irish Pilgrimage,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 11 (1960), 143–51, p. 144.

¹⁴ Mould D. Pochin, *Ireland and the Saints* (London: Batsford, 1953), p. 165; Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Medieval Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), pp. 158–67.

in the hope that the pilgrims would themselves find healing. Sumption observes that ‘miracles were necessary to assist the propagation of the faith’, yet these elements are not contained in the *Navigatio*.¹⁵ Therefore, there was likely to be another economic reason for the development of the legend from a hagiography to a more secular narrative. Another suggestion is that an affluent monastery would have had a scriptorium, which would have been producing manuscripts from a commission of the wealthy, around the estimated date of the composition of the *Navigatio*.¹⁶ Lehane describes these manuscripts as ‘books for reading...to fit in a satchel and be carried on...frequent journeys’.¹⁷ This would certainly be in keeping with the exciting narrative of the *Navigatio*. Such influential monasteries were, as Edel observes, ‘developed into proto-urban centres with considerable populations which included far more non-monks than monks’.¹⁸ The ‘non-monks’ were responsible for a variety of manual tasks around the wider monastic community, for example working the land and craftsmanship. I suggest that the ‘wider community’ was the third intended audience and the *Navigatio* would be one of the narratives contributing to their spiritual edification. O’Loughlin, discussing the lay audience of the *Navigatio*, concludes: ‘it is in such a varied community we should imagine the *Nauigatio* being read, and in such a community it presents a single coherent message about “the higher gifts” and more excellent ways’.¹⁹

Despite the conflict between adventure and piety both the *Vita Brendani* and the *Navigatio* focus on spiritual edification. Thus, there are three audiences to which the *Vita* and the *Navigatio* would have appealed, in what scholars speculate was early medieval Ireland.²⁰ First, there were those who were looking for a patron or authority figure to justify the existence of their monastic community and provide a devout role

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Based on David Dumville’s suggestion that the *Navigatio* was composed around the third quarter of the eighth century. See Dumville, ‘Two Approaches,’ pp. 95–96.

¹⁷ Brendan Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity* (London: Constable, 1994), p. 62.

¹⁸ Edel, *The Celtic West*, p. 100.

¹⁹ Thomas O’Loughlin, ‘Distant Islands: The Topography of Holiness in the *Nauigatio Sancti Brendani*,’ *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Ireland and Wales*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 1–20, p. 19.

²⁰ Michaela Zelzer observes that the rule of Benedict was not decisively established in Ireland, although she suggests that the *Navigatio* was re-written on the continent in the ninth century; see Michaela Zelzer, ‘Frühe irische Amerikafahrten und monastische Reform: Zur *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*,’ *Wiener Humanistische Blätter* 31 (1989), 66–87.

model for their lives. For these monks, the hagiography of the pious *Vita Brendani* was likely to be paramount. In addition, there were *two* secular audiences. One was the more commercial enterprise that generated funds for the monastery through donations and the commission of manuscripts. The other was a group drawn from the laity on the fringes of the monastic society who received their spiritual education from hearing the narratives being read in the monastery. This final group was the principal target for the author of the *Navigatio*. In order to satisfy all these audiences, the author had to develop the *Navigatio* from the genre of traditional hagiography and consider new ways of appealing to the vast spectrum of the audiences in order to introduce new methods of conveying the didactic message. The next chapter will demonstrate that this method was through fantastic imagery.

Genres of the two narratives

The two earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Navigatio* discussed above (**Brit. Lib. Add. 36736** in London and **Clm. 17740** in Munich) describe the narrative as a *vita*. This is a *prima facie* indication that these scribes were copying what was considered to be a saint's life or hagiography. The increasing number of surviving manuscripts of the *Navigatio* in subsequent centuries shows that the narrative appealed greatly to a wide range of people throughout the Middle Ages and grew in popularity. However, although the primary focus of the narrative is on the monastic discipline and spiritual maxims, there is a significant interest in elements of the fantastic. The pious life of the saint, as detailed in the *Vita Brendani*, has been pushed into the background and it does not appear in later collections of *vitae*.²¹ The principal difference between the *Vita Brendani* and the *Navigatio* is that, in the *Vita*, Brendan performs miracles that are in keeping with the deeds of a Christian saint; in the *Navigatio*, although miraculous events occur around Brendan, he does not perform them himself. The voyage demanded a Christian hero and so, by drawing on a character whose birth had been foretold by, amongst others, St Patrick, Brendan had divine approval. In the light of the wide dissemination and popularity of the marvellous narrative

²¹ Carl Selmer, 'A Study of the Latin Manuscripts of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*', *Scriptorium* 3 (1949), 177–82, p. 182.

in Latin and its popularity, there is little surprise that it was translated into the vernacular at the start of the twelfth century. One of these versions was the A.N. *Voyage*.

Thus, three centuries elapsed between the date that we conjecture that the *Navigatio* was composed, and the composition of the A.N. *Voyage*. Before examining the dates, authors and manuscripts of the A.N. *Voyage*, it is appropriate to discuss the genre of the two narratives in the context of the cultural developments and literary trends over this period, in particular, issues related to genre, most importantly, hagiography, romance and the fantastic, both in general terms and in relation to these two versions.

Genre

At first glance, genre needs only a very simple explanation: it is a system into which literary texts are grouped. Todorov offers the definition that ‘genres are classes of texts’, although he admits that each term used in this definition raises complicated questions of terminology and this definition is modified and qualified throughout Todorov’s essay.²² Another useful definition is that ‘genre is the historically attested codification of discursive properties’.²³ Genre defines how we interpret a text: the rules of genre explain what we can and cannot expect to happen. Dubrow explains that it ‘functions much like a code of behaviour established between author and reader’ and ‘through such signals as the title, the matter and the incorporation of familiar *topoi* into his opening lines, the poet sets up such a contract with us’.²⁴ However, Dubrow, following Roland Barthes, suggests that ‘since the reader is faced with an infinite series of conflicting signals and codes, it is almost impossible to interpret a work of literature precisely and objectively’.²⁵ Codes may be violated, unconsciously or deliberately. This, in turn, brings with it a fluidity between genres. Cornwell observes that ‘genres are “never static” but evolve in “a dialectical combination of both variants and invariants”’.²⁶ Dubrow argues that ‘a writer who mixes genres could adduce ancient

²² Tzvetan Todorov, ‘The Origin of Genres,’ *New Literary History* 8 (1976), 159–170, p. 161.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁴ Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), pp. 2 and 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁶ Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 35.

and honourable precedents'.²⁷ She adds that we should not expect the movement from one genre to another to follow a neat pattern, which indicates that there is invariably a kind of slippage between genres.

It is exactly this kind of slippage that is important when we consider the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. The narratives have been labelled as hagiography, and yet, in comparison with the *Vita Brendani*, the *Navigatio* reads as a pious adventure story, although the A.N. *Voyage*, a more literary construction, contains romance elements. Thus, an analysis of what is understood about hagiography and romance, and how the fantastic can be applied to them, may lead to a clearer understanding of the two versions.

Echtrae, immrama and legenda

The *Navigatio* presents a problem in terms of genre. It is presented as a hagiography; indeed, some manuscripts dictate that we read it as such by starting and ending *incipit* and *explicit vita Sancti*. Yet, the use of marvellous imagery, rather than that of the miraculous, confuses the genre. In the *Vita Brendani*, Brendan performs the miracles, whereas, in the *Navigatio*, although miraculous events occur, Brendan does not actually perform them himself.

The *Navigatio* is more closely recognisable as having elements of the *immram* genre, rather than those of the *echtrae*, although its composition has no doubt influenced by both of these genres. Dumville suggests that the *echtrae* deal with a pagan milieu, whereas the *immrama* consider Christian elements. Any secular elements in the *immrama* should be considered 'subordinate to the ecclesiastical inspirations and sources of these tales'.²⁸ There is considerable debate as to whether *Immram Brain maic Febuil* belongs to the *immram* or *echtra* genre, Mac Mathúna describes it as a 'hybrid which contains both *immram* and *echtra* elements'.²⁹ However, the suggestions that a text can be categorised according to whether it contains secular, pagan or ecclesiastical elements has been dismissed by McCone, who argues that, for example, the woman in the *Echtrae Chonlai* 'symbolises the Church and is an allegory of conflicts between

²⁷ Dubrow, *Genre*, p. 59.

²⁸ David M. Dumville, 'Echtrae and Immram: Some Problems of Definition,' *Ériu* 27 (1976), 73–94, p. 73.

²⁹ Séamus Mac Mathúna, *Immram Brain: Bran's Journey to the Land of the Women* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1985), p. 279.

pagan iniquity and Christian virtue'.³⁰ However, he also acknowledges that the discussion of the *minutiae* of the dichotomy between nature and the ecclesiastical genres is a 'futile taxonomical exercise'.³¹

As well as a hagiography and a narrative that resembles an ecclesiastical adventure story, Broun observes that there existed a now-lost *legenda Sancti Brendani* which included an account of the Irish (*Scoti*) in order to establish the authority of the text before its treatment of the saint's life. If this is indeed the case, then it is characteristic of the lineage that opens the *Navigatio*. However, as Broun admits, 'no existent life or *legenda* of a St Brendan contains this material'.³² He continues that origin material is rare in a life of a Gaelic saint and argues that a *legenda* would have been

produced in a part of Gaelic Scotland where the strength of Anglo-French acclimatisation in the twelfth century could have encouraged the writing of hagiography designed to explain existing saints' cults in terms acceptable to the new culture and its personnel. If so, the inclusion of an account of Scottish origins may have been intended to inform incoming Anglo-French men of letters that St Brendan belonged to an ancient people whose origins were located within the biblical scheme of early history.³³

Thus, the development of the legend of Brendan has included some adaptation according to genre classification. However, although sources and parallels for the *Navigatio* can be seen in the *echtra* and *immram* genres, it is clearly a text that focuses on spiritual edification in a manner that is presented as a hagiography.

Hagiography

Gray defines hagiography as 'pious literature concerning the lives of Christian saints and martyrs'.³⁴ Delchaye defines hagiography as the

³⁰ Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth: An Gagart, 1990), pp. 81–82.

³¹ Ibid., p. 79. Doris Edel also suggests that Dumville's argument that Bran belongs to the *echtra* genre is because 'he wants to restrict the use of the term *immram* to texts of ecclesiastical origin', Doris Edel, *The Celtic West and Europe* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), p. 67, n. 20.

³² Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), p. 88.

³³ Ibid., p. 114.

³⁴ Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 132.

‘official written reports of the interrogation of martyrs’.³⁵ He also submits that the term *hagiographical document* ‘should not be applied indiscriminately to any and every writing that bears on the saints’.³⁶ Both these last definitions cause difficulties in categorising both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*: in both versions, Brendan is already a Christian and, although he dies at the end of both narratives, he is not martyred. Delehaye’s other definition of a hagiographical document is more helpful: ‘to be strictly hagiographic, the document must be of a religious character and aim at edification’.³⁷ This partially helps to categorise the two versions of the Brendan legend: they are both of a religious character and the acts of Brendan, as well as the numerous maxims in the A.N. *Voyage*, sustain the didactic message through the narrative. Furthermore, if genre defines how we interpret the text, then a narrative that begins *Incipit vita Sancti* is prompting us to read it as a hagiography. However, as has already been observed, codes may be violated and this leads to a slippage between genres. Childress observes that there is an ‘ambiguous genre between hagiography and romance’. She describes this as ‘secular hagiography’.³⁸ Hopkins observes that there are ‘many religious romances... [that] have a strong affinity with saints’ lives’ and continues that ‘they occupy a position between the genres of hagiography and romance’.³⁹ In this middle ground, the saint’s life is filled with journeys and marvels. These ‘secular hagiographies’ are almost indistinguishable from romance narratives.⁴⁰ Indeed, some of the manuscripts containing the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* begin or end with the assertion that the text is a *vita* of Brendan. In order to clarify the distinction between the genres, Childress suggests that ‘the romance hero is basically a good man who actively embodies the aristocratic ideals of his society’, whereas the protagonist of secular hagiography ‘may have the ability to invoke divine aid to accomplish his feats, which are therefore not performed by the hero at all, but by

³⁵ Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1962), p. 89.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁸ Diana T. Childress, ‘Between Romance and Legend: “Secular Hagiography” in Middle English Literature,’ *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978), 311–22, p. 311.

³⁹ Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 12.

⁴⁰ Hopkins lists a number of other commentators who have used different terminology such as ‘homiletic romances’ and ‘exemplary romances’; see Hopkins, *Sinful Knights*, p. 12.

God through him'.⁴¹ This last definition is closer to the acts of Brendan. His actions are not performed to enhance the protagonist's reputation: instead they serve to glorify God, during the process of which Brendan and his monks patiently endure their suffering on their purgatorial and educational journey.

The legend of Brendan is not the only *exemplum* of secular hagiography that was developed at the start of the twelfth century: *La vie de saint Alexis* was written in Normandy around the mid eleventh century and then copied by an Anglo-Norman scribe before 1150.⁴² In this legend, Alexis, the son of noble parents, abandons his bride and gradually achieves sainthood through abstinence and denial: this theme, the unshakable faith of the central character, is similar to the Brendan legend, where the protagonist has already abandoned his parents and then leaves his brethren in the care of the Prior. Alexis, however, returns to his father's palace where he lives on the scraps from his father's table for a further seventeen years. It is only after his death that he leaves a parchment revealing his identity. The similarity is that the two texts have the protagonist attempting to imitate Christ by a voluntary exile from their familiar society: Alexis achieves this through the recognition of his voluntary acceptance of poverty and his death; Brendan achieves it through absolute trust in God on his journey and eventually finding Paradise. However, the principal difference is that Brendan's journey lasts through the whole of the narrative, whereas Alexis's journey is dismissed in fourteen lines. The importance in the latter case is upon how the protagonist patiently endures humiliation, deprivation and suffering.⁴³

Secular hagiography differs from romance in that the protagonist's superiority to other men and to his environment is most frequently expressed by the exaggeration of human capabilities. Hagiography successfully adapts romance elements without corrupting its own fundamental purpose of teaching orthodox doctrine.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Childress, 'Secular Hagiography,' pp. 314 and 316–17.

⁴² ms Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, nouv. Acq. fr. 4503 has the Brendan narrative immediately following the *Vie de St Alexis*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

⁴⁴ Amy V. Ogden, *Hagiography, Romance and the Vie de sainte Eufrosine* (Princeton: The Edward C Armstrong Monographs, 2003), p. 6. For further discussion see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saint's Lives and Women's Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Another useful comparison with the two versions of the *Voyage of Brendan* is the Middle English romance of *Sir Gowther*, which Childress categorises as another secular hagiography. In this narrative, Sir Gowther, the son of a devil, is inherently sinful from birth. Only direct divine intervention brings the protagonist to penance and ultimately salvation. Although this is a romance narrative, it shows (unlike the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*) a conversion to Christianity, more in keeping with a hagiographic text. Indeed, one of the manuscripts of *Sir Gowther* concludes with the line *Explicit vita Sancti*.⁴⁵

The miraculous intervention of the divine in *Sir Gowther* as well as the performance of miracles and fabulous imagery in both versions of the Brendan narrative, introduces us to a further sub-genre in the categorisation of these texts. It is this sub-genre that provides a starting-point for the methodology of this study: that of the fantastic as described by Todorov. Todorov suggests that what is central to the genre is not necessarily the subject matter, but instead the state of mind induced by the text and the uncertainty of how events are to be interpreted. He suggests that the 'fantastic is characterised by the hesitation that the reader is invited to experience with regard to the natural or supernatural events depicted'.⁴⁶

Romance

The term 'romance' refers to both the genre (tales of chivalry and love) and the language in which it was written. The phrase 'mis en romanz' appears in the A.N. *Voyage* ('He has put into words in accordance with the best of his ability/Into writing and the romance tongue'). It thus distinguishes the vernacular from classical writing, as well as differentiating secular texts from scholarly writing.⁴⁷ Hopkins observes that 'romance cannot be defined in terms of a literary genre...it is generally speaking a non-realistic fiction'.⁴⁸ Accepting that there is a plurality of meaning, the potential ambiguity of definitions is neatly summed up by Krueger who asserts that

⁴⁵ Childress, 'Secular Hagiography,' p. 317; Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1968), pp. 125–128.

⁴⁶ Todorov, 'Origin of Genres,' p. 167. See my discussion on 'hesitation' in chapter 2 on pp. 70–71, 84, 94 and 115.

⁴⁷ W.R.J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London: Longman, 1987), p. 1; Andrea Hopkins, *Sinful Knights*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

the term ‘romance’ used today refers to [a] narrative of chivalric adventures that were first encountered in medieval courts [which] derives from the Old French expression ‘mettre en romanz’ which means to translate into vernacular French. Consequently, many kinds of vernacular narratives were dubbed ‘romans’... These stories shared characteristics with other genres, whose boundaries were fluid rather than fixed.⁴⁹

Even within the concept of genre, the definition of ‘romance’ is fluid. Traditionally romance literature incorporates one of three themes: the matter of Rome or Troy, the matter of France and the matter of England. These themes invoke classical, historical or legendary ideals that assist in affirming the identity of a nation through their heritage. Of course, the legend of Brendan does not conform to any of these: it simply appeals to an ancient heritage, that of the Celtic saint. However, in the A.N. *Voyage* Brendan is also from a royal lineage and so his authority is accepted.

Romance tales are also concerned with the essential qualities of human nature as well as the ideal of adventure and instruction which are both elements of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. One of the qualities of the romance genre is that of the idealised self: it is a mastery of the protagonist over the laws of nature.⁵⁰ Brendan, in both versions, demonstrates these qualities: he has foreknowledge of the dangers that the brethren face, showing himself superior to other men and his environment in *degree*, that is, in personal qualities. He is also able to achieve the level of perfection necessary to visit the part of Paradise that he is permitted to visit. The characteristics of the protagonist become a stereotype that serves to convey the didactic message. Similarly, through his purgatorial journey, Brendan is able to know himself, as well as learning the mysteries of the ocean.

Both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* contain many motifs that are recognisable in conventional chivalric romance: the mysterious challenge or summons to a mission; the lonely journey through hostile territory; and the single combat against overwhelming odds against a mysterious opponent. These factors, as suggested by Barron, appear in both versions of the narrative, although in a slightly different manner. The

⁴⁹ Roberta L. Krueger, ‘Introduction,’ *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–9, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 33–34; cf. Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 11, Barron, *English Medieval Romance*, p. 2.

‘summons’ is the overwhelming longing to see the divine—whether inspired by Barrindus’s visit or through Brendan’s fervent prayers to see the mysteries of Paradise and hell. In the same way, the ‘lonely journey’ is represented by the months of desolation as the monks cross the ocean. Finally, although the brethren do not undertake any combat themselves, unless it is their struggle against the elements and temptation, violence is described through the combat of monsters and the punishment of Judas Iscariot, particularly in the A.N. *Voyage*.

Another of the central themes of romance is the dream of wish-fulfilment which Frye argues that romance is the closest of all literary forms to this theme.⁵¹ Romance can deal with enchantment or the Otherworld, or dreamworld, motifs. Through these utopian or dystopian environments the author could explore potentially sensitive issues and ideas in a realm that was separated from the reality of recognisable society.⁵² However, as Barron observes, romance texts ‘cannot ignore reality since its idealism is constantly challenged in readers’ minds by their knowledge of the imperfect world in which they live’.⁵³ It is this observation that allows an audience, either listening to or reading a story, to hesitate while they consider whether or not what they are hearing is plausible, and, when faced with a model of perfection, to compare themselves with it. Barron suggests that ‘such tales derive their lasting appeal from the universal nature of the emotions which the listener is invited to share by identifying with the hero...in the exploration of experience through feeling rather than conscious thought: maturation through struggle’.⁵⁴ Barron goes on to describe how the narrative structure may be a composite of ‘independent episodes in the hero’s career’; however it is also likely to be a ‘mounting sequence to a climactic adventure, [but] the underlying structure is always a quest’.⁵⁵ This is, in itself, a kind of wish-fulfilment. In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the quest is to reach Paradise, but the fact that the brethren return means that it should be considered as a pilgrimage, for their homecoming provides the opportunity to spread the word of God further. The gradual introduction of fantastic elements that achieves

⁵¹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 186.

⁵² Jeff Rider, ‘The Other Worlds of Romance,’ *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 115–31, p. 122.

⁵³ Barron, *English Medieval Romance*, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

this climax in relation to Todorov's hypothesis of the fantastic will be discussed later.⁵⁶

The story of Brendan's journey is found copied or bound among the narratives of saints and martyrs that are, as Barron observes, 'barely distinguishable from the contemporary romances of chivalry'.⁵⁷ Both betray their mythic inheritance by the frequency with which their plots are resolved by the violation of the laws of nature and the charismatic ease with which their heroes dominate their environment and lesser men. Thus, an adventure story would have been one of the means of conveying the didactic message to the masses without transgressing ecclesiastical rulings.

By contrast, by viewing the adventurous journey of Brendan and his monks as allegorical would be, as C.S. Lewis presents it, both an 'extention of religion [and] and escape from religion'.⁵⁸ It is a means to explore principal ecclesiastical issues without confronting them directly. According to Lewis, the allegorical Earthly Paradise does indeed belong to the Otherworld, but it is an Otherworld of imagination rather than of religion, and allegory is a means of conveying 'deep, unfailing sources of poetry' to those people who 'could not otherwise have found it'.⁵⁹

Jones goes further than Barron. He suggests that the A.N. *Voyage* is 'an adventure story rather than a *vita*' and describes it as the first surviving example [of romance] in Old French.⁶⁰ However, as Gaunt argues, 'precise generic terminology [concerning romance] usually derives from critical discourse and it is therefore hardly surprising that generic labels are not used with any consistency in Old French'.⁶¹ In fact, the A.N. *Voyage* was composed well before the recognised beginning of romance. That said, the romance genre did not simply spring into existence: the poets had partial models in the older *chansons de geste* (from the Latin *gesta*, meaning things done, or exploits). Legge observes that by 1100, the *chanson de geste* was a well-established form, although it

⁵⁶ See my discussion in chapter 2 on pp. 70–76.

⁵⁷ Barron, *English Medieval Romance*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 120.

⁶⁰ Robin F. Jones, 'The Precocity of Anglo-Norman and the *Voyage of Saint Brendan*,' *The Nature of Medieval Narrative*, eds Minnette Grunmann-Gaudet and Robin F. Jones, *French Forum Monographs* vol. 22 (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum Publishers, 1980) 145–58, p. 147.

⁶¹ Simon Gaunt, 'Romance and Other Genres,' *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45–49, p. 45.

was soon to go out of favour in courtly circles.⁶² The earliest examples of the developing romance genre would have been oral performances, that have since been lost, and it is only once the concept of the genre had become more developed that the texts were written down. Barron observes that 'the literature of the masses...was unlikely to achieve written form unless, by chance, it caught the attention of the clerics who controlled the expensive apparatus of literacy and who were liable to rework it in "art" versions of their own'. He continues that 'the appearance of the *Chanson de Roland* (c. 1100), an epic fully formed and completely structured, represents the maturing rather than the first flowering of a tradition of secular narrative in the vernacular'.⁶³

Genre of the Navigatio and the A.N. Voyage

The narratives of both the *Navigatio* and the *A.N. Voyage* both progress into the realm of the fantastic and ultimately the marvellous. The use of this literary mode allows the authors to present the mysteries of the ocean in a dynamic and exciting fashion and further allows them to maximise the use of both didactic and entertaining imagery.

The genre of the *Navigatio* remains close to hagiography, although a more pious life of Brendan exists as the *Vita Brendani*. Unlike the *Vita*, Brendan in the *Navigatio* does not contain the traditional motifs that one would expect in a *Vita* (for example, the conversion of non-believers, raising the dead and martyrdom). Instead the *Navigatio* is a celebration of the Christian year and the monastic day. The principal events occur on important festivals during the Christian calendar, as well as observation of the monastic hours and Christian rituals such as the prayers at terce, nones and vespers; the ceremony of the washing of feet and the sacrificial lamb, for example. In addition, some of the manuscripts are entitled *Vita Sancti Brendani abbatis* and end with *Explicit vita Sancti Brendam*, or the prayer 'Amen'. Written in Latin, the *Navigatio* contains lists of psalms which gives it an excessively ecclesiastical flavour. There are references to Biblical characters when Brendan prays, for example, allusions to David and Goliath and Jonah and the whale. In addition, the imagery is often taken from the Bible, such as the description of

⁶² M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 3.

⁶³ Barron, *English Medieval Romance*, p. 13.

the crystal column, which parallels the description of the temple in Ezekiel. Similarly, events are explained in terms of Biblical imagery with which the assumed audience would have been familiar. As well as the apocryphal encounters that are presented in the narrative, for example, the Paradise of Birds and the respite of Judas Iscariot, the *Navigatio* also substantiates the encounters through other Christian writings, such as Jerome's *Lives of the Saints*. Thus, the *Navigatio* reads as a devotional text. The primary message of the *Navigatio* is that the Lord will provide for the faithful. Brendan, the abbot of the monks with which he travels, is their guide and their protector. There is little that he encounters of which he does not have foreknowledge, unlike the brethren (to whom the narrative refers as 'servants of Christ'), whom Brendan instructs as they progress. However, it should be noted that the *Navigatio*, which reads as an adventure story, has borrowed sources from an early *imram* genre, and the author is aware of the secular imagery that he is blending into his ecclesiastical material in order to Christianise it and make it acceptable for his intended audiences.⁶⁴ Ultimately, however, the spiritual quest that Brendan performs is an attempt to rise above human limitations and the message delivered by the narrative attempts to enhance the faith of those who hear it.

Three of the six existent manuscripts and fragments of the A.N. *Voyage* are entitled *Incipit vita Sancti Brendani*; in addition, two of these manuscripts end with the assertion *Explicit vita Sancti Brendani* and two others with the prayer 'Amen'. Despite the Christian maxims within the text, which suggest it is a didactic text, the genre of the narrative has moved further away from the hagiography of the *Navigatio* to a more secular narrative. It is not written in the prose of the *Navigatio* but in octosyllabic couplets suggesting a literary construction, rather than a legitimate account of a saint's deeds. The A.N. *Voyage* opens with a salutation praising the queen and omits details that would have been irrelevant to the Anglo-Norman audience, such as Brendan's genealogy and the topography of Ireland. For the most part, the A.N. *Voyage* follows the format laid down by the narrative of the *Navigatio*: most of the encounters are similar and the monks still celebrate the holy days at key places. However, the focus of the narrative is on the encounters, rather than on their religious nature. There are references to the monastic day, but these are not as prominent as in the *Navigatio*. Furthermore, the

⁶⁴ See my discussion on pp. 17–19.

A.N. *Voyage* is not hindered by lists of psalms or apparently irrelevant encounters that slow down the pace of the narrative, particularly where the author does not fully understand the Irish heritage of the material that he uses. Instead, the narrative of the A.N. *Voyage* is much more tense and exciting, occasionally revelling in violent and gory descriptions from which the *Navigatio* shies away. By the omission of certain details that appear in the *Navigatio*, the A.N. *Voyage* presents to its audience an unbroken stream of fantastic imagery for half of the narrative. It does not commonly employ the same Biblical imagery that the *Navigatio* uses to describe the features of the encounters: for example, the crystal pillar is described in terms of its riches, rather than the allusions to the temple in Ezekiel. However, the A.N. *Voyage* does present Paradise in relation to the descriptions of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation. In the A.N. *Voyage*, the principal message concerns trust in God, but also emphasises the hard work necessary to achieve knowledge. Brendan is the guide for the brethren; throughout much of the narrative he has omniscient knowledge, but eventually he too must learn along side the monks and can only achieve Paradise with the assistance of a mysterious procurator who assists them on their journey.

The author, dates, manuscripts and audience of the Anglo-Norman Voyage

Despite Jones's assertion of the 'precocity' of the A.N. *Voyage* as a romance, it was composed well before the recognised beginning of romance and could not, therefore, be considered to be a representative of the genre.⁶⁵ Although, containing many elements of a historical and legendary nature that are now recognisably a part of the romance genre, it is safer to suggest that the A.N. *Voyage* is a secular hagiography containing romance elements. Both Jones and Short and Merrilees argue that the A.N. *Voyage* stands apart from other contemporary works with which it has been compared and suggest that the narrative was commissioned for secular entertainment.⁶⁶ Legge observes that the earliest saints' legends were 'narratives written to be sung to the tune of the Latin hymn proper to the day and it is possible that the Brendan is

⁶⁵ Jones, 'Precocity,' p. 157.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 156–57; Short and Merrilees, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, pp. 18 and 22.

one of the last in that tradition. If the evidence of the *Reynart* is to be believed, that was a lay if nothing else, of St Brendan could be sung'.⁶⁷ However, despite its ecclesiastical origins and maxims, the A.N. *Voyage* only contains romance *elements*. It is a secular hagiography that is predominantly didactic and inspirational content, as well as entertaining material.

Little is known about the author of the A.N. *Voyage*, although he provides tantalising textual evidence in an eighteen-line dedication at the beginning of the poem, where he identifies himself as 'L'apostoiles danz Benedeiz': the term *danz* is derived from the Latin *dominus*.⁶⁸ This was a feudal title given to knights, prelates, the lesser nobility and Benedictine monks and does not occur anywhere else.⁶⁹ Short and Merrilees argue it is the title of a Benedictine monk, considering the content of the *Voyage*.⁷⁰ However, the title *apostole* causes some consternation. The Latin *apostolicus* refers to the Pope as successor of the apostle Peter to the Episcopal seat, but it is unlikely that it refers to any Pope or papal envoy.⁷¹ Waters concludes that the title meant 'belonging to a monastery', and suggests that 'until some better explanation is forthcoming, we may regard the author of the poem as an Anglo-Norman monk named *Benedeit*'.⁷² Conversely, despite corrupting the rhyme, Walberg inverts the order of the words to read the line '*dan Benedeit l'apostole*'. Thus, he interprets the name as a sobriquet connected to the monk on account of his profession within the monastery, in the same way that a family surname of dignitaries had been used without necessarily meaning the rank indicated. He concludes that, if *Benedeit* was a monk, he could have had the appellation 'l'apostole' before accepting ecclesiastical orders, but it was also possible that he inherited the name.⁷³ Whatever

⁶⁷ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 16; cf. pp. 135–39.

⁶⁸ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 8. This name is abbreviated to *Beneiz* to conform to the metre in MSS *B*, *C*, and *D*; cf. Waters, *Voyage*, p. 192.

⁶⁹ Legge observes this title does not refer to Cistercians, as Waters says (p. xxvi); see Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ Short and Merrilees, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, p. 5.

⁷¹ Pope Benoît X was deposed in 1059 and the next Pope of that name was elected in 1303. It was unlikely for this to have been an archaic sense of the Latin *apostolicus* or 'bishop'. There is no trace of any church dignitary bearing the name in 1121, indeed the name is uncommon in English records in this period; see Waters, *Voyage*, pp. xxvi–xxvii; E. Walberg, 'Sur le nom de l'auteur du *Voyage de saint Brendan*', *Studia Neophilologica* 12 (1939), 46–55, pp. 46 and 48.

⁷² Waters, *Voyage*, p. xxvii.

⁷³ Walberg, 'Le nom de l'auteur', p. 55. Jones observes that Brian Merrilees has suggested to him that 'apostole' means 'legate' in Jones, 'Precocity', p. 157, n. 3.

the case, there is no convincing connection of historical personages with the name of Benedeit to identify them as the author of the A.N. *Voyage*.⁷⁴ All we can glean about Benedeit is that he was certainly of Norman extraction, but had lived in England for some time.⁷⁵ Legge conjectures that he may have been a member of the royal foundations of Westminster or of Reading and that Adeliza—Henry I's second wife—took great interest in the latter.⁷⁶

From the textual evidence (discussed below) the Anglo-Norman *Voyage* of *St Brendan* dates from the first quarter of the twelfth century, although the earliest surviving manuscript fragment (fragment **F**) dates from the end of that century. However, other manuscript evidence shows that the legend of Brendan had been known in France from at least 1047, as Raoul Glaber (c. 985–c. 1047) gives an inaccurate summary of the *Navigatio* in one of his five books of histories at the abbey at Cluny.⁷⁷

The precise dating of the A.N. *Voyage* is the subject of much conjecture based on the details given in the dedication. The fifth line refers to 'Henri lu rei': Henry I of England (reigned from 1100–35). The first line refers to 'Donna Aaliz la reine', who was Adeliza of Louvain, Henry's second wife, and daughter of Duke Godfrey VII of Louvain.⁷⁸ Adeliza would have learned poetry in Afflighem near Alost, where the monastery had an extensive library and was 'a veritable center for verse chronicles and other texts'.⁷⁹ Holzknecht suggests that Adeliza probably invited troubadours to England and there was free communication between the two countries, as Norman French was the

⁷⁴ Waters identifies two possibilities, but only to dismiss them, Waters, *Voyage*, pp. xxviii–xxix.

⁷⁵ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 9; see also Ian Short, 'Tam Angli quam Franci: Self-definition in Anglo-Norman England,' *Anglo-Norman Studies* 18 (1995), 153–75, p. 155.

⁷⁶ M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1950), p. 47.

⁷⁷ John France, ed. and trans., *Rodulphi Glabri Historiarum libri quinque* (Rodulfus Glaber: *The Five Books of the Histories*) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 51–55; see also James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1966), p. 418. The details of Fragment *F* will be discussed in appendix one on p. 253.

⁷⁸ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xxiv. In the manuscripts, *A* has the name 'Aaliz'; *B* spells this name 'Aliz' and *D* 'aeliz'; the name is omitted in *E* and the folios of fragment *F* have not survived. Fragment *C* will be discussed on pp. 34 and 251.

⁷⁹ Urban T. Holmes, 'The Anglo-Norman Rhymed Chronicle,' *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Honor of Helmut A. Hatzfeld*, ed. Alessandro S. Crisafulli (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 231–36, p. 232.

literary language of England.⁸⁰ As the dedication of the poem suggests events in the future, it is possible that the poem dates from shortly after Adeliza's arrival in England and marriage to Henry in Windsor Castle on 29 January 1121.⁸¹ By all accounts she was beautiful.⁸² She was also a patron of literature, as the *Bestiaire* of Philippe de Thaun was also dedicated to her.⁸³ Adeliza's interest in mythical animals might well have been inspired by the menagerie which William of Malmesbury records that Henry kept at Woodstock.⁸⁴ Her royal patronage is more directed at compositions that contained romance elements: Gaimer in his *Estoire des Engleis* declares that the same 'raine de Luvain' commissioned a metrical life of her husband from David 'the Scot', bishop of Bangor.⁸⁵ As French was Adeliza's native tongue, it is plausible that she encouraged literature in the vernacular. Adeliza's patronage did not exceed the king's lifetime: he died in 1135 and she remarried in 1138 with William Albini (later Earl of Arundel). She died in 1151.

Although the three manuscripts naming Adeliza suggest that she was the patron of the A.N. *Voyage*, the dedication in ms C is to 'mahalt': presumably Matilda (or Maud), daughter of Malcolm III, King of Scots

⁸⁰ Karl Julius Holzknecht, *Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 48.

⁸¹ 'Rex Anglorum H., legalis coniugii olim nexus solutus, ne quid ulterius in honestum committeret, consilio Radulfi Cantuarijorum pontificis et principum regni, quos omnes in Epiphania Domini sub uno Lundonie congregavit, decrevit sibi in uxorem Adhelizam, filiam Godefridi ducis Lotharingiae, puellam virginem decore modesti vultus decenter insignitam... Puella predicta, in regni dominam electa iii^o. kal. Feb., Sabbato, regi despousatur a Willmo Wintoniensi episcopo, iubente Rawlfo Cantuarijace arciepiscopo, et crastion die, iii^o. kal. Feb., ab eodem arcipresule regina consecratur et coronatur'; J.R.H. Weaver, ed., *The Chronicle of John of Worcester 1118–1140* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), pp. 15–16. See also Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965), p. 243. Also Edward J. Kealey, *Roger of Salisbury: Viceroy of England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), p. 131; William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, ed. William Stubbs, vol. 90, part 2 (London: H.M.S.O. (Eyre and Spottiswoode), 1889), p. 528. For further details see Agnes Strickland, *The Lives of the Queens of England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1840), vol. 1, pp. 212–56.

⁸² 'Quid diadema tibi pulcherrima? Quid tibi gemmae?' Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 243.

⁸³ 'Pour l'onur d'une gemme, ki mult est bece fremme/Aliz est numée, reine rest coronnée/Reine est de Engleterre, sa ame n'ait jà guere!/En ebrew en vérité est Aliz laus de Dé,/Un livere voil traiter, Des sait al Cumercer,' cited in Holzknecht, *Literary Patronage*, p. 85.

⁸⁴ Judith A. Green, *The Government of England under Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 12, 158.

⁸⁵ Jessie Crosland, *Medieval French Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), p. 196. William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, pp. 498 and 502.

and St Margaret.⁸⁶ She married Henry I in 1100 and died in 1118.⁸⁷ Their son, William, died on 25 November 1120 in the disaster of *La Blanche Nef*, leaving Henry without a male heir.⁸⁸

The choice between the two queens is difficult, especially as they both spoke French and were patrons of the arts. Walberg believes it is a simple error of the copyist: the scribe probably knew Mahalt better as a name of a queen of England, but Adeliza was the intended dedicatee.⁸⁹ Ritchie challenges the dedication to Adeliza on the basis of the historical details; he observes that the Prologue implies that great things are expected from the queen and that the phrase 'lei de terre' (l. 3) refers to the Charter of Liberties. Henry issued the charter after taking the crown in 1100, as his queen was hailed to bring conciliation between Normans and English, especially when she acted as intermediary between Henry and his brother, Duke Robert, in 1103.⁹⁰ According to Ritchie, the 'marriage led to no such political developments as those which are forecast in the Prologue and which followed his marriage to Maud'.⁹¹ Nevertheless, if the poem had been dedicated to Adeliza, the author of the Prologue might also anticipate that great events would develop from her marriage to Henry, even though they did not occur. He concludes that 'Brendan was the most picturesque of the Irish saints who evangelised Maud's native land... The *Navigatio* must have had more appeal for the Scottish Maud than for the Flemish Adela'.⁹² However, Jones argues that as Maud was a Scot, the more usual idiom was unlikely to have been French, even though she spoke the language.⁹³

Conversely, Legge suggests that, having given birth to three children, Matilda stayed in Windsor patronising poets and musicians, especially

⁸⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawl. D 913; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 9.

⁸⁷ William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, p. 493; cf. C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 126.

⁸⁸ William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, pp. 496–97; cf. Hollister, *Henry I*, pp. 276–80.

⁸⁹ Walberg, 'Le nom de l'auteur,' p. 46.

⁹⁰ Ian Short observes that Walter Map singled out Henry for having succeeded in 'joining both peoples in firm amity by arranging marriages between them and by every other means he could' suggesting there was a tradition in acknowledging particular accomplishments by the monarchy, Short, 'Tam Angli quam Franci,' p. 169.

⁹¹ R.L.G. Ritchie, 'The Date of the *Voyage of St Brendan*', *Medium Aevum* 19 (1950), 64–66, p. 64.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 65–66.

⁹³ Jones, 'Precocity,' p. 149.

foreigners, to the great disgust of native writers, and that Matilda commissioned Benedeit to write a copy of the *Voyage* in Latin.⁹⁴ Legge further speculates that Benedeit translated it at the queen's request for the benefit of those courtiers who did not understand Latin, maintaining that 'romances and other works in octosyllabic couplets belonged in the chamber. Many of the earliest Anglo-Norman texts were written for ladies in this form'.⁹⁵ She observes that 'women led a more sedentary life and had more time for literature. It is therefore not surprising to find that great ladies were the chief patrons of the early Anglo-Norman writers'.⁹⁶ However, concerning the dedication in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*, she concludes that the poem was rededicated to Adeliza when she married Henry.⁹⁷ The Latin Prose translation of the A.N. *Voyage*, ms *L* in Waters' *stemma codicum*, (ms 3496 in the Bodleian Library) was copied around 1200 and originally came from the monastery at Valle Crucis in Denbighshire, North East Wales.⁹⁸ The Latin Prose translation is contemporary with the oldest surviving manuscript of the A.N. *Voyage*, which raises the question as to whether this could be the version that Benedeit describes as being 'en lettre'.⁹⁹ As with the A.N. *Voyage*, the Latin Prose translation omits details that are included in the *Navigatio*, including the Island of the Three Choirs and the Island of Grapes. There are also similarities in alterations of details found in both ms *L* and the A.N. *Voyage*, for example a golden goblet instead of a silver bridle stolen from the abandoned citadel. It is for this reason that Plummer and Legge argue that the Latin Prose translation is the source for the A.N. *Voyage*.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ 'En lettre,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 10,11. William of Malmesbury complains that her patronage was directed to foreigners who might make her famous and that she oppressed her tenants to procure more revenue; see William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, p. 494; Holzknecht, *Literary Patronage*, pp. 32 and 219.

⁹⁵ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁷ M. Dominica Legge, 'Anglo-Norman Hagiography and the Romances,' *Medievalia et Humanistica* 6 (1975), 41–49, p. 41.

⁹⁸ This should not be confused with ms *L* discussed by Selmer in appendix one on p. 248.

⁹⁹ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Plummer, 'Some New Light on the Brendan Legend,' *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 5 (1905), 124–41, pp. 139–41; Legge, 'Anglo-Norman Hagiography and the Romances,' p. 41. There is, in addition, a Latin metrical version of the A.N. *Voyage* in the British Library (ms **Cotton Vespasian D IX**, fols. 2–10b), which is ms *R* in Waters' *stemma codicum*. Although the manuscript was copied at the beginning of the fourteenth century, once again it is a copy of an earlier manuscript. Legge argues that it is 'plainly later by a substantial interval' (Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 13). The

Benedeit's skill as a translator is beyond question: in the A.N. *Voyage* he excises material that would have interested only the clergy, which includes the lists of psalms on the Island of Ailbe. Furthermore, descriptions that would appeal to the laity are made more vivid, for example the punishment of Judas Iscariot, the Deserted City and Paradise.¹⁰¹ Benedeit also adds proverbs that highlight the moral within each of the encounters and divides the poem into three distinct sections, each containing a recurring motif, such as the departure of one of the supernumeraries.¹⁰² However, given that the story of Brendan's voyages already existed in Latin, it would have been unlikely that a second Latin text would have been commissioned. Instead it would have been appropriate to compose one in the vernacular, which would have appealed to a wider audience. Waters argues that the Latin Prose version is a translation based on the A.N. *Voyage*, and not vice versa, suggesting that the

closeness of the French and Latin versions awakens suspicion. It is no easy matter for a writer of verse...to follow a prose model word for word...whereas the opposite is relatively simple....The claim of L [the Latin prose version] to priority can only be defended if we assume that there are many *lacunae* in the Latin text, and of this there is no evidence.¹⁰³

Waters concludes that to dedicate the poem to Matilda in 1100 and to rededicate it to Adeliza in 1121 is 'highly improbable' and that the first nineteen years of Henry's reign could hardly refer to the peace referred to in line 4.¹⁰⁴ He concludes that 'the scribe of C, or a predecessor, has substituted *Mahalt* for *Aaliz* owing to some misreading or historical error'.¹⁰⁵ A misreading is certainly possible. After all, Adeliza's stepdaughter, the mother of Henry II, was also called Matilda.¹⁰⁶

Latin metrical version declares that it has drawn on both a Latin and romance source, presumably the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*: 'Hec romanus preterit, inserit latinus'. It includes, for example, the section of the Island of the Three Choirs.

¹⁰¹ Waters observes that the writer of the *Navigatio* 'foolishly exhausted his ideas on this subject at the very beginning of his work. The description...is therefore brief, hackneyed and uninteresting.' Waters, *Voyage*, pp. xvii–xviii; see my discussion on pp. 228–31.

¹⁰² Cf. Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*'.

¹⁰³ Waters, *Voyage*, pp. cvi–cvii.

¹⁰⁴ 'E remandrat tante guerre,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xxv. He observes that John of Hexham made a similar error in 1180 referring to the Empress Matilda as 'Aaliz', *idem*, n. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Although this Matilda was married to Emperor Henry V, he was already dead when Matilda assumed the throne, so she cannot be considered as the patron of the

Whether the poem was dedicated to Matilda or Adeliza, from the mere fact that a dedication is included, we can date of poem to within fifteen years: *c.* 1106 or *c.* 1121.

It is difficult to speculate over the precise nature of the audience of the A.N. *Voyage*, although we can generalise on the basis of a number of elements within the text that it was predominantly aimed at an aristocratic English court. Firstly, although the text is written in Anglo-Norman, it has been composed for English speakers. Short observes that English terms used in the A.N. *Voyage*, such as *raps* (ropes, l. 461), *haspes* (l. 688) and *baz/bat* (boat, ll. 602, 890) ‘must have been quite meaningless to any continental audience, Norman or otherwise; they make sense only if they are seen as belonging to a language common... to both author and listener’.¹⁰⁷ The audience suggested by Short would have been courtly and secular, rather than ecclesiastical: although the theme of the A.N. *Voyage* is the story of a Christian saint, Benedeit has excised many of the long-winded liturgical lists that slow the pace of the narrative and which would have appealed only to an ecclesiastical audience.¹⁰⁸ Conversely, the descriptions of riches and abundance would have been more appropriate to the aristocracy. There is a piece of textual evidence: Benedeit refers to a rock that ‘li vilain’ (peasants) call Brendan’s leap.¹⁰⁹ The fact that Benedeit points out that it is the peasants who refer to this rock suggests that he is not addressing them himself.

Although in general Anglo-Norman literature in the first third of the twelfth century was ‘educational rather than imaginative’, this is not strictly true in the case of the A.N. *Voyage*.¹¹⁰ Although the *Navi-*

Anglo-Norman *Voyage*. It is tempting to think that a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (**Codex lat. 15076**) was once in the possession of Adeliza, although I suspect that the name that appears on the first folio that reads like ‘Aliz’ may have been added by a later hand (ms *K*, discussed in appendix one on p. 248).

¹⁰⁷ Short, ‘*Tam Angli quam Franci*’, p. 155. See also Mildred K. Pope, ‘Variant Readings to Three Anglo-Norman Poems,’ *Studies in French Language, Literature and History Presented to R.L. Graeme Ritchie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p. 173. These line references refer to Waters’ edition.

¹⁰⁸ These passages in the *Navigatio* (composed for spiritual edification) have the same purpose as reciting a rosary, but would be of little interest to a secular audience; see below, p. 172.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Roceit que li vilain/Or apelent le Salt Brandan,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 163–64.

¹¹⁰ Holmes, ‘Anglo-Norman Rhymed Chronicle,’ p. 236. The author of the A.N. *Voyage* was as interested in generating fantastic imagery as he was in conveying a plausible narrative, to the point that the fantastic and the plausible are finely balanced; see below, p. 170.

gatio was almost certainly composed for a monastic audience and the wider *civitates*, Jones observes that because Benedeit wrote for a court audience ‘he would not have felt the constraint of the requirements and familiar code of public worship in Church’.¹¹¹ Jones suggests that the A.N. *Voyage* contrasts with the early hagiographic texts to be read in church on Brendan’s feast day, suggesting that Benedeit ‘wrote his poem to entertain a queen of England and...to amuse polite society’.¹¹² Conversely, the *Navigatio* focuses on liturgical structure.¹¹³ It is possible that the legend of Brendan was originally an extended sermon, although both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* deviate from hagiographic conventions, such as the performance of miracles that one sees in the *Vita Brendani*, for example. Both versions describe Brendan as a Christian saint, chosen by God to learn the marvels of the ocean. When considering other popular genres of the time Sneddon observes that ‘the two classic genres of the period before 1100 are the *chanson de geste*—compositions such as the *Chanson de Roland*—and the saint’s life, which were ‘lyric rather than narrative forms with their use of stanza or laisse as their base unit’.¹¹⁴ The A.N. *Voyage* discusses the life of a saint, although it contains elements of a *chanson de geste*. Conversely, some of the manuscripts (mss *A*, *B*, *D* and *E*) contain some tantalising clues concerning their composition. Two of these manuscripts, mss *B* and *D* (both dating from the first half of the thirteenth century) claim that they are telling a hagiographic tale with their headings *Vita Sancti Brendani*. ms *A* (dating from the middle or second half of the thirteenth century) has *Vita Sci Brendani Gallice* on the flyleaf in sixteenth-century writing; conversely, ms *E* (dating from around 1267) refers to the *Voyage de St Brendan*.

The only manuscript of the A.N. *Voyage* uniquely bound with hagiographic and religious writings, ms *B*, has the Brendan narrative in the company of the Lives of St Alexis and St Catherine, as well as a poem

¹¹¹ Jones, ‘Precocity,’ p. 151.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 146; see also Ruth J. Dean, ‘What is Anglo-Norman?’ *Annale Mediaeval* 6 (1965), p. 41.

¹¹³ Bourgeault, ‘The Monastic Archetype,’ p. 111; cf. Jonathan M. Wooding ‘Fasting, Flesh and the Body in the St Brendan Dossier,’ in J. Cartwright (ed.), *Celtic Hagiography and Saints’ Cults* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 161–76; and Rumsey, *Sacred Time*.

¹¹⁴ C.R. Sneddon, ‘Brendan the Navigator: A Twelfth-Century View,’ *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages*, eds Thomas R. Liszka and Lorna E.M. Walker (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 211–29, p. 214.

by Herman de Valenciennes about the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; there is also a French translation of a bull of Alexander III concerning the Templars. Nevertheless, the fact that the *Vie de St Alexis* has been harmfully corrected and that 169 lines of the A.N. *Voyage* have been omitted by negligent scribes, implies either that the scribes were copying from imperfect *exempla*, or that the manuscript was rushed, rather than that the scribes were concerned with providing the best manuscript for the service of God. Similarly, the scribe of ms *D* has also been careless in his copying. However, although ms *D* asserts that it contains a *Vita Sancti Brendani*, it is collated with fables by Marie de France and was most likely commissioned for a secular audience.

The clearest example of the A.N. *Voyage* being in a manuscript for a lay audience is ms *E*. It contains hagiographic and religious writings, but bound with it are secular writings such as the Bestiary of Pierre de Beauvais, a calendar, advice on health, and an almanac of the century. The narrative of the A.N. *Voyage* has been modernised so that it ‘differs quite considerably’ from other manuscripts.¹¹⁵ The miniatures that remain in the manuscript are of good quality, which suggests that those that were removed would have been of equal or better quality, or perhaps of a more interesting subject matter. Clearly, then, a wealthy aristocratic family commissioned the manuscript as a collection of religious and secular writings, modernising the language of the A.N. *Voyage* into thirteenth-century Picard French, so that it loses its original Anglo-Norman form, but is more accessible to its new audience.

A second argument that the A.N. *Voyage* was composed for a lay rather than a monastic audience is its definite literary form. Waters observes that, with the exception of the tenth-century *Passion* and *Life of St Leger*, the A.N. *Voyage* is probably the earliest existent poem written in octosyllabic couplets. In fact, Legge argues that these earlier examples are assonance and not rhyme and were therefore to be sung to a tune written for a liturgical hymn.¹¹⁶ The use of octosyllabic couplets was a literary convention that was developing at the start of the twelfth century.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Legge speculates that the narrative was composed to be sung. In the *Roman de Renart*, composed at the end of the twelfth

¹¹⁵ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xix.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. xxix; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 14.

¹¹⁷ Holmes goes so far as to suggest that Adeliza ‘launched the genre’ of rhymed chronicles in the vernacular, Holmes, ‘Anglo-Norman Rhymed Chronicle,’ p. 234.

century, Renart, pretending to be a minstrel, mentions Brendan.¹¹⁸ If the A.N. *Voyage* was indeed composed to be sung, it would further suggest that the purpose of the tale was that of lay entertainment. Jones goes further and observes: 'Hagiographic romance is a curious combination, but the *Brendan* [the A.N. *Voyage*] attests to its existence'.¹¹⁹

There are, however, other literary conventions in the A.N. *Voyage*. The fact that Benedeit excised scenes that would not have been of interest to a lay audience has been discussed above. Furthermore, as Illingworth points out, Benedeit divided the narrative into three sections of similar lengths.¹²⁰ The tripartite structure and the recurrent themes lead Illingworth to see the structure of the A.N. *Voyage* as a ninefold Cruciform pattern:¹²¹

1. Brendan's Desire (Barintus) ll. 1–202	4. The Isle of Ailbe (The Abbot) ll. 597–786	7. Torments of the Damned (Judas) ll. 1215–1510
2. Voyage to the Unknown ll. 203–480	5. Conflicts of Monsters ll. 787–1106	8. The Last Voyage (Paul the Hermit) ll. 1511–1640
3. The Paradise of Birds (The Host) ll. 481–596	6. The Vision of Hell (The Demon) ll. 1107–1214	9. The Vision of Paradise (The Youth) ll. 1641–1840

Illingworth's Ninefold Cruciform Pattern of the A.N. *Voyage*.

Illingworth argues that group of three sections contains recurring motifs, for example the departure of one of the supernumeraries. Imagery is also repeated, such as the encounters with Jasconius and the fact that neither the enormous sheep, the monks in the community of Ailbe, nor the inhabitants of Paradise suffer any illness.¹²² He concludes that the structure is not an example of 'oral mnemonic poetry' but is instead a 'self-conscious work of Romanesque imagination and craftsmanship'.¹²³

¹¹⁸ 'Je fout savoir bon lai Breton... De Charpel et de saint Brandan,' Mario Roques, ed., *Roman de Renart, première branche: Jugement de Renart, Siège de Maupertuis, Renart teinturier*, Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 78 (Paris: Champion, 1948), ll. 2435 and 2438. See also Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 262.

¹¹⁹ Jones, 'Precocity,' p. 157. See my discussion on pp. 22–25.

¹²⁰ Illingworth observes that these lengths are 596, 618 and 624 lines respectively; see Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*,' pp. 217–18.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 218.

¹²² Ibid., p. 223.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 227.

From the tripartite structure and the use of the octosyllabic rhyming couplet form, in addition to the lack of focus on the religious message, the A.N. *Voyage* was unlikely to have been used for anything other than secular audiences.

In view of the evidence presented above and considering the royal dedication at the beginning of most of the manuscripts, I suggest that the A.N. *Voyage* was originally composed for (or at the behest of) Adeliza, probably for the interest of her non-Latin court, when she was apart from Henry, for she ‘played a much less active role in government’ than Matilda.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the manuscript evidence suggests that the audiences, for which the manuscripts of the A.N. *Voyage* were commissioned, were secular and often aristocratic rather than ecclesiastical. Thus the emphasis of the narrative was primarily on exciting each audience with vivid imagery, though the narrative contains didactic maxims and is often referred to as a *Vita* of Brendan.

I have described above what I consider to have been the different milieux in which these two versions of the Brendan narrative were composed. Although the *Navigatio* does not contain traditional hagiographic elements, it is presented as a *Vita* and contains elements that one would expect to find in a devotional narrative. Conversely, the A.N. *Voyage* has evolved further away from the ecclesiastical elements of the *Navigatio* and is instead a secular hagiography containing romance elements. Undoubtedly, Benedeit used the *Navigatio* as his source, although, as will be demonstrated later, he was not always familiar or comfortable with the material from which he was drawing, leading him to alter or excise certain scenes. I now turn to the historical and literary foundation that would have been the basis of the Brendan legend and the source of the information used by the author of the *Navigatio*.

¹²⁴ Hollister, *Henry I*, p. 130.

Part Two

Historical and Literary Sources

Before the voyage

St Brendan was the abbot of Clonfert.¹²⁵ He is the Irish patron saint of boatmen, mariners, travellers, elderly adventurers and whales. He is called ‘the navigator’ because of his voyages. According to the annals, he was born in the last quarter of the fifth century in the sept of Altraige, near Tralee in County Kerry,¹²⁶ and he founded the church at Clonfert in 558.¹²⁷ He died on 16 May 575, in his ninety-fourth year.¹²⁸

The earliest surviving manuscript evidence of the saint is the *Vita Columbae* by Adomnán (679–704) which mentions a visitor to the monastery who attended ‘Brendan moccu Altæ’ for twelve years.¹²⁹ Later, when Brendan himself visits Columba with three other saints, he sees

¹²⁵ The *Book of Leinster* records that seventeen saints bear the name of Brendan; see Robert Atkinson, ed., *The Book of Leinster* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1880). See also Charles Plummer, ed., *Vitæ sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), vol. 1, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii, n. 5.

¹²⁶ Liam de Paor, ed., *Saint Patrick’s World* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), p. 124. The annals disagree upon the date of Brendan’s birth. The *Annals of Inisfallen* describe that he was born in 486, while the *Annals of the Four Masters* gives an approximate year of birth of 483. However, the author of the *Navigatio* would not have used the *Annals of the Four Masters*: although they are a compilation of earlier annals, they themselves were compiled between 1632–1636. Jonathan Wooding states that the record of ‘the birth of the saint and the foundation of a house which he makes famous are...self-evidently events of retrospective interest, see Jonathan M. Wooding, ‘St Brendan, Clonfert and the Ocean: Charting the Voyages of a Cult’, in *Navigatio: a Voyage of Research in Search of Clonfert*, eds. J. Higgins and C. Cuniffe (forthcoming, 2008). Elva Johnston observes that the *Annals of Ulster* should always be given priority when dating early Irish events as they provide the ‘only continuous and contemporary record’. They are thought to date from at least the second half of the sixth century, if not earlier, suggesting that references in connection with Brendan are historically accurate [pers. comm.].

¹²⁷ de Paor, *Saint Patrick’s World*, p. 122.

¹²⁸ Plummer, *LSH*, vol. 1, p. xxxvi, n. 5. Jonathan Wooding argues that Brendan died in 575 basing his evidence on the *Annals of Tigernach* and the *Chronicum Scottorum*, observing that the date ‘is within the period of contemporary recording’ for the chronicles. ‘St Brendan, Clonfert and the Ocean’. He further argues that the year 583 cited in the *Annals of Ulster* as the death of Brendan is an interpolation; see Jonathan M. Wooding, ‘Monastic Voyaging and the *Nauigatio*’, *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 226–45, p. 229. n. 15; see also pp. 64–65 below.

¹²⁹ Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 131. Adomnán wrote the *Vita Columbae* around a century after Columba’s

a radiant ball of fire shining like a column from Columba's head for the duration of the Eucharist.¹³⁰ The second earliest surviving textual reference that mentions Brendan, the *Vita Machutis* (Life of St Malo) by Bili, can be dated to between c.865 and 872 by virtue of the dedication to Bishop Ratwili in the text.¹³¹ Malo is Brendan's disciple in the *Vita Machutis*, which includes two motifs that are also seen in the *Vita Brendani*: the heathen giant being brought back to life and the celebration of Easter on the back of a whale.¹³² So, as Kenney observes, if these scenes are not interpolations, 'they constitute the earliest documentary records of the legend that can be approximately dated'.¹³³ Even so, Bili was not the first to have written on the Life of Malo: he speaks of 'alius sapiens' who had written the *Vita* before he, Bili, was born.¹³⁴

Although the legends contained in the *Vita Brendani* and the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* were circulated some two centuries after Brendan's death, the *Vita Columbae* and the *Vita Machutis* attest that there were narratives about Brendan already in circulation that cannot have been influenced by the *Vita Brendani* or the *Navigatio*, at least, not as they survive to the present day.¹³⁵ However, as the *Martyrology of Óengus* (dated c.800) has no allusion to Brendan's journey, the story of his journey did not develop at least until the beginning of the ninth century.¹³⁶

death and was 'primarily a hagiographer rather than a biographer or a historian', see Rumsey, *Sacred Time*, p. 152.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹³¹ 'Domino sancto et venerabili totoque pectoris sinu amplectendo ac meo magistro gregorio in sancta Trinitate Ratuilio episcopo mihi amantissimo, Bili, levita humilis, perpetuam salutem,' Léopold Duchesne, 'La Vie de St Malo. Étude critique,' *Revue celtique* 11 (1890), 1–22, p. 7. See also Séamus Mac Mathúna, 'Contributions to a Study of the Voyages of St Brendan and St Malo,' *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 157–74, p. 161.

¹³² In this version, Brendan is Abbot of Llancarvan, (now in the Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales). Later manuscripts of the *Navigatio* (for example Paris B. N. Lat. 2333A and 5348) include the detail that Machutis was one of the fourteen companions who travelled with Brendan to Paradise, but, as O'Donoghue observes, this is clearly an interpolation; see Denis O'Donoghue, *Lives and Legends of Saint Brendan the Voyager* (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1994), p. 117. See also Clara Strijbosch, 'The Heathen Giant in the *Voyage of Saint Brendan*,' *Celtica* 23 (1999), 369–89.

¹³³ Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 417–18.

¹³⁴ Duchesne, 'St Malo,' p. 2. The earliest manuscripts of the *Vita Machutis* date from the ninth century; see Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 417–18.

¹³⁵ Wooding, 'Introduction to the Latin Version,' p. 15. Cf. Whitley Stokes, *On the Calendar of Oengus*, Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Irish ms series, 1, pt 1 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1880), p. lxxx.

¹³⁶ Kenney, *Sources*, p. 410. Orlandi agrees that the *Vita Brendani* could have been composed in the second quarter of the ninth century; Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, p. 73. Dumville suggests that the *Navigatio* 'is most credibly dated before 786', based

There are five surviving versions of the Latin *Vita Brendani*: these are known as the *Vita Salmanticensis* (Sharpe gives the *Vita prior* the siglum S1 and the *Vita altera* siglum S2),¹³⁷ the *Vita Oxoniensis* (siglum O),¹³⁸ the *Vita Dubliniensis* (siglum D),¹³⁹ and the *Vita Anglie* (no siglum).¹⁴⁰ Of these five versions, four are conflated with the *Navigatio*. Plummer describes the fifth, the *Vita altera* in the *Codex Salmanticensis*, as ‘absolutely pure’, but also ‘ruthlessly abbreviated’ for the purposes of reading in Church.¹⁴¹

In addition to the Latin *Vita Brendani*, there are two Irish versions of the Life of Brendan called the *Betha Brénnain*; the first Irish Life is also known as the Lismore Life.¹⁴² The first part of the Lismore Life is dedicated to Brendan. However, through the loss of some of the leaves

the data provided by regional information and family names in the opening sentence; Dumville, ‘Two Approaches,’ pp. 95–96. Edel observes that Dumville’s arguments could equally show that the *Navigatio* was composed before 851; see Doris Edel, ‘De Ierse achtergronden van de Reis van Sint Brandaan,’ *Nederlandse Letterkunde* 2 (1997), 365–73, p. 369. Wooding argues for a re-dating of the *Navigatio* to a *terminus post quem* given by Dicuil’s account of the desertion of the Faeroes, therefore later than 795 [pers. comm.]; this is also discussed in Jonathan M. Wooding, ‘The Date of the *Navigatio S. Brendani abbatis*,’ *Journal of Celtic Studies* (forthcoming). Certainly, the legend of Brendan could have been composed c.786, but perhaps had not received widespread popularity by the time of the writing of the Martyrology of Óengus.

¹³⁷ Published by Heist, *V.S.H.*, pp. 56–78 (S1) and pp. 324–31 (S2). These are discussed in Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 304–5, called *VB4* and *VB1*. See also Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*, pp. 231–36.

¹³⁸ Published by Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, pp. 98–151. This is discussed in Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 306–7 and referred to as *VB2*. See also Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*, pp. 249–52.

¹³⁹ Published by Patrick F. Moran, ed., *Acti Sancti Brendani: Original Latin Documents connected with the Life of Saint Brendan, Patron of Kerry and Clonfert* (Dublin: Kelly, 1872), pp. 1–26 and O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, pp. 182–269. This is discussed in Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 305–6 and referred to as *VB3*. See also Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*, pp. 95–96 and 106–11.

¹⁴⁰ Carl Horstmann, *Nova legenda Anglie: As collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave and others, and printed, with new lives, by Wynkyn de Worde, A.D. mdxvi*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), vol. 1, pp. 136–53. The *Vita Anglie* is discussed in Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 306–7 and referred to as *VB5*. See also Mac Mathúna, ‘Structure and Transmission,’ p. 321.

¹⁴¹ Charles Plummer, *Lives of Irish Saints*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), vol. 1, p. xviii; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*, p. 368.

¹⁴² Published as the ‘Life of Brennain son of Finnlug’ in Whitley Stokes, ed., *The Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890; facsimile repr. Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1995) and published without the Voyage in O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, pp. 4–31. See also Stokes’s commentary in Whitley Stokes, ‘Notes on the Life of St Brendan,’ *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 8 (October 1871–February 1872), 17–25, 79–86, 178–190 and 193–208. This is discussed by Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 308–9, 413–14 and referred to as *VB6*. See also Mac Mathúna, ‘Structure and Transmission,’ pp. 321–22 and Séamus Mac Mathúna, ‘The Irish Life of Saint Brendan: Textual History, Structure and Date,’ *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

in a manuscript that is now lost itself, the conclusion of the Life of Brendan includes the beginning of a separate text, the *Fis Adamnáin*. The loss of these folios led later scribes, who were copying automatically and failed to notice the missing section, to marry the two parts together.¹⁴³ The second Irish life combines elements from the *Book of Lismore*, the *Navigatio*, and the heritage of the Latin *Vita Salmanticensis (prior)*.¹⁴⁴

The *Vita Brendani* and *Betha Brénnain* conform more to a hagiographic genre than the *Navigatio* or its vernacular adaptations. The Irish *Book of Lismore*, for example, opens with a pedigree of Brendan's character of fourteen names, including Biblical figures and saintly theologians. Brendan is therefore described in relation to the virtues of a distinguished list that ends with Noah, who, like Brendan, is associated with a journey by boat, so that the opening reads like the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, in the *Book of Lismore*, Brendan's birth and baptism parallel the description of the birth of Jesus in Matthew's gospel, through the prophecies of greatness, the arrival of important visitors after the birth (one bearing gifts) and the baptism ceremony, where John the Baptist declares himself the servant of the baptised. Of the Irish saints, Brendan appears as the only one with Christ-like attributes.¹⁴⁶

Most sources that mention Brendan's genealogy agree that Brendan is the son of Finnlug.¹⁴⁷ From these details, an audience well-versed in Irish mythology would ascertain that Brendan's lineage might well have derived from the line of Lug, the Gaelic sun-god.¹⁴⁸ Despite this pagan

¹⁴³ Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. xix; O'Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, p. 108. The *Fis Adamnáin* is published by Boswell in *An Irish Precursor of Dante*.

¹⁴⁴ Published in Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 44–95. This is discussed in Kenney, *Sources*, p. 414, and referred to as *VB7*. Mac Mathúna, 'Structure and Transmission,' pp. 323–24 designates this as *VB8*, as he also includes the text of the 'Twelve Apostles of Ireland' because it links the traditions of the *Vita* and the *Navigatio*.

¹⁴⁵ Stokes, *Book of Lismore*, p. 247; cf. *Matthew* 1:1–17.

¹⁴⁶ There are, however, miracles surrounding the birth of other saints: for example, Máedóc has a divine light shining over his birthplace: 'Et uxor similiter eodem tempore vidit lunam splendentem in os suum intrare,' Heist, *V.S.H.*, p. 234.

¹⁴⁷ The genealogy, according to O'Clery, is as follows: Brendan, son of Fionnlug, son of Olcon, son of Alta, son of Fogomain, son of Fithcuire, son of Delmna, son of Enna, son of Usralaig, son of Astamain, son of Ciar, son of Fergus, son of Rosa, son of Rudraighe. See Michael O'Clery, *The Martyrology of Donegal: A Calendar of the Saints of Ireland*, trans. John O'Donovan (Dublin: Printed for the Irish Archaeological Society by A. Thom, 1864), p. 113.

¹⁴⁸ Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland: The Monuments and the People* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1991), p. 74. Lug's lineage included Ciar, son of Fergus, and his pedigree included Ir and Míl, the fathers of the Milesian Race; see Stokes, 'Notes,' p. 18. Craig

heritage, Brendan is a Christian saint. His name derives from the white mist (*broen finn*) that rose when he was born.¹⁴⁹ Brendan also attains his spiritual authority from a prophecy of St Patrick, who predicts Brendan would be a great patriarch.¹⁵⁰

Early versions of the *Vita Brendani* and the *Betha Brénnain* show Brendan performing ‘minor’ miracles that are more suited to the apocryphal infancy gospels (writings detailing the childhood of Jesus).¹⁵¹ For example, under the tutelage of Bishop Erc, Brendan sees angels ministering to his sister.¹⁵² The *Betha Brénnain* also incorporates local legends, for example where Brendan commands a man fearing for his life to crouch by a rock and prays for the rock to assume the man’s form. The man’s enemies strike off the ‘head’, after which Brendan reveals that all they carry is a lump of stone: the enemies repent and follow Erc’s rule.¹⁵³

Brendan’s piety is also shown through his righteous anger: when travelling with Erc, the young Brendan is distracted from prayer by a pretty girl who tried to play with him. Afterwards, Brendan explains that he had beaten her because he wished to be free from distraction in order to read the scriptures. The young girl had caused him to react with righteous anger, so he accepts his penance. Yet, because Brendan is without sin, angels minister to him and his face assumes the brilliant

Buchanan (MPhil, of the Research Institute of Irish & Scottish Studies, University of Aberdeen) observes that a majority of Irish heroes are descended from Eremon, the first king of the Milesians; this lineage does not tie Brendan so closely to the high kings and removes him from political influence [pers. comm.].

¹⁴⁹ ‘Broen-finn’ became his name ‘because he was white in body and soul’, see Stokes, *Book of Lismore*, p. 248; O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, p. 11. Broen Finn is a Christian etymologisation of the name rather than the actual meaning of the name itself.

¹⁵⁰ Stokes, ‘Notes,’ p. 20; St Patrick also prophesied (amongst others) the birth of St Berach, Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁵¹ M.R. James, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924).

¹⁵² Stokes, *Book of Lismore*, p. 249; O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, p. 13. *The Martyrology of Donegal* observes that there are four bishops of this name; however, O’Donoghue refers to St Erc of Slane (d. 512 according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*) as the tutor of Brendan; see O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, pp. 36–40. Brendan’s relationship with Erc may well be a historical fact.

¹⁵³ Stokes, *Book of Lismore*, pp. 250–51; O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, p. 17. The *Book of Lismore* describes that the ‘stone remains in the same place’. O’Donoghue argues that this is in the townland of Lerrig, where it had stood for centuries, and that it requires little imagination to believe the stone to have been the trunk of a man, O’Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, p. 64. The use of illusion to confuse the enemy is another common motif in Irish hagiography, seen in, amongst others, the lives of Aed and Máedóc; see Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, p. 42; vol. 2, p. 160.

countenance of the divine so that few people can look at him.¹⁵⁴ The little girl in this violent episode has been interpreted as a temptress, or even a succubus—a female demon—that might entice Brendan away from his holy office with sexual intercourse.¹⁵⁵ One can draw a parallel with St Kevin whose temptress drowned when he threw her off a cliff into Glendalough.¹⁵⁶ However, it also parallels the righteous anger Jesus displayed when ejecting the traders from the temple.¹⁵⁷

Away from Erc, Brendan is recognised for his pious acts: he converts a great warrior, raises a dead man to life and encounters an angel who commands him to write an ecclesiastical rule. Thus, as he matures, the miracles he performs are in keeping with those performed by Christ in the gospels.¹⁵⁸ Erc would have probably ordained Brendan into the priesthood around the year 501, as the canons of the early Church prescribe that ordination takes place after the candidates reach their thirtieth year.¹⁵⁹ After Brendan's ordination, most versions of the *Vita Brendani* and one of the *Betha Brénnain* become influenced by the tales of Brendan's marvellous journey to the Promised Land of the Saints. In three versions of the Latin and Irish Lives, Brendan first discusses his journey with Barrindus, just as he does in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*.¹⁶⁰ In other versions of the Latin Lives that are conflated with the *Navigatio*, Brendan sees Paradise from a mountain (*VB2*) or sets out without explanation (*VB4*).¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ The *Book of Lismore* suggests that only Finan the Bent can look at him (p. 250). Finan is called 'the squinting' ('Fionan cam') in Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. 47. Similarly a fragment of the Book of Noah describes how 'when he opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house like the sun,' in *The Book of Enoch*, trans. R.H. Charles (London: SPCK, 1997), p. 151.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Cherici, *Celtic Sexuality: Power, Paradigms and Passion* (Hampton, Connecticut and Washington D.C.: Tyrone Press, 1994), pp. 49–54. This is also discussed in John Ryan, *Irish Monasticism*, Celtic Studies, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), p. 249.

¹⁵⁶ Lehane, *Early Celtic Christianity*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; John 2:15–16.

¹⁵⁸ Stokes, *Book of Lismore*, p. 252.

¹⁵⁹ Stokes, 'Notes,' p. 193. However, Stokes cites the 'ancient Latin Life' (omitting to mention which one) and the *Annals of the Four Masters* stating that Brendan 'died in 577 in his ninety-fourth year', thus giving Brendan's year of birth as 483 (ibid., p. 21). By these calculations, Brendan would have been ordained in 513, and not, as Stokes suggests, 503; however, my calculations are based on Wooding cited in n. 128 above. All dates provided by the annals are contentious and should not necessarily be considered as historical fact.

¹⁶⁰ These versions, as listed by Mac Mathúna, are *VB4*, *VB5* and *VB8* (this last ms is *VB7* according to Kenney). Barrindus will be discussed in chapter 2 on pp. 80–82.

¹⁶¹ *VB1* and *VB6* are not conflated with the *Navigatio*.

In addition to the seven versions of the Latin and Irish Lives of Brendan, a further narrative describing Brendan as a traveller is ‘The Twelve Apostles of Ireland’.¹⁶² Here, the twelve Patriarchs are with Finnian of Clonard when a flower from the Land of Promise appears among them.¹⁶³ As they all wish to travel to that land, they draw lots on who shall go. Although the lot falls upon Brendan of Birr, he is considered too old for the quest and so the younger Brendan of Clonfert sets out instead. The text contains four episodes. Two of these, the episodes with the whirlpools and the devil appearing on the prow of Brendan’s vessel, also appear in the *Vita Brendani*, although they are not in the *Navigatio*. Other scenes, the island fish and the encounter with Judas Iscariot, appear in different forms from those in the *Navigatio*. The island fish ‘rises’ when Brendan requests dry land on which to celebrate Easter.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, when Brendan encounters Judas in ‘The Twelve Apostles’, it is *within* Brendan’s vision of hell; Judas does not enjoy the respite depicted in the *Vita Brendani*, the *Navigatio* and later vernacular versions of the narrative.

The text of ‘The Twelve Apostles’ contains suggestions about the sources and heritage of the earliest Brendan narrative: the ‘wonderful flower’ is analogous to a silver branch with white flowers that appears in the *Immram Brain maic Febuil*, the earliest of the *immrama*; it also corresponds to the fruitful branch that bears testimony that Ailbe had travelled to the Otherworld.¹⁶⁵ The motif of the magical flower is related to pagan legends in Irish literature, opening a portal and enticing the finder to hidden realms, whether it is to the *side* (or faerie) realms, the happy Otherworld or to the Christian land of Saints.¹⁶⁶ Yet, as Herbert observes, the separation of the protagonist from the branch

¹⁶² Published as ‘Dá apostol décc na hÉrenn’ in Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 96–102. Mac Mathúna includes this as *VB7* in the canon of the *Vitae Brendani*. See also, Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 141–46; see also Martin McNamara, ‘*Navigatio Sancti Brendani. Some Possible Connections with Liturgical, Apocryphal and Irish Tradition*,’ *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 146–52.

¹⁶³ Arthur C.L. Brown, ‘The Wonderful Flower that Came to St Brendan,’ *The Manly Studies in Language and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 295–99.

¹⁶⁴ Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. 97. The ‘island fish’ also appears at Brendan’s request in the *Vita Brendani*, *ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁶⁵ For the *Vita Ailbe*, see Heist, *V.S.H.*, pp. 118–31.

¹⁶⁶ See also Eleanor Hull, ‘The Silver Bough in Irish Legend,’ *Folklore* 12 (1901), 430–45.

becomes the herald of Ailbe's death.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Bran is no longer able to touch Irish soil: when one of his companions attempts to do so, he immediately becomes a heap of ashes. Similarly, although in 'The Twelve Apostles' Brendan is youthful, in the *Vita Brendani*, the *Navigatio* and the later vernacular translations, he dies shortly after completing his journey.¹⁶⁸

Another of the *immrama* containing a link to the 'The Twelve Apostles of Ireland' is the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* (*The Voyage of Máel Dúin's boat*) which includes a meeting with a survivor from the crew of Brendan of Birr.¹⁶⁹ Carney believed that Brendan of Birr was the hero of a lost version of the *Navigatio*; or perhaps, as Wooding suggests, the replacement by Brendan of Clonfert represents the 'outgrowth of a cult of another early Brendan'.¹⁷⁰ The scene of the wonderful flower shows a link between two of the *immrama*. Furthermore, the undertaking of the journey by Brendan of Clonfert rather than Brendan of Birr could be seen as the point of the legend where the mantle of 'voyager' passes from one saint to another. It is therefore appropriate to address the question of how the tradition of the *peregrinus* developed in the early Irish Church.

Peregrinus and exile

The voyage tale, a journey across the sea to marvellous lands, is one of the oldest literary devices. As Ireland is a nation surrounded by water,

¹⁶⁷ Máire Herbert, 'Literary Sea-Voyages and Early Munster Hagiography,' *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the 10th Congress of Celtic Studies*, eds Ronald Black, William Gillies and Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh, vol. 1: Language, Literature, History, Culture (East Linton: Tuckwell Press Ltd., 1999), 182–189, p. 185.

¹⁶⁸ Although the section concerning the Voyage in *VB4* suggests that Brendan died shortly after his journey, the conflation of the *Vita* with the *Navigatio* contradicts this. The *Vita Munnu* describes that Brendan and three other saints have established communities in the *Terra repromotionis sanctorum*: ‘‘Ego nunc veni a terra repromotionis, in qua nos. iiiii. congregati nostra loca constituimus: silicet Columba Kille et ego, duo loca nostra simul circa vadum consistunt, Kannechus vero et Brandinus Macu Althe, circa alterum vadum sua loca consistunt’’; see Heist, *V.S.H.*, p. 208. Sharpe suggests that the *Vita Munnu* dates from the eighth century; see Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*, p. 334.

¹⁶⁹ Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite)', p. 73; Harbison, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 47–48.

¹⁷⁰ Jonathan M. Wooding, 'Introduction,' *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), xi–xxvii, p. xvi. James Carney's views remain unpublished, but posthumous publication of Carney's letters is being undertaken by David Dumville.

the tales of exploration aroused the imaginations of the Irish to free themselves from the confines of their island and travel anywhere in the world, even to the Otherworld.¹⁷¹ Pohl suggests that ‘missionary zeal’ sent Irish anchorites to the islands of the Atlantic.¹⁷² Irish Christianity, which developed from the fifth century, was essentially a monastic religion and some monasteries became like walled cities.¹⁷³ Therefore, Irish monks sought seclusion on deserted islands where they could contemplate God in silence, such as the Isle of Ailbe in the *Navigatio*. Wooding observes: ‘the archaeological detritus leaves no doubt as to the reality of Atlantic island monasticism’ and ‘no source for Irish exploration in the north Atlantic islands implies any other status than religious for the personnel of these voyages’.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, as Sumption observes, ‘religious wandering [on the continent] was recognized by contemporaries as a peculiarly Irish practice’.¹⁷⁵ However, the pilgrimage should not be an easy task, but a matter of deep devotion: Charles-Edwards suggests that the purpose of any pilgrimage was the rejection of worldly things, although by the mid-seventh century the term *peregrinus* held a status of substantial importance in Irish society. He observes that Irish law tracts describe the *peregrinus* as *deorad Dé*—the exile of God—who is ‘the representative on Earth of God and the saints. The *peregrinus* might have renounced the world, but the power which he held prevented the world from renouncing him’.¹⁷⁶ The act of voluntary exile was seen as the highest form of dedication to God and an imitation of Christ who himself willingly came down from heaven. The importance of committing oneself to faith explains why

¹⁷¹ Duffy suggests ‘the evidence would suggest that the Irish did not enjoy a particularly strong seafaring tradition until the Viking Age, and it was only at this point that naval warfare became significant’. See Seán Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 10. This would mean that travellers’ legends, such as those upon which the Brendan narratives were founded, would have been more significant to their audiences in pre-Viking Ireland.

¹⁷² Frederick J. Pohl, *Atlantic Crossings before Columbus* (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 37.

¹⁷³ While medieval Ireland understood that *civitas* to mean a ‘major ecclesiastical settlement’ ‘the grander *civitates* exhibited symptoms of urban status’; see Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 119–20. See also C.H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1989), p. 44.

¹⁷⁴ Wooding, ‘Monastic Voyaging,’ p. 231.

¹⁷⁵ Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 96.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘The Social Background to Irish *Peregrinatio*,’ *Celtica* 11 (1976), 43–59, p. 53.

the supernumerary monks who abuse the ascetic pilgrimage receive such harsh punishment.¹⁷⁷

In the *Navigatio*, Brendan and his monks allow themselves to drift when their strength fails after days of intensive rowing.¹⁷⁸ Draak observes that ‘to cross a wide expanse of water...must be a desperate venture, to be contemplated and to be undertaken only in direst necessity’.¹⁷⁹ Yet, the entry for the year 891 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* confirms that self-exile did indeed occur:

three Irishmen came to king Alfred in a boat without oars from Ireland which they had left secretly because they wished for the love of God to be in exile, they cared not where. The boat in which they travelled was made of two and a half hides and they took with them sufficient food for seven days.¹⁸⁰

Even so, this exile was not always an example of extreme piety or desperation; in other circumstances it was a brutal punishment. Although casting transgressors to sea without means of directing themselves is not an Irish motif, the Irish adopted it.¹⁸¹ St Patrick decreed that a criminal named Mac Cuill should be fettered and set adrift in a boat made of a single hide, without oars, rudder or provisions, to go whither providence carried him.¹⁸² As his chances of survival were severely reduced, it was accepted that God was protecting him should he do so. Curiously, although in most versions of the *Vita Brendani*, Brendan goes on a *peregrinatio* filled with a desire to see Paradise, in one version (VB4), he goes on a further journey to atone for his guilt, after a monk exposes himself to death through obedience to one of Brendan’s

¹⁷⁷ See below, pp. 86–95, 101–02, 166–71 and 192–93. The ‘supernumerary monks’ are the late arrivals that beg to join Brendan despite the fact that the saint has already chosen his fourteen companions and he warns that they will not reach Paradise; see Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 5*, ll. 8–9; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 199–202.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Et ceperunt nauigare usque dum uires eorum deficerent,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 4–5.

¹⁷⁹ Maartje Draak, ‘Migration over Sea,’ *Numen* 9 (1962), 81–98, p. 81; see also Anna Maria Fagnoni, ‘Oriental Eremitical Motifs in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*,’ *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 56–58.

¹⁸⁰ Anne Savage, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (Godalming: Bramley Books, 1997), p. 99; see also Charles-Edwards, ‘Irish *Peregrinatio*,’ pp. 48–49.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁸² Mary E. Byrne, ‘On the Punishment of Sending Adrift,’ *Ériu* 11 (1932), 97–102, p. 97. The description of Mac Cuill’s *peregrinatio* comes to us from Muirchú, St Patrick’s seventh-century hagiographer and thus constitutes one of the earliest references to setting adrift.

commands.¹⁸³ Such a punishment or penance was severe and the boats were not necessarily seaworthy: in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra* (*Voyage of the Húi Corra*) worms gnaw the outermost of the three hides.¹⁸⁴ As it was, Mac Cuill's vessel was blown to the Isle of Man where he was rescued by two missionary bishops, whom he eventually succeeded.¹⁸⁵ Charles-Edwards suggests that the punishment of being set adrift must have contributed towards the origins of the *immrama*: sixty couples who are set adrift for regicide in the *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* (*Voyage of Snedgus and Mac Riagla*), but the clerics, Snedgus and Mac Riagla, accompany the couples as witnesses that the voyage is undertaken, underscoring the difference between the imposed punishment and the voluntary exile.¹⁸⁶ Thus, there are both historical and literary analogues for Brendan's journey. Just how much of the above description of the life of Brendan is fiction, and how much are older legends attributed to him, is a matter for much conjecture. However, the aesthetics of the *peregrinus* do lend weight to the suggestion that Brendan's voyage represented a physical pilgrimage.

The Voyage of Brendan: an actual journey or fantastic fiction?

The parallels with the synoptic gospels on the events surrounding Brendan's birth are no doubt an embellishment illustrating his piety. The stone present in the story of the 'decapitated man' may have stood for centuries before Brendan's time, being only attributed to him by later collators of the legend. As a navigator, Brendan, or a representative saint, may have travelled to the island of Hinba (Argyll),

¹⁸³ O'Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, pp. 193–97. The Middle Dutch *De Reis van Sint Brandaan*, composed c. 1150, also adopts the sea voyage as the motif of punishment: in this version, Brendan is sent on a nine-year journey as punishment for his incredulity about Antipodean lands and for burning a book of wonders.

¹⁸⁴ Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' p. 55. see Jacqueline Borsje notes that although Stokes is correct in his translation from modern Irish, in Medieval Irish (based on the Dictionary of Irish Language) *Piast* translates simply as 'beast' or 'monster', see Jacqueline Borsje, *From Chaos to Enemy: Encounters with Monsters in Early Irish Texts. An Investigation Related to the Process of Christianization and the Concept of Evil*, Instrumenta Patristica, 29 (Steenbrugge: St-Pieters abdij, Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), pp. 163, 376.

¹⁸⁵ Charles-Edwards, 'Irish *Peregrinatio*,' p. 49.

¹⁸⁶ Stokes, 'Snedgus,' p. 19; see also Byrne, 'On the Punishment of Sending Adrift,' p. 101.

as suggested in the *Vita Columbae*, or possibly to St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides, where a church was dedicated to Brendan.¹⁸⁷ It is feasible that other aspects of the voyage are embellishments of various tales of seafaring monks who travelled to establish places of untroubled silent worship, as depicted by the community of Ailbe. The Icelandic Book, *Landnámabók*, records that Irish monks, called 'Papars' by Norse explorers, had reached Iceland by 795, leaving Irish books, bells and crosiers behind them.¹⁸⁸ Some scholars conjecture that Brendan's voyage details an actual journey and that the topographical descriptions in the *Navigatio* could be specific places seen *en route* to America, either to Newfoundland, via Greenland, or to Mexico, via the Antilles.¹⁸⁹ More recently, Severin travelled to Newfoundland in a coracle built to the specifications described in the *Navigatio*.¹⁹⁰ Bourgeault observes that there is a 'selective realism at work' in Severin's journey concerning aspects of 'fasting, vigils and liturgical psalmody, which are spelled out in the text in equal or far greater detail' than the details of boat building and practical seafaring.¹⁹¹ However, the focus on possibilities of an actual journey detracts from the author's original intentions: writing a tale containing a Christian message about salvation, monastic obedience and the faith required to undertake such a pilgrimage. Historically,

¹⁸⁷ The main island of the St Kilda archipelago is Hirta; see Mary Harman, *An Isle called Hirta: History and Culture of the St Kildans to 1930* (Waternish, Isle of Skye: Maclean Press, 1997), p. 337. I am grateful to Owain Carter for this reference.

¹⁸⁸ Ari Thorgilsson, *Landnámabók*, trans. Thomas Ellwood (Kendal: T. Wilson, 1898). Kaland observes that these books are based on the oral tradition and were written 300 years after the 'so-called' settlement took place; see Sigrid Kaland, 'Comments on 'The Early Settlement of Iceland'', *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 24 (1991), 10–12, p. 10. There is no archaeological evidence to support the claim of Irish or Celtic settlement in Iceland, although Vaughan suggests 'The men from the west who gave their name to the Vestmannaeyjar Islands off the south coast of Iceland must certainly have been Irish,' in Richard Vaughan, 'The Arctic in the Middle Ages,' *Journal of Medieval History* 8 (1982), 313–42, p. 315. Shetelig (cited in Hermanns-Auðardóttir) suggests that the Icelandic inhumation graves could be signs of Christian influence; see Margarét Hermanns-Auðardóttir, 'The Early Settlement of Iceland,' *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 24 (1991), 1–9.

¹⁸⁹ George A. Little, *Brendan the Navigator: An Interpretation* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son Ltd., 1945); Robert-Yves Creston, *Journal de bord de Saint-Brandan à la recherche du paradis* (Paris: Éditions de Paris, 1957), pp. 231–34. For suggestions that Brendan sailed to America, see, for example, Ashe, *Land to the West*.

¹⁹⁰ Severin's courageous feat is of academic importance by showing that such a journey is possible, albeit with the assistance of radar, radio, advance weather warnings, accurate maps and a course at the Royal Navy Safety Equipment and Survival School at Seafield Park; see Severin, *The Brendan Voyage*, pp. 291–92.

¹⁹¹ Bourgeault, 'The Monastic Archetype,' p. 111.

then, it is reasonable conjecture that, as Vaughan suggests, rather than undertaking all the journeys himself, Brendan ‘became the representative figure around whose illustrious name the fabulous adventures of other seafaring Irish monks were gathered and recorded’.¹⁹²

However, the tale of Brendan’s voyage is fictional rather than historical, although the popularity of the legend (shown through the commissioning of manuscripts as late as the seventeenth century) suggests that the various audiences of the *Navigatio* believed, or wanted to believe, the fantastic element in Brendan’s legends.

The influence of early audiences wanting to believe in the Brendan legends is shown through the number of places that bear his name, for example Brandon Mountain and Brandon Head in Ireland.¹⁹³ Medieval maps, including the Hereford Map (c. 1285), the Dulcert Map (1367) and the Pizigani map (1367) contain references that could be identified with Brendan.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, through the number of surviving manuscripts and translations, the legend travelled as far as the saint himself is supposed to have. Thus, having argued against an ‘actual’ journey, we now turn to the literary heritage of the *immrama* that might have inspired the earliest versions of Brendan’s journeys.

The Voyage of Brendan and the immrama

Only four *immrama*—the Irish voyage tales—have survived. The oldest of these is *Immram Brain maic Febuil* although this should be distinguished from other *immrama* as it also displays elements of *echtrae*; the others are the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* and the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*.¹⁹⁵ The manuscript of the *Immram Brain maic Febuil* dates from the tenth century, but, as some of the characters

¹⁹² Vaughan, ‘Arctic in the Middle Ages,’ p. 315.

¹⁹³ See also Carl Selmer, ‘The Origin of Brandenburg (Prussia), The St Brendan Legend and the *Scoti* of the Tenth Century,’ *Traditio* 7 (1949), 416–33; Carl Selmer, ‘The Irish St Brendan Legend in Lower Germany and on the Baltic Coast,’ *Traditio* 4 (1946), 408–13; Karl A. Zaenker, ‘St Brendan the Navigator: A *Wanderkult* in Hanseatic Towns around 1500,’ *Fifteenth Century Studies* 17 (1990), 515–25.

¹⁹⁴ Paul Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (London: British Library, 1996), pp. 48–49; William H. Babcock, ‘St Brendan’s Explorations and Islands,’ *The Geographical Review* 8 (1919), 37–46.

¹⁹⁵ These editions are Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*; Stokes, ‘Snedgus,’ pp. 14–25; Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ pp. 447–95; Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin (suite),’ pp. 50–95; Stokes, ‘Húi Corra,’ pp. 22–69. Although I have categorised these texts together, the *Immram Brain maic*

mentioned in the *Voyage of Snedagus and Mac Riagla* are historical, and because of the linguistic evidence, Stokes concludes that the incidents in the *immrama* can be dated around the middle of the seventh century.¹⁹⁶ The *Immram Brain maic Febuil* is, according to Oskamp, the ‘only surviving pre-Viking secular text containing voyage elements’.¹⁹⁷ Its theme is distinctly pagan: the Otherworld is accessible by mortals summoned by the inhabitants of the land. For Bran, the summons comes from a damsel singing magical, sweet music.¹⁹⁸ Other *immrama*, although secular tales, have an overt Christian message. The *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*, for example, includes a giant bird proclaiming the glory of Christ, a warning about the Last Judgement and an island where Enoch and Elias dwell.¹⁹⁹ The *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla* also carries a political message: arriving on a ‘hallowed’ island with a ‘righteous’ king, the priests who receive the Eucharist are warned that ‘foreigners’—presumably the Anglo-Norman invaders who arrived in 1169 led by Richard de Clare and Maurice Fitzgerald de Winsor—will inhabit half of the island owing to the Irish peoples’ neglect of ‘God’s testament and teaching’.²⁰⁰

The authors of the *immrama* also borrowed material: Stokes suggests that two incidents in *Immram Brain maic Febuil*, chapters xxi and xxvii, may have been inspired by the Calypso and Cyclops episodes in *The Odyssey*.²⁰¹ The *Immram Brain* may also have inspired the *Immram curaig*

Febuil is technically an *echtra*. This issue is, however, much debated, see, for example, Dumville, ‘*Echtrae and Immram*,’ pp. 73–94.

¹⁹⁶ According to the *Annals of the Four Masters*, King Domnal died in 639 and the rule of Ireland was jointly taken by Conall Cael and Cellach until 656; see Stokes, ‘*Snedgus*,’ p. 15. It is possible, however, that the *immrama* are consciously set in the Christian era of *peregrinatio* in Ireland.

¹⁹⁷ Oskamp, *Máel Dúin*, p. 39.

¹⁹⁸ More complete summaries of the *immrama* are included in William Flint Thrall, ‘Virgil’s *Aeneid* and the Irish *Immrama*: Zimmer’s Theory,’ *Modern Philology* 15 (1917), 449–74, pp. 67–73. Carney, however, believes that it is a ‘thoroughly Christian poem’; see Proinsias Mac Cana, ‘The Sinless Otherworld of *Immram Brain*,’ *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 52–72, p. 52.

¹⁹⁹ Stokes, ‘*Snedgus*,’ pp. 14–25.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25. Stokes’s translation is from the *Yellow Book of Lecan* which dates from the end of the fourteenth century; see n. 203 below. For a discussion of the different versions of The *Voyage of Snedagus and Mac Riagla*, see Thomas Owen Clancy, ‘Subversion at Sea: Structure, Style and Intent in the *Immrama*,’ *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 194–225, pp. 212–25.

²⁰¹ Stokes, ‘*Máel Dúin*,’ p. 449.

Máele Dúin through the scene of the lady pulling back her lover by a magical thread and the motif of the Island of Uncontrollable Laughter. There are also parallels with the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, including the island of the smiths, the sea of glass and the suggestion that the souls of the dead abide in Paradise in the form of birds.²⁰²

There is much debate about whether the *Navigatio* was the primary influence on the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*, or vice versa.²⁰³ Present scholarship leans toward the *Navigatio* predating *Máel Dúin*, although I think a reasonable conjecture is that an early version of the *Navigatio* influenced a proto-*Máel Dúin* and that inter-borrowing continued as the tradition developed.²⁰⁴ Carney maintains that *Máel Dúin* is a secularisation of the *Navigatio*; Mac Mathúna observes that it is ‘a conflation of both secular and ecclesiastical matter’ suggesting that ‘the *Navigatio*, or at least ecclesiastical sea-pilgrimage material, informs a central part of the tale’.²⁰⁵ However, just as the early Church christianised Celtic crosses and made them acceptable, the scribes of the early Church made the stories safe as well. Zimmer attempted to show that the Irish *immrama* were a direct imitation of the early adventures of Aeneas. Nevertheless, his hypothesis is regarded as ‘unconvincing’ by Thrall and Flint.²⁰⁶ Thrall argues that it is more ‘natural to regard the *immram* as an outgrowth of native narrative materials and forms, wrought into its typical structural form through natural processes by native story tellers who embellished

²⁰² It is not possible to date the text of the *Immram curaig Ua Corra* before the eleventh century, although it was ‘probably known around 800’; see Strijbosch, *Seafaring Saint*, p. 128. Also discussed in Dumville, ‘*Echtræ and Immram*’, pp. 89–90. Meyer suggests that the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* had been preceded by the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. 1, p. 162.

²⁰³ The four manuscripts of this *immram* are more or less defective. They are *Lebor na hUidre* in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin (written about 1100); the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, ms H.2.16 in Trinity College, Dublin (written in the fourteenth century); ms Harleian 5280 in the British Library (written in the fifteenth century); and ms Egerton 1782 (late fifteenth/early sixteenth century), see Stokes, ‘*Máel Dúin*’, p. 447.

²⁰⁴ See Mario Esposito, ‘An Apocryphal “Book of Enoch and Elias” as a possible source for the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*’, *Celtica* 5 (1960), 192–206, pp. 203–4.

²⁰⁵ Carney, ‘*Navigatio* (Review)’, p. 41; Mac Mathúna, ‘Structure and Transmission’, p. 338. For a counter standpoint see, for example, D.D.R. Owen, *The Vision of Hell: Infernal Journeys in Medieval French Literature* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press Ltd., 1970), p. 25.

²⁰⁶ H. Zimmer, ‘Keltische Beiträge: II. Brendans Meerfahrt’, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Litteratur* 33 (1889), 129–220; 257–338; cf. Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), bks. III–V. See also VI.J. Flint, ‘Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment’, *Viator* 15 (1984), 65–80.

their tales from time to time, drawing new material from any sources that presented themselves'.²⁰⁷ Although many parallels that can be drawn with classical literature, the current scholarly opinion suggests Zimmer's theory is implausible and that the author of the *Navigatio* composed the narrative from other sources. Esposito conjectures that one of these influences is the apocryphal book of Enoch and Elias: Máel Dúin encounters Enoch and Elias, who have been confined to the deserted island Paradise, waiting for their apocalyptic confrontation with Antichrist. The *Navigatio*, on the other hand, replaces that meeting with the encounter with Paul the Hermit. Esposito admits, however, that the substitution of characters is 'not easy to understand'.²⁰⁸ Dumville observes that a 'remarkable amount of apocryphal material was known in Ireland during the Old-Irish period' and there is every indication that the book was indeed a source for the *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*, but that Esposito's attaching this to the *Navigatio* was an 'unreasonable hypothesis'.²⁰⁹

Although the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* has a distinctly Christian theme, the earliest part of the text betrays a pagan heritage that is not in keeping with the remainder of the poem. Meyer describes the *Navigatio* as 'dressing the old half-pagan marvels in orthodox monkish garb'.²¹⁰ The *Navigatio* has clearly borrowed sources from an earlier *immram* genre, which has subsequently been edited and christianised, and the original has been lost. It has been suggested that the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* is the earliest complete *immram* where 'pre-Christian and Christian motifs are used indiscriminately by the author, and the result is a "work of art" composed of motifs of divergent backgrounds'.²¹¹ Both the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* and the *Navigatio* contain overlapping encounters, but one principal similarity between the two narratives is the arrival of the supernumeraries. In the *Navigatio*, after Brendan chooses fourteen companions, three late-coming monks beg to join him. Brendan relents, but prophesies that only one will receive a good fate for his journey, the other two will not. In the same way, Máel Dúin's three foster brothers

²⁰⁷ Thrall, 'Zimmer's Theory,' p. 90.

²⁰⁸ Esposito, 'Enoch and Elias,' p. 35, n. 36. Esposito also observes that Elias and Enoch appear in later Italian and German versions of the *Voyage of St Brendan*, *ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁰⁹ David M. Dumville, 'Biblical Apocrypha and the Early Irish: A Preliminary Explanation,' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 73 C (1973), 299–338, pp. 299 and 310.

²¹⁰ Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. 1, p. 161.

²¹¹ Oskamp, *Máel Dúin*, p. 43.

threaten to drown themselves if they are not allowed to join the group. Thus, the supernumeraries upset the equilibrium of the crew and only when they have left can Brendan or Máel Dúin complete their quests. Indeed, as Johnston observes, it is *because* of the additional crewmembers that Máel Dúin's vessel is blown off course (Máel Dúin had been told to restrict his crew to fourteen). However, unlike Brendan searching for Paradise, Máel Dúin sails to avenge his father's murder.²¹² So, in both versions, the journey is a personal quest, although the motivation for one is spiritual, and for the other it is secular. Máel Dúin has time to reflect and forgive his father's murderer; conversely Brendan, having learned the mysteries of the ocean, finds the Promised Land of the Saints. The *Terra repromissionis sanctorum* that Brendan finds corresponds to another Celtic motif: the Otherworld.

The Otherworld and other early influences

The ultimate destination in the Brendan narrative is the 'Promised Land of the Saints' that parallels the Celtic Otherworld. The Land to the West frequently appears in the Celtic mythological cycle. For example, Cú Chulainn, son of Lug the Sun god, raided the Otherworld and stole magical treasures and riches; he also passed into the Otherworld when he was sick.²¹³ In these instances the Otherworld is analogous to classical heroes entering the pits of Hades, rather than a Paradise. However, in early Celtic myths it is unusual for anyone to return from the Otherworld. The inability to return is a device from the traditional Celtic mythological cycle seen when, for example, the damsel who invites the hero Oisín to stay in the Land of Youth warns him that, if he sets foot on earthly ground, he will become old and withered.²¹⁴ A principal consideration of developing Irish mythology is that the principal characters *evolve* away from their pagan sources: the

²¹² Johnston argues that the presence of the supernumeraries allows Máel Dúin time to reflect and ultimately forgive his father's murderers, rather than becoming a murderer himself. Thus the supernumeraries are a part of Máel Dúin's salvation; see Elva Johnston, 'A Sailor on the Seas of Faith: The Individual and the Church in *The Voyage of Máel Dúin*', *European Encounters: Essays in Memory of Albert Lovett*, eds Judith Devlin and Howard B. Clarke (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), pp. 239–52.

²¹³ Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. 1, pp. 152–53.

²¹⁴ Charles Squire, *Celtic Myth and Legend* (Van Nuys: Newcastle Publishing Ltd., 1975), pp. 225–26; see also the discussion on p. 63.

gods become demi-gods, who become heroes, who become exceptional men. The later Christianising of the tales is achieved through resurrection and baptism: St Patrick raises Cú Chulainn from the dead despite the latter's pagan background in order that he might bear witness to the truth of Christianity.²¹⁵ The *immrama* tales provide similar important parallels with the *Navigatio* through using both pagan and secular material to convey the Christian message.

Although the *immrama* contain otherworldly elements, only in the *Immram Brain maic Febuil* is the Otherworld actually reached, for it is not the objective of other *immrama*.²¹⁶ The obvious source of the bounteous descriptions of the Otherworld is the Garden of Eden, but the motif appears in other Irish legends. In the story of Ruadán, a miraculous tree gives sap that will nourish the whole monastery, so that monks from other monasteries flock to him to enjoy the easier life.²¹⁷ The saints of Ireland beg him to make the monks work, like other monks. Ruadán accedes to their request and the tree ceases to produce its marvellous substance.²¹⁸ The motif of abundance is a wistful ideal contrasting with the famines of the Middle Ages. Similarly, the search for profusion is against the nature of the monastic vow of abstinence. The excessive lifestyle is described in the 'Land of Cockaigne'.²¹⁹ The Land of Cockaigne became prominent in medieval lore, particularly in the thirteenth century, with the circulation of the Old French *Le Fabliau de Coquaigne*, a Middle Dutch analogue, and the Middle English satire which contrasts monastic abstinence with a 'Paradise' of gluttony. Indeed the poet warns

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 227.

²¹⁶ Thus, the *Immram Brain maic Febuil* is technically an *echtra* rather than an *immram*.

²¹⁷ Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 320–21.

²¹⁸ W.W. Heist, 'Hagiography, chiefly, Celtic and recent developments in folklore,' *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés IV^e–XII^e Siècles* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981), 121–141, p. 126. Brendan also appears in this tale. He has to leave his cell at Tulach Brendan as he can hear Ruadán's bell ring; see Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 317–18.

²¹⁹ 'The Land of Cokaygne,' *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, eds J.A.W. Bennett and G.V. Smithers, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 136–44; Although written in Middle English, Bennett and Smithers suggest that the poem was composed in Ireland because of the linguistic heritage of some of the words, for example, the use of the word 'russin' (l. 20) for 'supper'. See also Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne: Medieval Fantasies of the Perfect Life*, trans. Diane Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

that Paradise is a miserable place with nobody and nothing there, save Elijah and Enoch and grass, flowers and trees.²²⁰

The descriptions of Cockaigne are very different from those of Paradise in the Brendan narrative. In Cockaigne, trees are in fruit, rivers run with wine and roasted geese on a spit fly through the air inviting people to eat them. These descriptions convey a sense of luxurious idleness which contrasts with the monastic discipline of the *Navigatio*.²²¹ The legend of Cockaigne could have been a parody of the *Navigatio*: in order to reach Cockaigne, the visitor had to wade for seven years through swines' dung, which might be analogous to Brendan's seven-year voyage to Paradise.²²²

There are earlier sources from which the versions of the Brendan narrative could have obtained some of the influence and imagery. Certain passages in the *Navigatio* bear some relation to the Sindbad legend, which lead scholars, such as Beazley, to suggest that the texts derive from a now lost manuscript of the 'Marvels of the East'.²²³ The 'island' that animates, and then proves to be a whale, is a motif seen in both Arabian legend and Anglo-Saxon poetry as a warning to unsuspecting seafarers.²²⁴ However, the whale, rising at Brendan's request in the *Vita Brendani*, is a reversal of the Anglo-Saxon poem, depicting Brendan commanding the elements of the ocean, rather than the seafarers falling victim to them.

²²⁰ 'þoð Paradis be miri and briȝt,/Cokaygn is of fairir siȝt./What is þer in Paradis/Bot grasse and flure and grene ris?...Beȝ þer no men bot two-/Hely and Enok also;/Elinglich mai hi go/Whar þer woniþ men no mo,' 'Land of Cockayne,' ll. 5–8, 13–16. For a discussion of the relationship between the 'Land of Cockaigne' and the Brendan narratives see E.K. Yoder, 'The Monks' Paradise in the *Land of Cokayne* and the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*,' *Papers in Language and Literature* 19 (1983), 227–38.

²²¹ According to legend, the Cockaignians had no ambitions, politics or armies and welcomed guests, provided that they stayed only for a short time. Yet, the visitors soon outnumbered the inhabitants and destroyed the ecological balance of the land. The Cockaignians then interbred with the newcomers and lost their immortality and contentment, see Robert Page, *The Encyclopaedia of Things That Never Were* (Limpfield: Dragon's World, 1985), pp. 102–3. See also my discussion on the Nephilim in chapter 2, pp. 117–18.

²²² Yoder, 'Cokayne and the *Navigatio*,' p. 236.

²²³ For a short discussion on oriental evidence in the *Navigatio* see Charles Raymond Beazley, *The Dawn of Modern Geography*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1897–1906), vol. 1, pp. 228, 230–39 and 438–50. Kenney rejects the Sindbad story as a source of the *Navigatio*, but does suggest that there has been some Oriental influence; see Kenney, *Sources*, pp. 409–12.

²²⁴ 'The Whale,' *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. Bernard J. Muir, 2 vols (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 272–75; cf. Richard Barber, ed., *Bestiary* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), pp. 203–5.

Another Arabian legend from the Exeter book is that of ‘The Phoenix’, where the fire that engulfs the phoenix is cleansing rather than destructive or punishing. The ‘Phoenix’ and the *Navigatio* are similar when considering the vivid description is of the land where the phoenix dwelled appeals to all senses and evokes in the reader the same yearning as Barrindus’s description of the Land of Promise does to Brendan.²²⁵ Both the legends of the whale and the phoenix belong to the bestiary tradition, which will be discussed in greater detail later.²²⁶

The Voyage Home

In the *Navigatio*, having completed his pilgrimage to Paradise and reached the river that prevents him from seeing more than he can comprehend, Brendan can progress no further.²²⁷ He has either to acknowledge the limitations of his understanding and return to Ireland, or to progress to a place that is beyond the human capacity for understanding (which he has been forbidden to do). Orlando’s edition of the *Navigatio* suggests that the final chapter of the narrative concerning Brendan’s death (as noted in Selmer’s edition) is not present in the earliest version of the manuscripts. Wooding observes that the later interpolation of this chapter demonstrates ‘that so far as genre is concerned the original *Navigatio* was almost completely distinct from a saint’s *vita*,’ though he adds that we cannot dismiss the possibility that ‘an early text in the *stemma* simply lost its final folio’.²²⁸

²²⁵ ‘The Phoenix,’ *The Exeter Anthology*, vol. 1, pp. 166–90; Barber, ed., *Bestiary*, pp. 141–43; also see below, pp. 110 and 222.

²²⁶ Also from the Exeter Book, one might consider the descriptions of psychological torment in *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* which reflects the purgatorial state that Brendan endures on his voyage. The Wanderer’s exile from his lord echoes Adam’s exile from the divine. By seeking Paradise, Brendan is searching for divine salvation. Osborn observes of *The Seafarer* that the ‘*mare vitae*’ is a ‘proving place, in which the soul, buffeted by emotion and passion, must control the ship of the body to redirect the spirit’. The sea therefore represents the cleansing of the soul that one must undertake before achieving Paradise or, in the case of Brendan, the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*, see Marijane Osborn, ‘Venturing upon Deep Waters in *The Seafarer*,’ in *Neuphilologische Mitterlungen* 79 (1978), p. 1.

²²⁷ In the A.N. *Voyage* there is no obstructing river. The youth leads Brendan to a high mountain from which they see many wonderful sights that they cannot explain: ‘D’ici veient avisious/Dum ne sevent divisiuns,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1783–84.

²²⁸ Wooding, ‘Introduction to the Latin Version,’ p. 15.

The presumed interpolation of the scene of Brendan's return to Ireland in the *Navigatio* changes the emphasis of the narrative. Without the return home, the text is simply a quest with the discovery of Paradise as much a prize to be coveted as the Grail is a prize to the questing knights in Arthurian legend. By including a description of the return to Ireland, the narratives of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* become a pilgrimage, as Brendan is able to provide proof of the *Terra re promissionis sanctorum* by carrying with him precious stones and fruits. Those who sought Paradise for the wrong reasons—the supernumeraries—fail to achieve it. Finally, the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* both end with Brendan's death shortly after the monks' return. The monks' homecoming acts as a counterbalance to Paradise. For those that have seen the *Terra re promissionis sanctorum* the return home is a suitable return to monastic life, but it cannot compare favourably to the wonders that the brethren have seen on their journey. Brendan's return to Ireland echoes the *Immram Brain maic Febuil*. Having spent time in the Otherworld, Bran cannot set foot on human land again. Returning from the Land of Joy, Bran announces his name and is told that the inhabitants of Ireland know the name 'only from the ancient stories'. Furthermore, when one of the crewmembers tries to leave the coracle, he becomes a pile of ashes when he touches land, 'as though he had been in the earth for many hundred years'.²²⁹ Brendan has evolved from saint to someone who has been in direct communication with God. He has become too good for society and, like Galahad achieving the Grail, he cannot remain among the sinners of humanity.

Unlike the narratives that focus solely on Brendan's voyage, the *Vita Brendani* does not end when Brendan returns from Paradise. Instead, it describes the desired effects that the narrative of the voyage should have on those that hear it. For example, VB3 describes how some people bring offerings to Brendan, and others 'relinquishing their worldly possessions, were received into the religious life'.²³⁰ Although this might suggest rhetorical wishful thinking on the part of the author, it does offer a suggestion of the principal purpose of the voyage: collecting offerings and educating the secular audience into the religious life.

²²⁹ The *Immram Brain maic Febuil* § 65; see Meyer, *Voyage of Bran*, vol. 1, p. 32. This is a common motif in Celtic literature, for example in the *Adventure of Connla* the hero leaves the enchanted island, but passes from human knowledge.

²³⁰ 'Postea multi plura munera Sancto Brendano in Xti nomine obtulerunt et alii relinquentes hujus res saeculi fecit eos,' Moran, *Acti Sancti Brendani*, p. 10.

The conflation of the *Navigatio* with the *Vita Brendani* suggests that the didactic message was well received.

Brendan's return from the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* does not mark the end of the *Vita Brendani*, which instead describes how Brendan behaves in the manner of saints of other hagiographic texts. He converts nations, performs miracles, establishes monasteries and undertakes further voyages.²³¹ For example, according to some later manuscripts of the *Navigatio* dating from after the twelfth century, Malo (or Machutis) travelled with Brendan on his fabulous voyage and Brendan, in turn, travelled to Brittany with Malo and helped establish a monastery there.²³² The compiler of the Second Irish Life admits that these 'additional stories come from a different book,' and Plummer observes that the 'genuine narrative' of the Latin Life 'comes abruptly to an end'.²³³ Included among these events is the foundation of the monastery at Clonfert, which the annals record occurred in 558.²³⁴ Finally, Brendan visits his sister, Bridget, in Annaghdown to arrange for his interment. Brendan dies at the threshold of the church saying 'into your hands, Lord, I commit my spirit'.²³⁵ His body is taken back to Clonfert and buried in a grave facing the front door of the cathedral.

When considering the historical Brendan and the range of dating Brendan's death between 575 and 583, Wooding observes that

the 'repose' (*quies*) of Brendan 'of Clonfert' is recorded in all of the major Irish annal compilations under the year 575 A.D., or under entries

²³¹ The Second Irish Life of Brendan also includes descriptions of how he established the churches at Ardfert and Annaghdown and then founded a monastery in Inis-dá-druim, now Coney Island in County Clare. He also undertook further voyages, the first to Gildas the Briton, which lasted for three years; from there he travelled to Iona and was instrumental in the founding of monasteries in Kilbrandon near Oban and Kilbrennan Sound. For a full list of Brendan's achievements and virtues; see Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. 93. See also Wooding, 'St Brendan, Clonfert and the Ocean'.

²³² See, for example, Paris B. N. Lat. 5348 and 2333A, and Brit. Lib. Cott. Vesp. A XIV and B X. Selmer lists five other mss that mention St Malo; see Selmer, *Navigatio*, pp. xviii–xix.

²³³ Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. xxi.

²³⁴ See, for example, Daniel P. McCarthy, 'The Chronology of the Irish Annals,' *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 98C, No. 6 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1998), 203–55.

²³⁵ 'In manus tuas, Domine, commendabo spiritum meum,' Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. 94; cf. Luke 23:46. Some versions, for example *VB1*, record his dying words as 'I fear that I shall journey alone, that the way will be dark; I fear the unknown land, the presence of my King and the sentence of my judge' ('Timeo, . . . si solus migravero, si tenebrosum fuerit iter, timeo inexpertam regionem, regis presentiam, iudicis sententiam,'), Heist, *V.S.H.*, p. 331.

which may be recalibrated to that year... The 575 entry is within the period of our contemporary recording; whether or not it is contemporary, this *obit* may still be about our earliest record of a cult of Brendan at Clonfert. We can say at least that this entry concerning the death of a leading person, presumably the abbot of an important Irish monastery, is a detail of obvious interest to another monastic house in the sixth or seventh century. The fact that it occurs in all of the major annal collections indicates that it was recorded in the common, pre-tenth century source for the existent annals.²³⁶

Even though the legend of Brendan's voyaging was circulated some two centuries after his death, the fact remains that medieval audiences *believed* the legend of Brendan of Clonfert and understood some of their theology through the events that the narrative describes. In 1274, Bernard Raymond Barahon, a citizen of Toulouse, was questioned in a deposition concerning the nature of Paradise. He answered that he believed that it was a place of rest because he had read it in the *Life of Brendan*. Barahon was replying to an accusation of heresy and Waldensianism. Following the inquisition, Barahon handed the inquisitors his two books, one being a copy of the *Vita Brendani* and the other an Occitan translation of the Bible.²³⁷

Not all critics of the *Navigatio* and the *Vita Brendani* approved of the theological message of the legend: a manuscript (Lincoln College, Oxford, 27) dating from between the eleventh and twelfth century criticises the concept of the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* on theological grounds and condemns the voyage as heretical.²³⁸ However, the fact that the *Navigatio* survives in so many manuscripts and, indeed, that Caxton printed a translation in English in 1483, attests to its popularity.²³⁹ Ultimately, as O'Loughlin observes, the *Navigatio* 'would have had a much broader audience than what we could consider a monastic community today' and the early Irish monastery would be 'something more like a

²³⁶ Wooding, 'St Brendan, Clonfert and the Ocean'. See also my discussion on p. 43 n. 126 and p. 47 n. 159. Brendan's monastery was subjected to attacks by the Danes; it was burned down in 1016, 1164 and 1179. Finally, both the monastery and the church were burned down in 1541. It was not re-built after that.

²³⁷ Taken from an unpublished work by Peter Biller (No. 20; Doat 25: deposition of Bernard Raymond Barahon, pp. 169–72). I am grateful to Peter Biller for allowing me to use this material.

²³⁸ Paul Meyer, 'Satire en vers rythmiques sur la légende de saint Brendan,' *Romania* 31 (1902), 376–79; cf. Ludwig Bieler, 'The Celtic Hagiographer,' *Studia Patristica* 5 (1962), 243–65, p. 258.

²³⁹ William Caxton, *Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend* (Westminster, 1483), ff. 394v–398v.

small town with a group of monks at its core rather than a religious house'.²⁴⁰ Therefore, the message of the *Navigatio* is not restricted to Brendan, but instead it is of didactic importance so that all levels of society can understand the tale.

The evidence for the historical Brendan is extremely sketchy, with the earliest surviving manuscript dating from at least a century after the saint's death. Furthermore, there are early, independent, manuscript references, such as the *Vita Columbae* by Adomnán. The legends surrounding the life and work of Brendan are filled with Christian images of piety and we would expect no less of such a famous Irish saint. Nevertheless, it is for his voyages that Brendan is most famous. Whether the stories attributed to him were an amalgamation of travellers' tales, or the adoption of the traditions of another saint, the legend of Brendan of Clonfert developed around 800. The stories transformed a hero with a pagan heritage into a Christian saint who displays the highest form of spiritual dedication, who goes into a personal exile and who shows absolute faith in God. Therefore, the stories of the *Navigatio* developed through borrowings from Biblical apocrypha, the *immrama*, and the mythology of the Marvels of the East that were circulating at the time. These were combined with the idyllic stories of the Lands of Plenty that contrasted with monastic abstinence and so engaged the imaginations of the various audiences of the Middle Ages. What is incontestable is the popularity of the legend of Brendan's tales, which survives in over a hundred manuscripts and which has been translated and adapted into eight languages.²⁴¹ As narratives that have moved away from the original hagiographic conventions of the *Vita Brendani*, the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* lend themselves to a literary analysis of the fantastic because of the gradual movement away from the plausible into the realm of the pure marvellous. These stages will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

²⁴⁰ O'Loughlin, 'Distant Islands,' p. 19.

²⁴¹ Discussed in Carl Selmer, 'The Vernacular Translations of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*: A Bibliographical Study,' *Medieval Studies* 18 (1956), 145–57 and Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan: A Critical Bibliography*. The Latin and vernacular texts are published in translation in Barron and Burgess, eds., *The Voyage of St Brendan*.

Conclusion

Unlike the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the *Vita Brendani* is more concerned with hagiographic conventions. The descriptions of piety, miracles and prayer in the *Vita Brendani* should not be considered as fantastic material: the devotion of the earliest audience, and the confirmation of the Church, would have supported the credibility of the legend accordingly. By the time of the composition of the *Navigatio* (and later the A.N. *Voyage*) it was understood that by engaging the fantastic and capturing the imagination, the homiletic message might remain with the audience for longer. As a literary genre, the fantastic provides an important discursive space in which potentially sensitive ideas can be developed without fear of personal reproach, more particularly when one considers that Benedeit acted as translator and adapter, rather than as author of—and therefore responsible for—the fantastic or potentially heretical material.

The use of Todorov's definition of the fantastic as a starting-point for discussion is appropriate because, with modifications, his model demonstrates the way that the narratives progress through the fantastic. Both versions begin grounded in reality, so that the narrator gains the audience's trust before gradually, almost unnoticeably, introducing elements of the fantastic and dissolving the boundaries of what is considered 'normal'. Of course, the earliest stages of the fantastic are still grounded within the plausible, which Todorov and others suggest may generate 'uncanny' feelings within each audience.²⁴² The uncanny presents each audience, whether modern or medieval, with a plausible, realistic scenario, but, at the same time, it allows the audience to consider unconsciously that there is something untoward—silently threatening—within the text. It is the uncertainty or hesitation of each audience that forces them to stand at a threshold of the 'uncanny': the uncertainty is either created by natural or supernatural causes and, as Todorov observes, 'the possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect'.²⁴³ The feeling of uncanniness is not contained *within* the text: it is generated within the mind of each person in the audiences. The uncanny exists in what has been referred to as a ““reading effect”, continually open to being re-read but re-read always strangely

²⁴² Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 41–57.

²⁴³ Ibid., pp. 25–26.

differently'.²⁴⁴ Thus, as with any text, what one reads in the two versions of the Brendan narrative may only become apparent to others with subsequent re-readings. However, it is true to say of the fantastic as a whole that if the audience observed that the narrative wavered from the literal in a single detail, they would become suspicious of every moment in the tale and the didactic message would lose its effect.

Nevertheless, the fantastic presents a literary genre that allows us to approach a text in a new way. That the text utilises elements of the fantastic; that it embraces the fantastic and allows the medieval audience to reach out to an Otherworld it had never previously considered; that each audience retains the fantastic message and that the narrative makes *sense* to both the Christian audience for which it was intended, *and* to the student of the fantastic, is a testimony of its quality and interest to multiple audiences, as evidenced by its longevity and popularity. It is these elements that the following chapters will address.

²⁴⁴ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 8.

CHAPTER TWO

ACCEPTING THE FANTASTIC: FROM THE FAMILIAR TO THE FANTASTIC-UNCANNY

Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how a pious legend concerning Brendan's saintly deeds had existed before the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* and that the text was probably composed to establish Brendan as an impressive figurehead for monasteries and churches that were dedicated to him. None of the manuscripts of the *Vita Brendani* and the *Betha Brénnaid* date from earlier than the fourteenth century and most of them have been conflated with the tale of Brendan's journey to the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* as described in the *Navigatio*.¹ Conversely, the number of surviving manuscripts of the *Navigatio* is a testament to its popularity. Even though both versions are Christian narratives, the fact that both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* invoke fantastic imagery suggests that, with the composition of the *Navigatio*, the genre moved from hagiography to an adventurous voyage containing marvellous imagery. That said, as both versions contain didactic passages, it is important that the narratives do not immediately launch into fantastic imagery, as this would make the scenes presented become implausible and unbelievable, potentially belittling the religious message. Instead, both narratives begin with elements that would be familiar to their respective audiences, whether that audience is ecclesiastical or secular Irish, or courtly Anglo-Norman. This chapter considers the elements of the fantastic in the first third of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, using, as its starting-point, Todorov's discussion of the fantastic and Freud's essay on 'The "Uncanny"'. In the first third of both versions, each scene receives a plausible explanation even though some encounters are initially presented as supernatural. It considers the opening decription

¹ See Kenney, *Sources*; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*. See also my discussion on pp. 46–50. For lists of the manuscripts of the *Vita Brendani* and the *Betha Brénnaid* see Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan*, pp. 4–12.

of Brendan's heritage in the *Navigatio* (which contrasts with the details presented in the A.N. *Voyage*). This chapter discusses feelings of claustrophobia related to the confinement in the coracle and predetermination concerning the fates of one of the late-coming (supernumerary) monks and uncanny silence of the Deserted Citadel in which one of the supernumeraries dies after stealing. This chapter examines two examples of enormous creatures (an island populated by large sheep and a giant fish that is mistaken for an island). Finally, it considers the portrayal of the angels that sided with neither God nor Lucifer during the battle described in Revelation. In particular, this chapter examines the movement of the narrative from the mundane features, which each audience would recognise, to the gradual introduction of elements of the uncanny, as both versions move towards the fantastic.²

Todorov's model

Tzvetan Todorov originally published *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* in French in 1970. This study is widely regarded as establishing a foundation for the study of fantastic literature.³ In his analysis, Todorov seeks to identify structural features common to fantastic texts in order to define the fantastic as a literary genre. He suggests that fantastic literature must fulfil three conditions:

First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to *hesitate* between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character... the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations.⁴

² Todorov, *The Fantastic*; Freud, 'The "Uncanny"'.

³ Originally titled *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Todorov's study of the fantastic is not without its critics. They include, for example, Rosemary Jackson, who observes that there is a 'reluctance to relate to psychoanalytic theory,' in Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), p. 61. Also, Neil Cornwell suggests modifications to Todorov's linear model; see Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 38–39. Todorov's model is shown below with details on how each subcategory represents the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* on p. 73.

⁴ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 33, emphasis added.

Todorov observes that the moments of ‘hesitation’ and the fantastic are not necessarily implicit in the texts: ‘the criterion of the fantastic is not situated within the work, but within the reader’s individual experience’.⁵ An audience (whether medieval or modern) that empathises with the character can experience discomfiture within the text without the author having to provide too much description: excessive detail could well generate a sense of disbelief in the audience and the potential for belief in the fantastic will be broken. As the descriptions are not implicit in the text, the onus is on each audience to decide whether, based on their own perceptions, what they have heard is unsettling. This decision suggests a willingness on behalf of the audience to choose ‘whether or not what they perceive derives from “reality” as it exists in the common opinion’.⁶ If an audience chooses not to engage the text in this manner, then the unspoken imagery passes them by. Anyone that is unwilling to participate in the narrative and refuses to engage with the criteria outlined by Todorov is unable to experience the ‘hesitation’ that is necessary to maintain the fantastic.⁷ The ‘pure fantastic’ is that point of ‘hesitation’ where each audience wavers on a knife-edge of believing whether the narrative with which they have been presented is plausible or supernatural: it is a mid-point between faith and incredulity.⁸ As Todorov observes: ‘either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life’.⁹

Only an unconscious agreement to suspend disbelief makes it easier for each audience to engage the fantastic: when an audience already acknowledges the plausibility of the unlikely events, they engage the text with a willing suspension of disbelief or an acceptance of the illusion. The audiences’ responses have, as Jauss observes, ‘been formed by conventions of genre, style or form’, awakening memories of the familiar, although these conventions ‘purposely evoke responses so that they can frustrate them’.¹⁰ When one considers Jauss’s observation in relation to the *Navigatio*, the opening scenes (Brendan’s heritage, the

⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 31, 44.

⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰ H.R. Jauss, ‘Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,’ *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, eds Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, 2nd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 83–90, p. 85.

topography of Ireland, the building of the coracle and the descriptions of the first encounters) are all plausible—if slightly unusual. Therefore, there is no suggestion that there is anything untoward occurring within the text, except by implication. Any discernible feelings of discomfiture are generated by an empathy with a character. Apter argues that ‘the uncanny touches upon material that is frequently ignored because it is too elusive to fit into the normal framework of thought’.¹¹ Her remark suggests that the audience’s hesitation is not represented within the text, but unconsciously generated by the individual within the constraints of their own experience.¹² Iser observes:

The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror; but at the same time, the reality which this process helps to create is one which will be *different* from his own (since, normally, we tend to be bored by the texts that present us with things we already know perfectly well ourselves). Thus we have the apparently paradoxical situation in which the reader is forced to reveal aspects of himself in order to experience a reality that is different from his own...indeed, it is only by leaving behind the familiar world of his own experience that the reader can truly participate in the adventure the literary text offers him.¹³

Iser’s assertion allows us to consider three things about an audience/text relationship, whether that audience is medieval or modern. First, an audience must be a willing participant when engaging with a text that deals with fantastic or marvellous issues: a conscious refusal that an event would ‘never happen’ would drag each audience back to the real world and familiar surroundings. Secondly, having embraced the possibility of the existence of the fantastic, a text may unconsciously evoke memories or fears within each audience and those personal experiences will supersede any descriptions that the text may present, regardless of the depth and detail of the text. Thirdly, there is the paradox that in order to engage the unfamiliar, each audience may only acknowledge it by recognising and comparing it with elements and experiences within themselves. Ironically, therefore, the ‘unknown’ can be understood only in relation to the familiar.

¹¹ T.E. Apter, *Fantasy Literature* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 42.

¹² Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 32 and 34.

¹³ Wolfgang Iser, ‘The Reading Process,’ *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, eds Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, 2nd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 77–83, p. 80.

In order to explain the sub-categories that surround the fantastic in its pure state, Todorov provides a diagram:

uncanny	fantastic-uncanny	fantastic-marvellous	marvellous
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Todorov's model does not have the 'pure fantastic' as a category in its own right, but as a thin meridian line that has 'no distinct frontiers' between the 'fantastic-uncanny' and the 'fantastic-marvellous'.¹⁴ In order to explain some of the sub-categories and how they relate to scenes within the versions of the Brendan narratives, I have expanded the model below to provide more detail:

Todorov's description	uncanny	fantastic-uncanny	pure fantastic	fantastic-marvellous	pure marvellous
Explanation	Audiences' personal anxieties not necessarily implicit in the text	Plausible presented as supernatural	Hesitation... Uncertainty whether events are supernatural or plausible	Supernatural presented as normal	Exotic or hyperbolic marvellous
Examples in the <i>Navigatio/ A.N. Voyage</i>	Building the coracle Claustrophobia	Island of Sheep Jasconius	Provision of food in Ailbe Fiery Arrow in Ailbe (in A.N. Voyage)	Fiery Arrow in Ailbe (in <i>Navigatio</i>) Intoxicating Spring	Conflicts of Monsters

This model demonstrates that both versions of the Brendan narrative being studied correspond with the sub-categories of fantastic literature that are presented in Todorov's diagram. During the course of his discussion of the fantastic, Todorov cites Penzoldt's structure of the ghost story, which is equally valid when considering the elements of the fantastic in both versions of the Brendan narrative. He suggests that the structure of the narrative is 'represented as a rising line which leads to the culminating point... Most authors try to achieve a certain gradation in their ascent to this culmination, first speaking vaguely, then more and more directly'.¹⁵ The next three chapters will discuss that this is precisely

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 44 and 53.

¹⁵ Peter Penzoldt, cited in Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 87.

the effect that is achieved in both versions of the Brendan narrative, although there are significant differences (for example in the *Navigatio*, where the monks enjoy a temporary respite from the fantastic upon the Island of the Three Choirs, discussed on pp. 166–71 below). When this is considered in relation to Todorov's model, there is a gradual movement from what each audience will perceive as unsettling based upon their personal experience (and not everyone will necessarily experience these unsettling feelings). The elements are steadily introduced as the narrative progresses, culminating in the peak of the 'pure marvellous', which is the conflict of the sea monsters.

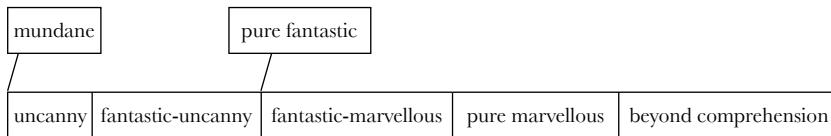
Todorov's survey speaks specifically about the *fantastic* elements in literature. In addition to the presentational modifications outlined above, two further sub-categories could be added to Todorov's model in order to assist further understanding of the movement through the elements of the fantastic. In order for a fantastic narrative to work, the author cannot immediately launch into a vivid and implausible description: this abrupt introduction would not allow the audience an opportunity to suspend their disbelief. Instead, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* begin by anchoring themselves in the plausible and sometimes the mundane. In order to achieve this, Benedeit, in the A.N. *Voyage*, adapts or omits certain scenes that would be of no interest to a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audience. An example of this is where he replaces Brendan's genealogy (which would have been relevant only to an Irish audience) with a dedication to the queen.¹⁶ From a structural point of view, Benedeit's contraction of Brendan's heritage represents only a few lines that set the scene before the events of the narrative are set into motion.

The second revision of Todorov's model is to extend it beyond the 'pure marvellous'. This subcategory, which is best described as 'beyond comprehension', is the aspect of the fantastic that *defies* explanation. Examples in the Brendan narrative include the impossibility of describing the Otherworld beyond the river in the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Picard scribe of ms E of the A.N. *Voyage* also considered the royal dedication at the beginning of the narrative to be irrelevant to his audience and added his own brief introduction: 'Seignor oies que io dirai Dun saint home vos conterai Dyrlande estoit brandans ot non Molt ert de grant religion,' Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 3516, fo. 96 r°.

¹⁷ In modern fiction, this is represented by the narrator's unwillingness to look at some indescribable horror, or through one of the protagonists suffering insanity because their mind is incapable of coping with the experience, for example in the writings of H.P. Lovecraft.

In this instance there would be no boundaries to mark the 'end' of the subcategory, for, as some scenes defy explanation, there can be nothing known about what lies beyond the river. These emendations to Todorov's model make the gradation of the fantastic appear thus:



Revised model to illustrate the gradation of the fantastic

Application of the model

As was indicated in chapter 1, Illingworth observes that the A.N. *Voyage* is divided into three sections of similar lengths.¹⁸ The first section concludes with Brendan's departure from the Paradise of Birds. In each of the scenes in this section there is a satisfactory explanation for each encounter, however implausible a modern audience may consider these scenes. The conclusion of this part of the A.N. *Voyage* presents Brendan a limited view of Paradise, one enjoyed by angels in the form of birds. Hence this chapter deals with the three categories on the left-hand side of the modified model: the mundane, the uncanny, and the fantastic-uncanny. Therefore, this chapter discusses the scenes in the first third of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, that is, those encounters that occur before the line of the 'pure fantastic'.¹⁹ Each of these subcategories overlap, when applied to the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, to maintain a fluidity in the progression of each narrative. The intersection is so pronounced that there are uncanny elements, even in the most mundane of the scenes. This chapter considers how the elements of the fantastic are used in each scene and what effect they might have on an intended audience. This chapter begins, then, by looking at how the texts begin with the mundane, basing themselves upon familiar elements

¹⁸ Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*', p. 218; see the discussion in chapter 1 on p. 41. The A.N. *Voyage* is more structured than the *Navigatio*, therefore these divisions are only approximate when referring to the latter text.

¹⁹ The events of the pure fantastic through to the marvellous will be discussed in chapter 3; those events leading to a point beyond comprehension will be discussed in chapter 4.

that the audience would recognise. Paradoxically, what initially appear as mundane incidents also have an underlying sense of the uncanny, so that the audience might feel uneasy when considering the situations faced by the monks.

Definition of the ‘uncanny’

The word ‘uncanny’ and all its connotations are ambiguous. ‘Canny’, from the Old English *cunnan*—to know—implies comfort, but also suggests supernatural wisdom. However, Freud’s original study was entitled ‘Das “Unheimlich”’, which has its origins in an Old High German word meaning ‘unhomely’, but, in the context of Freud’s essay, translates as ‘uncanny’, meaning, amongst other definitions, ‘mysterious’, ‘weird’, ‘uncomfortably strange or unfamiliar’, ‘supernatural’ and, ‘frightening’.²⁰ Freud was aware of the multiple definitions that his title would draw and analyses various definitions in various languages.²¹ When considering the definition of ‘heimlich’, Freud notes that the home represents what is familiar. However, even something familiar can carry a malign suggestion—for example the witch’s familiar. In addition, the home represents a private area, concealed from others. Adding ‘un’ merely extends the feeling of uncertainty; what had been ‘heimlich’—homely—becomes ‘unheimlich’, ‘unhomely’. This said, almost everything that is not connected with one’s home is ‘unhomely’: each door and window is a threshold leading to the ‘unheimlich’. The familiar with just a hint of doubt creates the uncanny.²² The uncanny is something secretive, concealed from sight, so that others do not get to know about it.²³ The word ‘Heimlichkeit’, used by Freud, belongs to two sets of ideas. Even in his conclusion, Freud offers multiple explanations for why an uncanny experience occurs: ‘either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed’.²⁴ In literature, however, the uncanny is not a theme woven into a text by a writer. Instead it is an ‘effect’: Bennett

²⁰ Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 9–10.

²¹ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”’, pp. 341–47.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 342–43.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 345 and 372.

and Royle observe that 'it is like a foreign body within *ourselves*'.²⁵ The author of the *Navigatio* can, of course, introduce uncanny elements within the text, but remains uncertain of the effects upon the audience. This uncertainty is, to an extent, the effect desired by the author of the *Navigatio* and is repeated in the A.N. *Voyage*.

The opening scenes of the Brendan narratives

Mundane or uncanny?

This section analyses the 'mundane' opening scenes in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* that serve to establish plausible platforms that ultimately progress into fantastic narratives. The scenes discussed in this section include the details of Brendan's genealogy and the narrative of Barrindus. Yet, even though the basic structure of the openings of both versions is essentially the same, the amount of detail presented strongly depends on the interests of the audience for which the version was composed.

By Martin Gray's definition, the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* are hagiographic texts as they describe the life and deeds of a saint.²⁶ The *Navigatio* draws upon other genres of Irish writing. However, unlike the versions of the earlier *Vita Brendani* and the *Betha Brénain* which discuss Brendan's pious deeds in great detail, the *Navigatio* condenses such deeds into a few lines. Rather than focusing on his holiness and miracles, the *Navigatio* describes how Brendan, a monk famed for his abstinence and virtues, was born in Munster and was son of Finnlug Ua Alta of the race of Eoghan.²⁷ An Irish audience would be able to trace Brendan's heritage back to the fathers of the Milesian Race, although MacNéill observes that the name of Brendan's father is a 'significant joining

²⁵ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory: Key Critical Concepts* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), p. 39.

²⁶ 'Pious literature concerning the lives of Christian saints and martyrs', Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 132.

²⁷ 'Filius Finlocha, nepotis Althi de genere Eogeni, stagnili regione Mumnenensium ortus fuit. Erat uir magne abstinencie et in uirtutibus clarus, trium milium fere monachorum pater,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 1*, ll. 1–4. Brendan's genealogy is discussed above on pp. 46–47. For a discussion on the correct representation of 'Althi' see Carney, 'Navigatio (Review)', p. 37.

of the names of two divine heroes of Gaelic mythology, Fionn and Lugh'.²⁸ The author begins by describing what his audiences—nineteenth-century Irish audiences composed of brethren, pilgrims and inhabitants of the monastic *civitas*—would see around them, for example describing Munster as a ‘marshy region’.²⁹ The historical details of Brendan’s heritage could also be corroborated, for example through the *Annals of Ulster*.³⁰ In this way, the *Navigatio* establishes a plausible foundation for the beginning of the narrative, commencing with details befitting a monk of Brendan’s piety and establishing the text’s authority.

The A.N. *Voyage* further condenses the details of Brendan’s life as they appear in the *Navigatio*. After the opening salutation (discussed above on pp. 32–37, 74), the narrative begins by stating that Brendan was born in Ireland of a regal line and establishes him as an honourable abbot of three thousand monks, before addressing his desire to see the Otherworld. In both versions, the details of the opening lines convey exactly what each audience would need to hear about Brendan. For the audience of the *Navigatio* it would be more important to establish the text as a Christian narrative. Conversely, the genealogy of an Irish saint and references to Irish mythology and locations in Ireland—so important in the *Navigatio*—would have had little relevance for an Anglo-Norman audience that was more eager to commence the story of marvellous wonders of Brendan’s journey to Paradise.³¹

Intertextual references

In neither version is it necessary to elaborate further concerning Brendan’s piety: the authority of the text is enough. It is probable that the earliest audience of the *Navigatio* would have been familiar

²⁸ Máire MacNéill, *The Festival of Lughnasa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 102.

²⁹ ‘Stagnili regione,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 1*, l. 2. An editor could also have included this information shortly after composition. Although it is possible that the genealogy of Brendan at the beginning is defective and is probably a corruption in the text, even though the error occurs in all examples of the *Navigatio*; however, Jonathan Wooding suggests that the reference to the Éoganacht Locha Lein is on account of the Cummine Fota, see Jonathan M. Wooding, ‘The Munster Element in *Nauigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*,’ *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, Special Number: Medieval Literature Relating to Cork and Munster (ed. K. Murray) 110 (2005), 33–47, pp. 37–8.

³⁰ ‘[558] Brendan founded the church of Clonfert,’ de Paor, *Saint Patrick’s World*, p. 122.

³¹ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 19–38.

with the hagiographical *Vita Brendani* from other sources and thus his piety would already be rooted in the minds of that audience. There is no manuscript evidence that the *Vita* preceded the *Navigatio*, although there is textual evidence that this is indeed the case.³² This intertextual reference to an *urtext*, an unspoken source for the *Navigatio*, may be considered a form of literary telepathy. Freud describes this effect in relation to the ‘double’ where the uncanny effects are ‘accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another’—in this case the characters are the *urtext* and the audience—‘so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other’.³³ For the modern scholar speculating on the knowledge of the earliest audience, the *Vita Brendani* that preceded the *Navigatio* becomes a phantom text: something that should exist and yet does not.³⁴

The concept of the phantom text is equally valid for the A.N. *Voyage*: Benedeit declares that he has translated the story of Brendan into the romance tongue, so, although this does not evoke the same latent memories of Brendan’s piety, the Anglo-Norman audience would be aware of Brendan’s long-standing heritage.³⁵ Furthermore, if, as Ritchie and Legge maintain, the A.N. *Voyage* was originally dedicated to Matilda and then rededicated to Adeliza after she married Henry in 1121, this creates a further ‘phantom’. If anyone in the twelfth-century audience remembered that the poem was originally dedicated to Matilda, then there would no doubt be an unconscious resonance of the unspoken original dedicatee, following her death in 1118. In addition, no one would forget that it was a maritime disaster that brought about the death of William Adelin, Henry’s heir.

Even the most mundane of conventions have an uncanny resonance. For the modern reader this suggests that, even though there are excellent published editions of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, there is a lost (or phantom) manuscript from which the branches of each of the surviving manuscripts of each version on the *stemma* have originated.³⁶

³² Mac Mathúna, ‘Structure and Transmission,’ pp. 318–37, particularly p. 324; Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxvii.

³³ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 356.

³⁴ Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 277–88.

³⁵ ‘En letre mis e en romanz... De saint Brendan le bon abeth,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 11, 13; see also chapter 1, p. 25.

³⁶ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xlvi; Waters, *Voyage*, p. lxxx. See my discussion of the *stemmae* in appendix one on pp. 245–55.

Although I have added the ‘mundane’ to Todorov’s model, as it is a necessary aspect to frame the fantastic, Todorov’s first category is that of the uncanny, where ‘the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomenon described’.³⁷ As described above, the modern audience generates their own anxieties, and therefore a sense of the uncanny, by empathising with the characters—in this case it is the uncertainty concerning the dedicatees—but this anxiety is not necessarily represented in the text.

The intertextuality described above would have generated a sense of recognition within each audience that was familiar with the Brendan legend in the form of either the *Vita Brendani* or the *Navigatio*. Although drawing on the connectivity of memories is the mildest form of the uncanny, it does evoke a sense of the familiar within the minds of those audiences for which this is relevant. Thus, the uncanny demonstrates the change from what is realistic and familiar to what will eventually become fantastic and unsettling. However, J. Hillis Miller, speaking about the uncanny more generally, observes that if a reader notices that the narrative is ‘wavering away from the literal in one detail, he becomes suspicious of every detail’.³⁸ Because of this, the introduction of the uncanny must be subtle. Thus, another means that the authors of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* use to anchor their respective narratives in the plausible is the introduction of familiar motifs. Both versions include the motif of Barrindus as a means of conveying information concerning the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*—the Promised Land of the Saints.³⁹

The *Navigatio* uses the same devices to present Barrindus as the audience would have already seen when Brendan is introduced: Barrindus is described as being of royal descent and Irish genealogies show him as a fourth generation descendent of Niall of the nine hostages (reigned 379–405) which is ‘credible for an elder associate of Brendan’.⁴⁰ An additional powerful figure that the audience of the *Navigatio* would recognise from local history thus underscores the authority of the text.⁴¹

³⁷ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 41.

³⁸ J. Hillis Miller, ‘*Wuthering Heights*: Repetition and the “Uncanny”,’ *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 42–72, p. 43.

³⁹ For a discussion of the name of Barrindus, see p. 4 n. 9, above.

⁴⁰ Carney, ‘*Navigatio* (Review),’ p. 38. This disagrees with Selmer’s conclusion that Barrindus was abbot of Drumcullen (d. 548 or 552); see Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. 99.

⁴¹ Brown, arguing that the Barrindus episode is ‘obscure and incoherent’, suggests that the inclusion ‘must be a survival of ...some Celtic tradition’; see A.C.L. Brown, ‘Barintus,’ *Revue celtique* 22 (1901), 339–44, pp. 339–40.

In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*, Barrindus is the navigator who conveyed Arthur to Avalon and is the guide to both Arthur and Brendan.⁴² Thus, Barrindus is a link between the *immrama* tales and the Arthurian cycle and, although it is generally assumed that Geoffrey used the *Navigatio* as the source for his caricature of Barrindus, it is also possible that the character has developed from a sea-deity of the Welsh legends.⁴³ Barrindus—or Barri—appears in the *Life of St David* by Rhygyfarch, composed around the end of the eleventh century.⁴⁴ Here Barri borrows a horse from David to ride across the sea from Wales to Ireland. Brown concludes that the name is a hypocorism and that by reversing the words of the Irish name *Barr-finn*, we obtain *Finn-barr*, the name of the patron of Cork.⁴⁵ This name of Finnbarr, literally meaning 'white-haired', has been Latinised, but it represents the name of a Welsh sea-deity, 'a lord of the Land beyond the waves... like Manannán'; however, for the purposes of the *Navigatio*, *Barr-finn* has been christianised and changed into a saint.⁴⁶ Thus, this intertextuality would also evoke familiar feelings for the earliest audiences of the *Navigatio* and recognition of Barrindus, even though there is no overt declaration concerning his heritage.

Uncanny-familiar

Unlike the opening of the *Navigatio*, that of the A.N. *Voyage* describes Brendan as an old monk desiring to see Paradise and hell before he dies.⁴⁷ When he seeks advice, Barrindus is not an abbot, but a hermit

⁴² 'Jluc post bellum camblani uulnere iesum/Duximus arcturum nos conducente barintho/Equora cui fuerant et celi sydera nota'; see Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Vita Merlini*, ed. John Jay Parry, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, vol. 10, no. 3 (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1925), p. 84.

⁴³ The name Barrind could be a hypocorism: Barr-find 'little/dear finn/finnian' perhaps Finnian of Clonard; see Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Towards a Methodology in Early Irish Hagiography,' *Peritia* 1 (1982), 146–59, p. 147. See also Paul Russell, 'Patterns of Hypocorism in Early Medieval Hagiography,' *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, eds John Carey, Máire Herbert, and Pádraig Ó Riain (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 237–49.

⁴⁴ MS Cotton Vespasius A.xiv is a collection of lives of Welsh saints; see also Simon D. Evans, ed., *The Welsh Life of St David* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ There may also be a connection with Brendan's birth name *broen finn*—white drop—see, for example, O'Donoghue, *Brendan the Voyager*, p. 11.

⁴⁶ Brown, 'Barintus,' pp. 342 and 344; Joseph Dunn, 'The Brendan Problem,' *The Catholic Historical Review* 6 (1921), 395–477, p. 412.

⁴⁷ 'Cum hoem qui ert de mult grant sens,/ De granz cunseilz e de rustes,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 40–41.

in the woods. Advice from a hermit is a common motif in medieval literature, for example Ogrin in Béroul's *Tristran*.⁴⁸ In the *Navigatio*, Barrindus spoils the mystery of how Paradise is represented at the end of the narrative by describing it in these opening scenes. This means that the ending of the *Navigatio*, where the descriptions are repeated, is also uncannily familiar when it arrives. In the A.N. *Voyage*, on the other hand, the omission of these descriptions enables Benedeit to keep the wonderful imagery of Paradise until the end of the poem. Waters observes of the *Navigatio* that the 'full description of the voyagers' goal at the very outset results not merely in repetition but also in an inartistic anti-climax'.⁴⁹ Thus the reader can 'follow the process of identification [of fantastic elements] step by step', which, as Todorov suggests, is a necessary condition of the fantastic as a genre.⁵⁰ Of course, a Christian audience that believed in miracles would accept that a saint such as Barrindus could travel to the Otherworld, although for a culture that did little travelling across land, let alone water, the audience of the *Navigatio* might be filled with a mild form of agoraphobia when contemplating such a long journey overseas. The idea of the opening scenes being linked with phobias will be discussed in the next section.⁵¹ Meanwhile, the narrative of both versions establishes saintly authority through the testimony of Barrindus to whom Brendan listens: if Brendan is a means of conveying a didactic message to the audience, then that audience must also listen to his wisdom.

Despite the numerous maxims, Benedeit's version of the A.N. *Voyage* further serves to distance the narrative from the hagiographic conventions. As the A.N. *Voyage* is a beautifully crafted poem in octosyllabic couplets, it suggests an artificial construction rather than a legitimate account of a saint's deeds. Similarly, the introduction of devices (for example obtaining information from the hermit in the woods) suggests homage to a literary convention. Unlike the *Navigatio*, there is a hint of the incredible in the opening scenes of the A.N. *Voyage*: an angel appears in order to sanction the journey, but divine authority comes only once Brendan and his brethren have prayed individually, hoping

⁴⁸ Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, trans. Norris J. Lacy (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1989), ll. 1360–422. This is a common motif in the *imrama*: Mael Dúin consults with Nuca the druid, while Snedgus visits his 'soul-friend' prior to their journeys; see Stokes, 'Mael Dúin,' p. 459; Whitley Stokes, 'Snedgus,' p. 17.

⁴⁹ Waters, *Voyage*, p. lxxxv.

⁵⁰ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 89.

⁵¹ See my discussion on pp. 86–92.

to understand God's purpose for them. The audiences of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would probably have believed in visitations by angels as they were substantiated by Biblical authority.⁵²

Although the opening scenes of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* do not contain any elements of the supernatural, there is still a vaguely uncanny sense of unconscious indebtedness concerning the literary genealogy of both Brendan and Barrindus of which each audience would be aware. In the case of the *Navigatio*, the audience would necessarily be aware of hagiographic and possibly also of the *imrama* conventions, most specifically the *Vita Brendani* and, if Brown is correct in his assertion, also the Life of David.⁵³ Conversely, the courtly audience of the A.N. *Voyage* would be aware of the Latin heritage of the *Navigatio* and the conventions to which Benedeit adheres. Of course, no text is created in isolation: it is always constructed within a convention. The *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* contain recognisable sources and motifs that can be traced: Philippa Semper suggests that a narrative 'upholds textual authority... its textuality inheres in a complex set of intertextual relations, through which other texts are adapted, translated and transformed', in other words, a text authorises another text and, therefore, by having a recognisable source, it establishes its authority.⁵⁴ The heritage creates a telepathy between the audience and the literary traditions and generates 'phantom effects, even if the phantoms do not exist'.⁵⁵ The monastic audience of the *Navigatio* is uncannily aware of Brendan's past, without it being necessary for it to be mentioned in the narrative. Yet, there is nothing uncanny or supernatural in the authors of both versions presupposing knowledge on behalf of their audiences. Jackson argues that fantastic literature in general deals 'blatantly and repeatedly with unconscious material', which ultimately assists in 'articulating the un-said'.⁵⁶ Thus, even though there was probably no intention to introduce uncanny elements into either version of the Brendan narrative at such an early stage, they emerge from the text in the most mundane of scenes: it falls on each audience

⁵² Cf. Daniel 10: 9–21; Luke 1:11, 28.

⁵³ Brown, 'Barintus,' pp. 339–40.

⁵⁴ Philippa Semper, '“A boke... of the whych the Mapamundi is made”: John Mandeville and the textuality of Maps,' unpublished paper presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, 10 July 2001.

⁵⁵ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 278.

⁵⁶ Jackson, *Fantasy*, pp. 6 and 48.

to recognise what it is that unsettles them, even if the elements are within the audience's own experience and not within the text itself.

'Hesitation'

The authors of both versions ensure that the opening scenes contain only plausible elements to establish the realistic foundation upon which the narrative is based. To further defuse any potential doubt from each audience of the *Navigatio*, the author has Brendan articulate this 'hesitation' by selecting fourteen monks and asking their advice on whether they should travel to the Promised Land. The brethren speak in one voice, stating that they will undertake the journey if it is the will of God.⁵⁷ Speaking together *could* represent the monks' enthusiasm, but it could also suggest that the monks are unable to turn away from the divine authority that has sanctioned their journey. The chosen brethren are unable to turn away from their fate, just as the 'supernumeraries'—the late-coming monks that Brendan did not choose to accompany him on his journey—cannot turn aside from their fates.⁵⁸ This inability to take independent action is similar to Freud's description of an unconscious and involuntary repetition (one aspect of the 'uncanny') that charges a scene that 'would otherwise be innocent enough with an uncanny atmosphere, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable'.⁵⁹ Thus, the voyage is established as a spiritual pilgrimage, but one that can only be completed through obedience, piety and with divine assistance. Even though saints and angels have authorised the journey, the technical vocabulary and details describing the building of the coracle in both versions emphasise the discipline, precision and hard work necessary to succeed.

Establishing the coracle as 'familiar'

Although that there is a sense of the uncanny generated even in the earliest scenes of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, these reactions are not explicit in either version of the narrative and are created only

⁵⁷ 'At illi omnes responderunt,' Selmer, *caput 7*, ll. 3–4; 'Respondent lui comunalment,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 113.

⁵⁸ There are also three evil barons in Béroul's *Tristran*: two of them are killed; however, the manuscript breaks off before we learn the fate of the third, but one can conjecture that he too was killed, Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 1708–10, 4040–42 and 4472–73.

⁵⁹ Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" pp. 359–60.

when a critic considers the unspoken intertextuality that must exist in all texts. The same is true with regard to the building of the coracle and the arrival of the supernumeraries. However, the sense of the uncanny generated in these scenes is slightly stronger than might be caused simply by the literary indebtedness of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. It might derive from the sense of claustrophobia when travelling in an overcrowded coracle and the knowledge that something is predetermined when Brendan warns the supernumeraries of their fates.

The purpose of these opening scenes is to construct a realistic foundation upon which the ensuing narrative is to be built. It is through this device that the author of the *Navigatio* gains the trust of the audience before gradually introducing scenes that could evoke discomfort, culminating in marvellous imagery. To this end, the author writing for a ninth-century secular Irish audience included details of a hide-covered coracle with which they would most likely be familiar, although this vessel was not necessarily contemporary with the historical Brendan.⁶⁰ Freud observes that the writer of the uncanny in literature ‘creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposefully, whether he is taking us into the real world or a purely fantastic one of his own creation’.⁶¹ Thus, even though the inclusion of the hide-covered coracle is an anachronistic displacement, it would be familiar to a ninth-century Irish audience. This uncertainty would most likely only be noticeable by one who was familiar with vessels used in sixth and ninth-century Ireland. The building of the coracle is an artificial inclusion to provide familiar imagery for the audiences of the *Navigatio*, although the descriptions highlight some of the dangers of the journey. In the *Navigatio*, the coracle is a light vessel with wicker sides and ribs and covered in cowhide: it requires significant faith to believe that such a vessel would be able to withstand tempestuous ocean conditions.⁶² These details further serve to ground the narrative in the

⁶⁰ Wooding observes that the historical value of the coracle in the *Navigatio* and the *immrama* is ‘questionable’ as the texts are ‘highly imaginative and often written well after the events that they purport to depict’; see Jonathan M. Wooding, *Communication and Commerce along the Western Sealanes, A.D. 400–800* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996), p. 10.

⁶¹ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 351.

⁶² ‘Sanctus Brendanus et qui cum eo erant, acceptis ferramentis, fecerunt nauiculam leuissimam, costatam et columnnatam ex silua, sicut mos est in illis partibus, et cooperuerunt illam coriis bouinis [atque rubricatis] in roborina cortice. Et linierunt foris omnes iuncturas pellum ex butyro,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 4*, ll. 6–10.

mundane: the preparation of the hides and the building of the wicker frames were probably also elements with which the secular audience of the *Navigatio* would have been familiar.⁶³

Although the coracle would have been familiar to the audience of the *Navigatio*, Waters argues that Benedeit was probably unfamiliar with it.⁶⁴ It is uncertain whether the reason he describes the vessel as being manufactured of timber ('mairen', l. 174) and pinewood ('sapin', l. 175) is due to an unfamiliarity with the coracle, or whether he recognised the light wicker frame as being impractical for enduring the ocean conditions. If the latter is the case, Benedeit's description makes the opening of his narrative more realistic. The details of a sturdy vessel capable of carrying Brendan and his brethren as well as food and utensils to last for forty days would hardly challenge the imagination of Benedeit's twelfth-century courtly audience, who would be more familiar with sea-worthy vessels through the king's own battle fleet and the Ship List.⁶⁵ Given Benedeit's plea in the Prologue that he should not be derided for his efforts in putting the narrative 'en romans', he is clearly seeking the approval of his audience by presenting them with elements that they would find familiar.⁶⁶

Claustrophobia: the late-coming monks and the confinement of the coracle

The Supernumeraries

The authors of both versions describe the sea-faring vessels in terms with which their respective audiences would be familiar and would be more readily able to accept. Such audiences would also be aware of the limits in the amount that their respective vessels could hold. Brendan specifically selects the monks to undertake the journey to the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* to perform the *peregrinatio*; however, this

⁶³ A description of the construction of a coracle is also found in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*; see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 38–41.

⁶⁴ Waters, *Voyage*, p. 103.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Hollister, *Henry I*, pp. 174–77 and 185.

⁶⁶ 'Mais tul defent ne seit gabeth,/Quant dit que set e fait que peot:/Itel servant blasmer ne steut,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 14–16.

number is unbalanced by the arrival of three supernumeraries.⁶⁷ The ‘supernumeraries’—late-coming monks who join the company despite Brendan’s warning—are another common motif that appears in early Irish literature, for example in the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*.⁶⁸ These characters do not complete the journey but are lost along the way. In the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, as well as some of the *immrama*, they arrive late and are thus marked as unlucky, just as Judas is the last of the disciples to be introduced in the gospels. The number of monks Brendan initially chose to undertake the journey (fourteen) is significant. The audience would anticipate that the supernumeraries would not be returning from the journey as the coracle should only carry ‘two times seven’ monks.⁶⁹ A common feature of hagiographic texts is that a saint is allowed to glimpse the future; thus, a sense of foreboding is enhanced by Brendan’s prediction that only one of the supernumeraries would find salvation.⁷⁰ However, the intertextual knowledge of the stock

⁶⁷ ‘Transactis iam quadraginta diebus et salutis fratribus commendatisque omnibus preposito monasterii sui, qui fuit postea suus successor in eodem loco,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 3*, ll. 3–5.

⁶⁸ Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ pp. 460–61. They are also seen in the *Vita Brendani* and the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*. However in the *Vita Brendani*, the monks are not latecomers and have committed no transgressions. They appear in all versions of the Brendan narrative, although in the Middle Dutch *De Reis van Sint Brandaan* they are also not latecomers. The fragment of the Norse version does not include the arrival of the supernumeraries, but it does include the punishment of one of the monks in the Deserted Citadel; see Andrew Hamer, ‘The Norse Version,’ *The Voyage of Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation*, eds W.R.J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 265–75, p. 269. For further discussion see Teresa Carp, ‘The Three Late-Coming Monks: Tradition and Invention in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*,’ *Medievalia et Humanistica N.S.* 12 (1984), 127–42.

⁶⁹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. 85. Selmer observes that events of significance in the *Navigatio* happen in threes, fours and sevens, or their multiples. The repetition of certain numbers in the *Navigatio* suggests that the presence of the supernumeraries upsets the balance of the magical number. Cf. Carp, ‘Three Late-Coming Monks,’ p. 130. In the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*, a wizard tells Máel Dúin to travel with seventeen men, yet Máel Dúin allows his foster brothers to join him, which causes the craft to be blown off course. Elva Johnston suggests that it is on account of the supernumeraries that Máel Dúin is able to achieve salvation rather than vengeance; see Johnston, ‘A Sailor on the Seas of Faith,’ pp. 239–52; Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ pp. 459 and 463.

⁷⁰ ‘Iste frater bonum opus operatus est. Nam Deus preparauit sibi aptissimum locum. Vobis autem preparabit teterimum iudicium,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 5*, ll. 8–9; ‘Les dous de vus avrat Satan/Od Abiron e od Dathan./Li tierz de vus mult ert temptez,/ Mais par Deu ert bien sustentez,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 199–202. The thirty-seven saints that demonstrate the ability to tell the future are listed in Dorothy Ann Bray, *A List of Motifs in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints*, FF Communications, 252 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1992), pp. 111–12 and 120.

motifs used by the author means that the audience are also able to have sight of the future and may experience an anxiety that the fate of the monks is pre-determined. By following Brendan, the supernumeraries are effectively courting their own deaths.⁷¹ This desire to undertake the journey, even if it results in death, is more pronounced in the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* where the foster brothers threaten to drown themselves rather than be left behind.

As with the *Navigatio*, the supernumeraries also arrive late in the A.N. *Voyage*. In addition to predicting their fates, Brendan likens the two ill-fated supernumeraries to Abiram and Dathan, two officials whom the earth swallowed when they rebelled against Moses. Through considering the supernumeraries in relation to Biblical characters, a sense of the uncanny is generated within any audience familiar with the Book of Numbers, as Abiram and Dathan go ‘alive into the grave’.⁷² The grave is something that we ultimately expect: death, although not essentially familiar, is a reality we all face. As Freud observes ‘the goal of all life is death’.⁷³ The fear of being buried alive, then, is partially to confront that reality from a cognitive standpoint, yet it is still rooted in an infantile irrationality, leading to fear. Freud argues that ‘being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny thing of all’.⁷⁴ It is an extreme form of claustrophobia and links the premature death of the supernumeraries with the confinement of the coracle.

Although the coracle represents what is familiar (or *heimlich*) to the monks, one should consider that, when travelling in the coracle, that which is *heimlich* is not necessarily safe. Particularly in the *Navigatio* the vessel is an oxhide shell demanding faith from the brethren that it can withstand the rigours of the ocean.⁷⁵ Indeed, in the *Navigatio*, the monks take the extra precaution of carrying two replacement

⁷¹ Freud discusses the ‘Death Drive’ (*Todestrieb*) in Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. C.J.M. Hubback (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), pp. 47–50 and 54–63; see Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 84–106; also Jonathan Dollimore, *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 180–97.

⁷² Numbers 16:33.

⁷³ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 47. Cf. Ecclesiastes 7:2, ‘Death is the destiny of every man’.

⁷⁴ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 366; Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 142–71.

⁷⁵ ‘Fecerunt nauiculam leuissimam, costatam et columnatam ex silua, sicut mos est in illis partibus, et cooperuerunt illam coriis bouinis [atque rubricatis] in roborina cortice,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 4*, ll. 7–9; conversely, in the A.N. *Voyage*, the vessel has a wooden frame: ‘Tute dedenz de fust sapin,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 176.

skins.⁷⁶ The coracle is also laden with contradictions that may also generate anxieties: the monks are not 'in' the water, but neither are they away from it. Although the coracle represents a haven for the faithful monks, it does not offer the safety of dry land and, certainly towards the beginning of the voyage, in both versions, the monks demonstrate little faith as they require spiritual comfort.⁷⁷ Burgess suggests of the A.N. *Voyage* that 'fear is an emotion which seriously undermines the monks' capacity to progress in their quest. It must be considered as a lack of belief in God'.⁷⁸ This lack of trust is, in part, due to the fact that, although the monks have a clear idea of their destination, the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*, they have no idea of how to achieve it. However, further anxieties are generated by the fact that, despite the wide horizon, the coracle is a confining space with no opportunity to move for long periods.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the supernumeraries would make the coracle overcrowded, which would instil feelings of claustrophobia—another form of the uncanny—in each audience. The imagery of the confinement of the monks in an overcrowded coracle, and, at the same time, staring at an unobtainable horizon for months on end, can only serve to induce an intense feeling of both claustrophobia and agoraphobia in any audience that empathises with their predicament. The many weeks of an unchanging horizon must dilute the monks' certainty that they are moving *somewhere*, to the extent that, when the wind drops, the monks express their collective anxiety that they are unable to move at all.⁸⁰ Admittedly, for the monks, the pilgrimage at sea represents an absence of all material things: the unchanging features of the sea can

⁷⁶ 'Et miserunt duas alias paraturas nauis de aliis coriis intus in nauim,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 4*, ll. 10–11. The *Imram curaig Ua Corra* describes how sea worms gnaw through the two lower hides of the vessel; see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 39 and 55.

⁷⁷ 'Fratres, nolite formidare. Deus enim adiutor noster est et nautor et gubernator atque gubernat,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 6–7; 'Metez vus en Deu maneie,/E n'i ait nul qui s'esmaie,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 225–26.

⁷⁸ Glyn S. Burgess, 'Savoir and faire in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan*,' *French Studies* 49 (1995), 257–74, p. 262.

⁷⁹ 'Et stipendia quadraginta dierum et butyrum ad pelles preparandas ad cooperiumentum nauis et cetera utensilia que ad usum uite humane pertinent,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 4*, ll. 11–13; 'Ustilz i mist tant cum estout,/E cum la nef porter en pout;' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 179–80.

⁸⁰ 'Cessauit uentis, et ceperunt nauigare usque dum uires eorum deficerent,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 4–5; 'Desque li venz tuz lur fud gurz;/Dunc s'esmaient tuit li frere/Pur le vent qui falit ere,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 220–22. In the A.N. *Voyage* this shows that the first lesson that the monks must learn is the practicalities of seafaring, although in the *Navigatio* they are already aware that it is only necessary to row when there is no wind.

allow them to focus solely on God and the spiritual enlightenment that they need in order to achieve Paradise.⁸¹ Yet, although water is the symbol of Christian purity and represents a symbolic baptism, the sea voyage is inappropriate for a period of spiritual discipline. There are too many dangers and distractions for the monks, which could cloud their spiritual growth.

The modern concept of claustrophobia—discomfiture arising from an invasion of personal space—developed out of studies by psychologists such as Freud, although an understanding of the subject only began with the publication of Benjamin Ball's influential article 'On Claustrophobia'.⁸² It is unlikely that the medieval audience had any understanding of the psychological impact of claustrophobia. The root of the word suggests the term originates from the Latin *claustrum* (meaning 'bar' or 'bolt') that later developed into the word 'cloister'. So, although any audience of the Middle Ages would not understand the psychological anxieties that claustrophobia carries, they might well understand the concept of voluntary withdrawal of society, or incarceration. It is even possible that the Old English elegy, 'The Wife's Lament', describes a form of claustrophobia where the narrator bewails that she was commanded to live in a grave ('in þam eorðscræfē') and confined by a protecting hedge ('bitre burgtunas') but that she longed to be outside in the lofty mountains.⁸³ Furthermore, given that punishment was harsh in the Middle Ages, and that, prior to the Magna Carta, one could be imprisoned without trial, confinement was certainly something to be feared. It is likely that both the audience of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* had some concept of phobias and, more specifically, a fear of confinement or incarceration. Yet, having no specific term for it meant it could only be discussed in spiritual, rather than psychological, terms. As Freud observes: 'the Middle Ages quite consistently ascribed all such maladies to the influence of demons, and in this their psychology was almost correct'.⁸⁴

Although the coracle remains familiar, the terrain—the ocean and the islands—is not. Freud observes that 'something has to be added

⁸¹ This spiritual understanding is the most essential part of their journey and only once they have achieved this can they achieve Paradise. Conversely, it was not essential for Barrindus and Mernóc, who reached the *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* and returned to the *Insulam deliciosa* in a relatively short time.

⁸² Benjamin Ball, 'On Claustrophobia,' *British Medical Journal*, 6 September 1879, p. 371.

⁸³ 'The Wife's Lament,' *The Exeter Anthology*, vol. 1, pp. 331–33, ll. 28–31.

⁸⁴ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 366.

to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny'.⁸⁵ There is nothing overtly frightening in the coracle's departure; what is unfamiliar is the feeling of confinement. The unfamiliar would further be manifested as claustrophobia by the absence of familiar aural stimuli, which one might view as an uncanny silence. Freud observes that silence is an element in the production of the infantile anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never quite become free. Given that the supernumeraries are travelling towards their deaths and that the remaining brethren are seeking the land that they will inherit after their deaths, they illustrate Apter's assertion that 'the repetition principle... is an effort to restore a psychic state that is developmentally primitive and marked by the drainage of energy in accord with the death instinct'.⁸⁶ This is a part of the 'repetition effect' that Freud observes, which includes 'the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes'.⁸⁷ The supernumeraries are bound to follow the journey through to *their* end, acting as sacrificial lambs so that the chosen brethren can learn from the supernumeraries' mistakes, even though their transgressions are not often spelled out to each audience.⁸⁸ Furthermore, both versions of the narrative present a description of the 'premature burial' where the supernumerary in question is still very much alive and conscious of being dragged to hell.⁸⁹ The brutal damnation of the supernumerary serves two purposes: first, it creates an anxiety of being buried alive.⁹⁰ Secondly, it allows the narrative an opportunity to present a convincing account of hell in order to terrify the audiences so that they may receive the didactic message.

Claustrophobia is a mild form of the uncanny and there is nothing supernatural about it. Indeed, even if a text describes a feeling of confinement and describes the discomfiture of one that suffers from claustrophobia, the *experience* of claustrophobia is not something that can be inherent in a text, and one who has never experienced the anxiety cannot empathise with those who have. Thus, as Todorov suggests, the fantastic is not something intrinsic in a text, but something that each

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 341.

⁸⁶ Apter, *Fantasy Literature*, p. 32.

⁸⁷ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 356.

⁸⁸ "Ve tibi, fili, quia recepisti in uita tua meriti talem finem", Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 24, ll. 15–16.

⁸⁹ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 24, ll. 10–11; Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1200.

⁹⁰ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 366.

member of any audience brings with them.⁹¹ Pacifying an audience with quotidian descriptions can quash such an anxiety. Therefore, the only element of the supernatural in the opening of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* is the prediction of the death of the supernumeraries, something that an astute audience would already anticipate. Psychologically, then, by travelling towards the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* in an over-crowded coracle for sustained periods, the monks are required to face deep-rooted trauma in order to complete their spiritual cleansing. The physical pilgrimage becomes a means for the monks to purge themselves of the mental, emotional and spiritual baggage that makes them impure in the sight of Christ. Those who do not succeed in this confrontation of impurities (the supernumeraries) fail to complete the journey. In the A.N. *Voyage*, the supernumeraries represent a moral failure as, symbolically, the disappearance of each is associated with devils.⁹² However, the feelings of confinement which pervade this scene are created by further uncanny elements, for example the confinement of the cyclical journey and the sense that the fates of the supernumeraries are unavoidable.

The fate of the supernumeraries

From a Christian standpoint, in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, two monks are doomed because they endanger the journey to Paradise. The first monk succumbs to temptation and dies, although he achieves salvation by repenting for the theft of an item.⁹³ The transgression of a second monk is only implied in the narratives. However, like Jonah, he is perhaps also the cause of the wind that blows the coracle towards the mouth of hell where, like an automaton, he leaps ashore and devils drag him away.⁹⁴ The fates of these supernumeraries demonstrate that misdeeds are dealt with swiftly and the punishment for the unrepentant

⁹¹ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 41.

⁹² A devil possesses the first monk (l. 344); a hundred devils seize the second after he jumps ashore at the smoke-capped mountain (l. 1206) and only after Judas is dragged back to hell is the third monk discovered missing (ll. 1499–1502). See Illingworth, ‘The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*’, p. 223.

⁹³ This item is a bridle in the *Navigatio*, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 56–57. The item is a goblet in the A.N. *Voyage*, Waters, *Voyage*, l. 315; cf. p. 85, n. 120.

⁹⁴ ‘Ve mihi, pater, predor a uobis, et non habeo potestatem ut possim uenire ad uos,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 24*, ll. 10–11; ‘Seignur, de vus or sui preiez,/Pur mes pecchez, bien le creez,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1203–4.

tant is severe.⁹⁵ They themselves parallel the two thieves crucified with Christ: one is promised a place in heaven following his repentance, the other thief is damned.⁹⁶

The *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* differ on the fate of a third supernumerary. In the *Navigatio*, he is left on the Island of the Three Choirs as a blessing and, thus, the fates of all three show three aspects of the soul after death: achieving Paradise through good deeds; achieving salvation through repentance; and damnation. Benedeit, however, omits the Island of the Three Choirs in the A.N. *Voyage*, presumably because it contains a wearisome liturgical passage and provides little to further the narrative.⁹⁷ Instead, Benedeit composes an original scene where a monk vanishes after the encounter with Judas and, although the implication is that devils take him to hell along with Judas, the fate of this supernumerary is undecided so that even Brendan does not know.⁹⁸ Burgess observes that Brendan knows more than the other brethren and considers 'whether the learning process undergone by the monks is different from that undergone by Brendan himself'.⁹⁹ Certainly, in other encounters, Brendan has foreknowledge and instructs the brethren accordingly. The twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audience remain as ignorant concerning the later plot developments as the monks and those who are receptive to a didactic message learn lessons of faith alongside the brethren. Similarly, the undecided fate of one monk fulfils a criterion of the fantastic as 'an ideal art of the fantastic must keep to indecision'.¹⁰⁰ The A.N. *Voyage* avoids giving answers to quash its audience's 'hesitation': the ambiguity assists in generating the moment of the pure fantastic for the audience's uncertainties. This effect is further enhanced by Brendan's prophecy. The *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* vary in their understanding of the importance of the supernumeraries. For the *Navigatio* they represent the embodiment of what happens to the soul after death, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage* they demonstrate that the

⁹⁵ ‘‘Ibi fui quando deglutii fratrem uestrum, et ideo erat infernus letus ut emisisset foras flamas ingentes’’, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 25, ll. 26–28.

⁹⁶ Luke 23:43.

⁹⁷ Benedeit may also not have been aware of the literary significance of this scene in relation to the *immrama*; this is discussed in chapter 3 on pp. 170–71.

⁹⁸ ‘Sachez qu'il ad sun judgement,/U de repos u de turment,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1509–10.

⁹⁹ Burgess, ‘*Savoir* and *faire*,’ p. 259.

¹⁰⁰ Louis Vax, cited in Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 44.

punishment for any transgression is swift and severe and that no one can truly know what the afterlife holds.

The departure of the supernumeraries shows that despite divine assistance, some of the characters are fated not to survive the voyage.¹⁰¹ The uncertainty as to whether the successful completion of the journey is a foregone conclusion may well generate empathy between the characters and each audience and may lead the latter to reflect on their own future and ultimate judgement.¹⁰² The loss of a crew-member shows that the voyage is not easy and that there will be casualties along the way; it also shows that transgressors are dealt with less sympathetically than any of the other monks. In general, the crew are a nameless conglomerate: they have no individual identity. Yet, the supernumeraries' actions may lead to death or damnation and, to each medieval audience concerned about the realities of hell, there can be little more terrifying than a personal description of hellish torments described by the damned monk and Judas Iscariot. Psychologically, by identifying with the supernumeraries' fates, the audience is provided with a discursive space in which they are able to rehearse their own death and possibly come to a form of understanding or mild acceptance of the inevitable. However, the fantastic lasts only as long as the 'hesitation' of the audience, for that period during which they cannot reconcile themselves with the unnerving descriptions, nor dismiss them as supernatural. Once that 'hesitation' is passed, all members of the audience can comfort themselves that what they perceive derives from reality as it exists outside of their imagination.¹⁰³ The identification with the supernumeraries also represents the first true introduction of fantastic imagery in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, although in both versions it is dismissed in a couple of lines.¹⁰⁴

For the pilgrims who have travelled to the monastery in order to hear the tale of Brendan's fabulous voyage, the focus of the *Navigatio* is aimed at their spiritual edification. By promoting the narrative as a pilgrimage, the authors might also wish it to be considered as a pilgrimage of the mind, 'designed by the Church as an armchair sub-

¹⁰¹ In *VB6*, the smith of the company dies while travelling with Brendan; see Stokes, *Book of Lismore*, p. 257.

¹⁰² Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 34–35.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁴ 'Fiat uoluntas uestra, o filioli,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 5*, ll. 6–7; 'Il les cumut e sis receipt; Qu'en avendrat, bien le purveit,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 195–96.

stitute for a real pilgrimage to Rome'.¹⁰⁵ Alternatively, one may read this as a description of a physical journey that details the dangers of navigation in uncharted waters. Because the authors evoke a plurality of interpretations, a fixed solution cannot be found for what effect the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would have on the spiritual development of their respective audiences. The duality of interpretation embraces the uncanny: Todorov argues that for the successful introduction of fantastic imagery there must be two solutions, 'one probable and supernatural, the other improbable and rational'.¹⁰⁶ The religious emphasis of the pilgrimage is the 'probable...supernatural' solution, and the physical journey is the 'improbable...rational' explanation. Implausibly, both interpretations must have equal credence as both fantastic and uncanny definitions; yet, in the *Navigatio*, the emphasis on encouraging Christian growth is desirable and therefore *heimlich*. Among its many definitions, Freud observes that *heimlich* is 'on the one hand...what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight'.¹⁰⁷ Thus, even within these definitions there is a plurality of meaning—the 'hesitation' required by the fantastic where both the reader and the character 'must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion'.¹⁰⁸

The patterns of the journey

In addition to providing physical and spiritual discipline, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* describe how the monks conform to the life of monastic discipline, even during their journey. The *Navigatio* emphasises that the monks observe the monastic structure by describing daily and annual monastic litanies and Christian celebrations. Paradoxically, these celebrations serve to make the unfamiliar (represented by the journey) familiar to each audience by presenting to them elements that they would recognise. Draak observes that the idea of the pilgrimage and the migration over sea 'changed the religious pattern of the Celtic tribes of Ireland and made them "lose" some of their Continental gods'.¹⁰⁹ Although the texts' emphasis upon monastic discipline shows that it is

¹⁰⁵ Harbison, *Pilgrimage*, p. 237.

¹⁰⁶ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 49.

¹⁰⁷ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 345.

¹⁰⁸ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁹ Draak, 'Migration over Sea,' p. 85.

vital for Brendan and his crew to maintain their orders throughout their journey, it also shows that the idea of a pilgrimage across the water might serve to sanitise the pagan heritage of Ireland and to make it Christian and safe. Once a framework of monastic discipline has been established, it is tempting to believe that the monks are free to sail the ocean as they search for Paradise. However, this is not the case in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* where it is prophesied that they will journey for seven years, returning to pre-determined locations for principal festivals before finally achieving Paradise.¹¹⁰ For Brendan and his monks, their future has been determined and this has been reinforced by Brendan's prophecy concerning the supernumeraries. The latter cannot turn aside from their fates, and the other monks are compelled to follow a seven-year cyclical journey. The monks, and presumably the early Irish and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audiences, would have been aware of the importance of the liturgical festivals that the brethren celebrate in specific locations. The familiarity of these celebrations is enhanced by the fact that Brendan must follow a restrictive journey, with no room for manoeuvre, spiralling closer to the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*. Thus, what is 'familiar and agreeable' is also stifling.¹¹¹ Yet, repetition only serves to familiarise each audience, whether medieval or modern, with *certain* parts of the text, allowing them to find elements against which they can anchor themselves before addressing the waves of marvellous imagery that eventually follow. Like the claustrophobia in the coracle and the citadel, the cyclical nature of the journey also gives a sense of predetermination: the monks can no more turn away from their fates than the supernumeraries can escape theirs.¹¹²

In both versions, Brendan's voyage lasts for seven years. Janet Hillier Caulkins describes the journey in terms of a purgatorial labyrinth, suggesting that Brendan circles around Paradise, coiling slowly closer to God. She illustrates this in the diagram (below).¹¹³ Thus, the journey becomes a metaphor for the difficulties faced in Christian life, particu-

¹¹⁰ 'Tu autem cum tuis fratribus habes unum annum in tuo itinere. Adhuc restant sex,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 11*, ll. 44–45; 'Tuz cez set anz freiz vostre turn,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 878.

¹¹¹ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 345.

¹¹² I discuss the monks who lose control of their movements on pp. 166–68 and 191–93.

¹¹³ J. Hillier Caulkins, 'Les notations numériques et temporelles dans la *Navigatio de saint Brendan de Benedict*,' *Le Moyen Âge: Revue d'histoire et de philologie* 80 (1974), 245–60, p. 255.

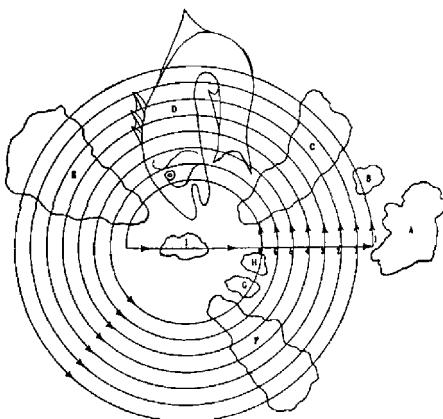


Illustration showing the spiralling nature of Brendan's Voyage.

larly those of monastic discipline. Considering labyrinths more generally, Matthews asserts that 'the larger examples [of the labyrinth] were used for the performance of miniature pilgrimages in substitution for the long and tedious journeys formerly laid on penitents'.¹¹⁴ The labyrinth, as a path through a church, can be considered as a replacement for an actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the same way that walking the Stations of the Cross is a representation of Christ's journey to Calvary. As Sumption observes, 'by re-enacting in their own lives the sufferings of Christ they [ascetics and visionaries] felt that they were performing an act of personal redemption just as Christ, by His death, had made possible the salvation of all men'.¹¹⁵ What is important is that through the repetition—either the encircling loops of the labyrinth, or perhaps the recitation of catechisms—the contemplative was able to reflect on some of the physical torment inflicted upon Christ.¹¹⁶ The journey of the pilgrim, whether on a physical pilgrimage or confined to the church,

¹¹⁴ W.H. Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922), p. 67. Matthews also acknowledges that it is not clear on what evidence this is based. Penelope Doob agrees that a few church labyrinths were known as 'Chemins de Jérusalem', but documentation of this epithet is post-renaissance; see Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth: From Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 120.

¹¹⁵ Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, p. 93.

¹¹⁶ This meditation is also the effect of the lists of psalms in the scenes of the Paradise of Birds, the community of Ailbe and the Island of the Three Choirs in the *Navigatio*; see below, pp. 122, 135 and 169.

embraces the concept of spiritual focusing.¹¹⁷ Such meditation can be comforting to the penitent, and is particularly seen in the *Navigatio* in the encounters on the Paradise of Birds and the Islands of the Three Choirs, where the lists of psalms act as a mantra which enables the penitent to focus on God.

The Paradise of Birds, to which Brendan returns each year, is the starting location from which the brethren can explore a new quarter of the ocean: travelling north from the Paradise of Birds represents danger; travelling east leads to Paradise. Even so, the purgatorial pilgrimage and the labyrinth echo the uncanny concept of claustrophobia as discussed above: once committed to the journey, it is impossible to break the cycle. Like a series of rules or religious obligations, the labyrinth within the text forces the participants, who commit themselves, to follow in a direction that they might not want to travel and from which they cannot deviate, until they reach their destination (unless, like the supernumeraries, they do not complete their journeys). Following a labyrinth requires an acceptance of the uncanny concepts of pre-destination and repetition: there is only one route through the labyrinth and one who follows it is forced to adhere to a set path in order to reach the centre. In the same way, although God gave mankind free will, there is also a sense of predetermination as one fulfils God's divine plan. The claustrophobia, whether it relates to the time spent confined in a coracle, or obeying a path of strict rules, is a natural anxiety that the audience might understand and is as relevant to a modern reader with a fear of incarceration as it would be to any medieval audience.

The 'pure uncanny'

Both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* describe the physical hardships on the early stages of the journey through the hunger, thirst and exhaustion that the brethren experience. These adversities, compounded with the feelings of confinement in a crowded coracle with monks that cannot escape their fate, further serve to induce feelings of tension through the feelings of claustrophobia and the pre-ordination of the fates of the supernumeraries. The sense of an inescapable fate is also gener-

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Jean Villette who notes that in the church of St Quentin, the labyrinth is called 'la lieue de Jerusalem', see Jean Villette, 'L'énigme du labyrinthe de la cathédrale,' *Notre-Dame de Chartres*, March (1984), 4–13, p. 9.

ated through the labyrinth of the monks' journey which causes them to circle Paradise for seven years. If the monks attempt to row in a direction that *they* choose, they are soon exhausted and the coracle continues in the direction that God has ordained, in a manner similar to the *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*.¹¹⁸ The A.N. *Voyage* introduces an angel to sanction Brendan's journey, although, in both versions, Brendan demonstrates the inherent ability of saints to glimpse the future (both of which would have been accepted by a medieval audience, who accepted the abilities of saints and the visitations of angels). Thus, at this stage in both narratives there have been no elements of the supernatural. Any 'hesitation' has been generated by each audience imposing their own anxieties by empathising with the characters and their environment, whether this is the discomfiture of the overcrowded coracle or understanding the restriction of the inescapable fate of the supernumeraries. Thus, as Todorov suggests, '*The reader's hesitation* is therefore the first condition of the fantastic'.¹¹⁹ These opening scenes correspond with the first category of Todorov's model, that of the 'pure uncanny' which relies on each audience's individual experience to generate any anxieties. Conversely, the first encounters on the journey are consistent with the second sub-category of Todorov's model, the fantastic-uncanny, where scenes that are given a plausible explanation are initially depicted as supernatural.

Uncanny silence and spiritual darkness: the Deserted Citadel

In the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* the monks follow a circular journey, returning to principal locations each year to celebrate the major Christian festivals. The repetition conveys a familiar *topos* for each audience, but it also reinforces the sense of frustration and the claustrophobic nature of the journey. Although none of the opening scenes in either version contain supernatural imagery, the first encounters on the journey in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* can be discussed in relation to the fantastic-uncanny category of Todorov's model, where scenes that are described in supernatural terms are ultimately given

¹¹⁸ 'Et ceperunt nauigare usque dum uires eorum deficerent,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 4–5; 'Mais de nager mult se peinent,/E desirent pener lur cors,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 216–17; Stokes, 'Snedgus,' p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 31 (his emphasis).

an explanation that would be plausible to a medieval audience. These encounters are in the Deserted Citadel, the Island of Sheep, Jasconius and the Paradise of Birds.

If any audience that read or heard the *Navigatio* or the A.N. *Voyage* had experienced feelings of claustrophobia in the first sections (discussed above) these feelings would continue into the first encounter on the voyage, in both versions. Even if the audience had not previously conformed to the role that Todorov suggests they must play to generate the fantastic, the descriptions of claustrophobia become much more explicit in both versions: even though the monks find land once their provisions are depleted, they are unable to find a safe harbour.¹²⁰ The fact that they endanger themselves by leaning from the coracle to catch the rivulets of water streaming from the island shows their desperation, in the *Navigatio*.¹²¹ They are dehydrated and within reach of land, yet still confined to the coracle. Brendan berates the monks for their foolishness and they learn a practical lesson: no matter how desperate their situation, their actions could endanger themselves and capsize their vessel.

Religious symbolism and preordination

The *Navigatio* describes subsequent events on the island of the Deserted Citadel by using religious symbolism: the monks spend three days looking for a harbour, finding it at the hour of nones, when Brendan blesses the landing spot. A dog, which Brendan declares is a messenger from God, leads them to a deserted mansion where a table is laid for the exact number of travellers.¹²² Paradoxically, the suggestion of the proximity of God may provide each audience comfort after the claustrophobia of the coracle; it may also lead them into deeper anxieties,

¹²⁰ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 89; Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 25–26; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 259–60.

¹²¹ ‘Fratres enim uxati erant ualde de fame et siti. Singuli uero acceperunt uascula ut aliquid de aqua potuissent sumere,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 18–20.

¹²² The dog guide may be a parallel to the cat that plays amongst the pillars in the *Immram curaig Máel Dúin*; in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* a supernumerary steals from the Deserted Citadel and is given a chance to repent before he dies; in *Máel Dúin*, the cat changes into a flaming arrow that kills the transgressing foster brother. The parallel with the flaming arrow in *Máel Dúin* and the arrow that ignites the lamps among the community of Ailbe is discussed in chapter 3 on pp. 144–45.

as God's presence underscores that events are fated to happen, which, as Freud suggests, is a necessary criterion of the uncanny.¹²³

Like the *Navigatio*, the A.N. *Voyage* also describes the long journey and the difficulty in landing. It emphasises the monks' fear when their provisions deplete, highlighting the problem of material deprivation since they have not yet learned that God provides for them.¹²⁴ The vivid details of the coastline add a heroic feeling of peril—an inhospitable landscape and an unfriendly sea—emphasising the geographical obstacles that hinder the monks and highlighting both the spiritual and physical nature of the pilgrimage.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the A.N. *Voyage* omits the canine guide, leaving the brethren to find their own way to the citadel and thus underscoring that the citadel is *totally* deserted and that not even animal life remains. In the citadel, in both versions, the first of the supernumeraries steals despite a direct warning from his abbot.¹²⁶ In the *Navigatio*, Brendan witnesses a devil in the form of a black boy giving a bridle bit to one of the supernumeraries.¹²⁷ Rather than stating that he has seen Satan tempting one of the monks (as in the *Navigatio*) Brendan, in the A.N. *Voyage*, instructs the monks neither to remove anything from the palace nor to take too much food for themselves.¹²⁸

The monk's foolish action of stealing in the face of Brendan's warning underscores the feelings of pre-ordination that might be felt by the audience. The temptation of the supernumerary shows that misdemeanours are immediately punished. It derives from the monastic vow of poverty and parallels the temptation of Eve in the Paradise of Genesis.¹²⁹ Even though the nature of the theft is incomprehensible (a bridle-bit would serve no useful purpose on their pilgrimage and would be difficult to

¹²³ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' pp. 362–63.

¹²⁴ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 241–46.

¹²⁵ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 251–59.

¹²⁶ ‘‘Cauete, fratres, ne satanas perducat uos in temptationem. Video enim illum suadentem unum ex tribus fratribus...de furto pessimo,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 39–42. In the *Navigatio*, the stolen item is a bridle bit, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage* it is a golden goblet, perhaps because Benedeit could not see the same value in a bridle as the Irish author. The scene of temptation is a common motif in the *imramna*.

¹²⁷ ‘‘Udit sanctus Brendanus opus diaboli, infantem scilicet ethiopem,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, l. 56. The *puer niger* is omitted from the A.N. *Voyage*.

¹²⁸ ‘‘Seignurs, vus pri,/N'en portez rein od vus d'ici,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 329–30. This scene is echoed when the monks find the Crystal Column; see chapter 3, pp. 183–84.

¹²⁹ Genesis 3:4–6.

conceal) the scene demonstrates that, although the monk has broken faith with God, He has an infinite capacity for forgiveness.

The uncanny

The A.N. *Voyage* differs from the *Navigatio* in that it refers to an ornate city of many palaces, rather than a citadel.¹³⁰ The marvellous descriptions of the palaces no doubt enhance the appeal to the courtly audience and echo the descriptions of heavenly richness in the New Jerusalem in Revelation.¹³¹ Unlike in the *Navigatio*, where the absence of humanity is merely implied, in the A.N. *Voyage* it is overtly described, as is the discomfort of the monks that there is no one else in the city.¹³² Although the uncanny silence of the Deserted Citadel affects the monks, it does not affect Brendan. His piety ensures he is confident, despite the fact that he is in an apparently magical place and about to confront a devil that will tempt one of the monks. Indeed, Brendan's presence acts as a counterbalance to that of the devil: the evil presence is expelled with ease and it bursts from the monk's chest.¹³³ The darkness of the Deserted Citadel is a metaphor for spiritual blindness: the devil is initially invisible to all the monks save Brendan and the supernumerary. Royle observes that 'darkness is at least implicitly involved in the crucial definition of the uncanny that Freud takes from von Schelling: the *unheimlich* or uncanny is what "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light"'.¹³⁴ Paul de Man turns this around to suggest that 'to make the invisible visible is uncanny'.¹³⁵ Brendan can see with God's help, yet, even in the face of overt temptation, the brethren are blind, although the audience of both versions also 'see' the devil (either described as 'Satan' or a 'black boy') along with Brendan.¹³⁶ The ability of the audience to see the nature of the temptation serves to

¹³⁰ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 272–76.

¹³¹ Revelation 21:10–27.

¹³² 'Mais une rien mult lur desplout,/Que en la cité hume n'i out,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 277–78.

¹³³ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 7*, ll. 11–12. Evil is a physical presence in the *Navigatio* in the same way that the Devil enters Judas at the Last Supper (cf. Luke 22:3).

¹³⁴ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 108.

¹³⁵ Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 49.

¹³⁶ The *puer niger* is a common motif in medieval literature; for example he appears in the 'Life of St Anthony' in the *Legenda Aurea*; see Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Thomas Graesse (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1969), p. 104.

distance the narrative from the fantastic and, instead, challenges each audience to consider themselves in relation to the encounter with the devil and whether they would succumb to temptation. Freud suggests that 'the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached...to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes'.¹³⁷ Ultimately, the 'blindness' in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* is not only the physical restriction of being unable to see in the dark: Brendan stays awake when the other monks sleep.¹³⁸ The link between morality and vision is further underscored in the A.N. *Voyage* by the fact that Brendan can see the devil in the dark, without the assistance of a candle.¹³⁹ Brendan can see when the monks cannot; blindness and immorality are therefore interlinked—spiritual blindness leads to sin and sin leads to damnation.

Although a scene of demonic possession and exorcism may have stirred more anxieties within each audience, particularly concerning the idea that something is fated to happen, the monk's fall to temptation and his death (following his repentance) are not to be seen as a marvel. Instead, this scene should be considered as a serious message concerning the nature of temptation and the salvation attained through confession and absolution. The potentially fantastic imagery has the ability to stir some contrition within an audience that empathises with the supernumerary and it challenges individuals to consider how *they* might react in the face of sin. Furthermore, the scene in the Deserted Citadel establishes Brendan as a Christian saint in two ways: first, he has divine knowledge that the transgression *will* occur; secondly, he displays the power of Christ when facing the demonic entity that possesses the supernumerary. The scene in the Deserted Citadel presents a didactic message demonstrating that sin will be discovered: Brendan has the gift of divine knowledge, but there are limits to his knowledge.¹⁴⁰ Divine inspiration is not necessarily telepathy as discussed by Freud, although it is an example of what he describes as 'omnipotence of thoughts'.¹⁴¹ Brendan's foreknowledge and his ability to drive out the devil are, for the monks, the first physical evidence of the power of God. Even

¹³⁷ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 351.

¹³⁸ Q.v. Christ on the Mount of Olives, see, for example, Luke 22:45. Brendan also stays awake when the monks are intoxicated by a sleep-inducing spring; see the discussion on pp. 150–54.

¹³⁹ 'Pur tenebres ne remaneit:/Sanz candele tut le veteit,/Quar quant çô Deus li volt mustrer,/Sur çô ne stout cirge alumer.' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 323–26.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, Waters, *Voyage*, l. 128.

¹⁴¹ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 362.

though the imagery of the *puer niger* might appear supernatural in the *Navigatio*, the devil should not be considered as an example of the fantastic, as Christianity asserts the power of faith over evil. The concept of pre-determination is a claustrophobic restriction for the characters who cannot turn aside from their paths, for example the portents that herald Cú Chulainn's death.¹⁴² From a Christian perspective, the uncanny sense of predetermination only serves the divine purpose, for example that Christ was to be crucified, in accordance with the prophecies from both the Old and New Testaments, in order to redeem mankind from his sins.

Fantastic-uncanny

The scene in the Deserted Citadel corresponds to the first example of the fantastic-uncanny in Todorov's model, in that during a credible encounter (at least, for an audience that accepted the concept of demonic possession) the plausible is presented as supernatural.¹⁴³ It is acceptable to believe that the monks *could* have discovered an abandoned citadel. At the same time, both the early Irish and the twelfth-century audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would be expected to accept a message that God will provide, even if a secular modern audience does not. The encounter also stirs uncanny anxieties through the sense of abandonment and generates eschatological possibilities. In the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, there is no suggestion as to who the occupants of the citadel were, provoking the question 'Where are those who lived before us?' a familiar *topos* from Latin and Anglo-Saxon elegies.¹⁴⁴ The concept of abandonment is one that would provoke disconcerting anxieties within most people: Freud asks 'what is the origin of silence, darkness and solitude?'¹⁴⁵ Yet, Royle observes that Freud's question 'suggests that they all belong together: silence, darkness and solitude. And this is how the essay concludes—with a complex, shifting figuration of what remains enigmatic. Darkness remains uncanny, a "site" of ghostly omissions'.¹⁴⁶ These 'ghostly omissions' are precisely what the *Navigatio*

¹⁴² Squire, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, pp. 181–83.

¹⁴³ See my discussion on p. 73.

¹⁴⁴ Earlier examples include 'Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt?' *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, OS 117 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1901), pp. 761–63 and 'The Ruin,' *The Exeter Anthology*, vol. 1, p. 360.

¹⁴⁵ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 369.

¹⁴⁶ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 109.

and the A.N. *Voyage* present to each audience: there is no explanation as to why the citadel is deserted, nor who has provided the food for the brethren. These are details that the author of the *Navigatio* chooses not to reveal and upon which Benedeit does not elaborate. The images of simultaneous abandonment and provision create a perturbing discordance. Thus, as the details have been repressed, they correspond with Freud's early attempts to provide a definition for *heimlich*: 'kept from sight...as though there was something to conceal'.¹⁴⁷

In both versions, the scene of the Deserted Citadel contains all three of the elements—silence, solitude and darkness—that Freud hesitates to discuss in his essay on the uncanny, describing them simply as 'elements in the production of the infantile anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free'.¹⁴⁸ Each of these elements is uncanny in its own right, yet Freud dismisses them in a single sentence. This, in itself, suggests a repression, which is another aspect of the uncanny. Furthermore, Freud observes that if an 'affect belonging to an emotional impulse...is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs'.¹⁴⁹ In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the solitude does not end in the Deserted Citadel, it is repeated on the Island of Sheep and in the Crystal Pillar where, once again, there is no indication as to what has happened to the previous inhabitants. Similarly, the monks of the community of Ailbe have taken a vow of silence and there is also no explanation for *their* mysterious provision of food.¹⁵⁰ However, the fact that the scene in the Deserted Citadel contains all of the elements that Freud will not discuss (silence, solitude and darkness) suggests a repression that will recur later in the text.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, as the devil is finally made visible to the other brethren, this constitutes, according to Freud, quoting von Schelling's definition of the uncanny, 'something that ought to have remained...secret and hidden but has come to light'.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 344.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 376.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 363 (his emphasis).

¹⁵⁰ These scenes will be discussed on pp. 107–10 and 177–86 below.

¹⁵¹ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 376. See, for example, my discussion of silence on the Island of Sheep, p. 109.

¹⁵² 'Ecce uiderunt ethiopem paruulum salire de sinu suo et ululantem uoce magna,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 7*, ll. 12–13; 'Devant trestuz tuz veables/Eisit criant li diables,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 341–42; Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 345.

The powers of evil cannot stand up to Brendan's faith; yet, uncanny elements in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* instil further anxieties, 'hesitation' and discomfiture within each audience that identifies with the characters in the narrative. These anxieties are repeated in later encounters such as Crystal Pillar (discussed below on pp. 177–86).

In addition to the unsettling anxieties generated by the scene in the Deserted Citadel, the encounter also provides an example of divine protection and comfort through the mysterious provision of food. Divine provision is an important recurring motif that appears in other scenes, for example the Island of Sheep and the monastery of Ailbe.¹⁵³ The solitary island community that has taken a vow of silence is symbolically 'enlightened' by the flaming arrow that lights the lanterns in the church. Although the scene in the Deserted Citadel contains the image of Brendan dispelling a devil, it should not be considered as fantastic since the audience would be familiar with this ability through the acts of Jesus and the apostles in the Bible. The scene also establishes Brendan as an exceptional man of God with power over evil and shows the swift and severe punishment passed on any monk who transgresses God's laws and falls into temptation.

Leading towards the fantastic-uncanny

The encounter in the Deserted Citadel deals with the uncanny elements of silence and darkness. Furthermore, certain descriptions have been repressed to leave each audience uncertain about what is missing from the scenes. This sense of the uncanny builds on those of earlier scenes: the silence corresponds to the absence of familiar aural stimuli that the monks experience as they embark on their journey. The darkness of the citadel enhances any feelings of claustrophobia that each audience may have experienced when hearing about the overcrowded coracle. The sense of claustrophobia is enhanced by the feeling of confinement of the cyclical seven-year journey that the monks must perform before they can return home. It also underscores the inescapable fate and the death drive of the supernumeraries, as the first is punished for his theft, and the fact that the successful completion of the journey is by no means a foregone conclusion. Although all of these elements are present in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, their recognition requires

¹⁵³ Fagnoni, 'Oriental Eremitical Motifs', pp. 58–66; also see below, pp. 108 and 136–37 respectively.

empathy from each individual for them to experience the feelings that are implicit in each version. However, to follow the gradual increase of fantastic imagery, the authors inject further uncanny imagery that appears supernatural, but ultimately receives a plausible explanation thus corresponding with the second subcategory of Todorov's model: the fantastic-uncanny. The two encounters that particularly follow this category of the model are the island of enormous sheep and Jasconius, 'the island fish'.

Enormous creatures: The Island of Sheep and Jasconius

Previous encounters in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* have had the potential of being unsettling; however, there is no overt fantastic imagery that would cause disbelief for Christian audiences of the ninth or twelfth century, regardless of how unrealistic the concept of demonic possession may appear to a modern audience. Any unsettling effects so far have been achieved by the suggestions of claustrophobia, confinement, the absence of familiar stimuli (darkness and silence) and the threat of damnation. The encounters that follow the Deserted Citadel in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*—the Island of the Giant Sheep and Jasconius—generate a more pronounced sense of unease as both scenes discuss creatures that are unusually large. These two encounters are consistent with the second category of Todorov's model of the fantastic where, although the abnormal size of these creatures may initially seem unnatural, the encounters finally receive a plausible explanation. The reasonable descriptions serve to further ground the narratives within a reality that serves to convince each audience that what they hear is realistic. At the same time, paradoxically, the scenes further enhance uncanny anxieties and gradually progress towards the 'hesitation' necessary for the pure fantastic.

The episode of the Deserted Citadel links with the Island of Sheep in that both evoke a sense of eschatology. In the *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, Dicuil, writing in 825, describes that the Faeroe Islands were previously a haven for anchorites. These islands were deserted after attacks from Norse pirates, so the only living beings there are sheep and birds.¹⁵⁴ Commentators who argue that the Brendan narrative describes

¹⁵⁴ J.J. Tierney, ed., *Dicuili liber de mensura orbis terrae* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967), pp. 76–77.

an *actual* voyage suggest that, when the author of the *Navigatio* speaks of the Island of Sheep, he is referring to the Faeroes, the name of which is taken from the Old Norse *Færeyjar*—the ‘isle of sheep’.¹⁵⁵ The name of the Faeroes lends weight to the suggestion that the early ideas of the *Navigatio* stemmed from a collection of ‘local’ sea-voyages, rather than a major expedition across the Atlantic. Aleem observes that it was customary for medieval navigators to leave sheep on an island for their future voyages.¹⁵⁶ Despite the finding of the sheep being one of the few times that Brendan expresses surprise in the A.N. *Voyage*, these signs of habitation suggest that the narrative describes a well-travelled route and one with traces of monastic communities.¹⁵⁷ Yet, the *Navigatio* explains that the sheep are not only unusual because of their size, but also because of their colour—white.¹⁵⁸ The absence of humanity is never explained in either the *Navigatio* or the A.N. *Voyage*. The departure of humanity simply means that the sheep can grow without hindrance. Even given these exceptional descriptions of the sheep, it is easier for each audience to accept that the sheep are unusual, and therefore uncanny, rather than otherworldly.

From the uncanny to the fantastic-uncanny

The Island of the Sheep underscores the absence of humanity, a motif that has already been used in both versions in the Deserted Citadel and will be repeated at the Crystal Column. The sheep in the *Navigatio* suggest an island where monks *had* been, but are no longer there, for, as the Bible suggests, sheep are evidence of a secular presence.¹⁵⁹ Thus, the

¹⁵⁵ See, for example, Little, *Brendan the Navigator*, pp. 70–71; Burgess, ‘The Use of Animals’, pp. 13–14.

¹⁵⁶ Anwar Abdel Aleem, ‘Wonders of the Sea of India: An Arabian Book of Sea Tales from the Tenth Century and the St Brendan Legend,’ *Atlantic Visions*, eds John de Courcy Ireland and David C. Sheehy (Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin: Boole Press Limited, 1989), pp. 61–66, p. 65.

¹⁵⁷ “E!” dist l’abes, “berbiz ad ci,”’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 417.

¹⁵⁸ The sheep of early medieval Ireland were usually black, thus a white fleece was more valuable than a dark fleece; see Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1998), p. 70.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:7; Jonathan M. Wooding conjectures that this is linked with an episode of a giant sea cat in the *Vita Brendani*, this was discussed in his unpublished paper ‘Becoming a Stranger in Irish Eremitical Practice,’ paper presented at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 9 July, 2002 and Jonathan M. Wooding, ‘The Date of *Nauigatio S. Brendani abbatis* (forthcoming). Cf. Tierney, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, p. 77.

sense of abandonment highlights the eschatological nature of the text: already in the Deserted Citadel, each audience has seen the temptation and death of one of the supernumeraries. The sense that the brethren are moving towards a place that is Paradise after death may well awaken further anxieties in the audience, anxieties that have been prompted by the sense of abandonment in the Deserted Citadel.¹⁶⁰

For the audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, their self-generated eschatological anxieties can become more dominant than their true feelings—at least for the duration of listening to the narrative—for, even though the text represents the audience’s ‘present’, the audience are more likely to consider and respond to any didactic message that is presented to them. The sense of isolation that pervades the citadel and the Island of Sheep is part of the overall construction of an uncanny silence. The fact that the food in the citadel is still fresh suggests that the exodus happened recently. Similarly, the citadel does not have the same details of decay that are described in the Anglo-Saxon poem, ‘The Ruin’, which suggests that the inhabitants of the Deserted Citadel in the A.N. *Voyage* left the city swiftly, rather than being afflicted with the pestilence described in the Anglo-Saxon elegy.¹⁶¹

In addition to the motif of silence in the Deserted Citadel and on the Island of Sheep, the latter also has a common feature with the encounter that follows in both versions: Jasconius, the ‘island fish’. Both scenes use a simple device to create an uncanny effect: in both cases the creatures are unusually large. The *Navigatio* describes pure-white sheep as ‘large as oxen’ and streams teeming with fish.¹⁶² The youth explains that the sheep are large because they are never milked.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Iser says of reader reception more generally, ‘once the reader is entangled, his own preconceptions are continually overtaken, so that the text becomes his “present” while his own ideas fade into the “past”; as soon as this happens he is open to the immediate experience of the text, which was impossible so long as his preconceptions were his “present”,’ Iser, ‘The Reading Process,’ p. 82.

¹⁶¹ ‘Crungon walo wide, cwoman woldagas, swytl eall fornom secgrofra wera;’ ‘The Ruin,’ ll. 25–26.

¹⁶² The streams of fish are omitted from the A.N. *Voyage*. The author of the A.N. *Voyage* changed the description to ‘large as stags’, no doubt to appeal to a courtly audience, Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 389–90.

¹⁶³ The concept of large sheep is presented in a manuscript discussing the ‘Marvels of the East’: ‘Pær beoð weðeras accennede on oxna micelnesse,’ (‘There are rams born there as big as oxen’), Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), p. 184; in addition, the A.N. *Voyage* observes that the sheep are not a marvel, ‘“N'est merveille”’, Waters, *Voyage*, l. 419. This description of enormous animals also appears in the *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*,

Although the sheep are large, the source of uncanny anxieties, like the feelings of claustrophobia in the coracle, could be rooted in an infantile perception.¹⁶⁴ However, the focus of the encounter is not on the sheep, but on the celebration of Easter. The messenger's prediction of future journeys, when Brendan does not know himself what they would be, acts as a voice of authority to direct the course of the voyage. Brendan's future is safe within the constraints of God's plan. It also shows that Brendan is not able to foresee specific aspects of his voyage despite his predictions for the monks. Precognition is left to the divine messengers, who remove the monks from peril by organising their journey and supplying provisions, although it is not their remit to make the journey easy. Only by understanding God's marvels can the brethren attain the wisdom necessary to reach Paradise. Thus, even though uncanny elements are present, they are not highlighted. The messenger's explanation of the giant sheep would lead each audience to accept that their uncanny anxieties are, in fact, rational. As discussed above, a supernatural description of what turns out to be a natural event is an example of the fantastic-uncanny, according to Todorov's model. However, by establishing a plausible reason for uncannily large creatures, the next encounter with Jasconius needs no explanation, as the concept of large creatures is one already familiar to the audience.

The encounter with Jasconius (or at least a fish that is mistaken for an island) is common to all versions of the Brendan legend, as well as the *Vita Brendani* and the 'Twelve Apostles of Ireland'.¹⁶⁵ In the *Navigatio* and its vernacular versions, the monks celebrate Easter on what they believe to be a small island, but as they light a fire to cook a meal, the 'island' moves and is revealed to be a large fish.¹⁶⁶ Jasconius is one of

where they find an island with salmon 'bigger than a bull-calf'; see Stokes, 'Snedgus,' pp. 18–19. Ó Cróinín argues that the *Navigatio* presents a plausible description of the sheep, as manuscripts in prosperous Irish churches in the seventh century were mainly made from calf-skin. He concludes that the sheep were not unusually large, but that the oxen of the times of Brendan were smaller than today; see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland: 400–1200* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 102.

¹⁶⁴ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 355.

¹⁶⁵ This also appears in the *Life of David* where St Scuthyn travels on the back of a sea monster ('anghenuir o'r mor') from Ireland to caution David from eating poisoned food, Evans, *The Welsh Life of St David*, p. 7, ll. 14–15.

¹⁶⁶ In the 'Twelve Apostles' the beast rises at Brendan's request, so that the monks have a dry land on which to celebrate Easter: the monks do not fear the creature; see Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 97–98. There are parallels between the Sindbad stories and the Brendan narratives. It is likely that these stories had a common source in a now-lost manuscript of 'Marvels of the East'. In the *Arabian Nights*, the 'moving island' is a device

four places to which Brendan returns to celebrate a principal Christian festival. It derives its name from the Irish *iasc*, meaning 'fish'.¹⁶⁷ The encounter in the *Navigatio* echoes the bestiary tradition of the 'Aspido-Delone', the whale, although the *Navigatio* never applies the epithet 'whale' (*cetus* or *ballena*) to Jasconius, instead, it is always 'fish' (*piscis*) or 'monster' (*beluam*).¹⁶⁸ Yet, there are many similarities with the bestiary tradition. Philippe de Thaun's *Bestiary* speaks of the belly of the whale 'so great that the people took it to be hell'.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon poem 'The Whale' equates the beast with the 'way of devils'.¹⁷⁰ The motif of the floating island is repeated in the Anglo-Saxon poem, but as it sinks, it drags souls down to hell with it.¹⁷¹ It would appear, then, that the island fish represents the Devil and, as the island appears as a safe haven for the pilgrims to celebrate Easter, so the Devil lulls the monks into a false sense of security, deceiving unwary souls.¹⁷² However, later encounters with Jasconius show him to be God's messenger who ultimately assists the monks in their quest for Paradise.

to separate Sindbad from his crew (the 'great fish that hath become stationary in the midst of the sea...so that it hath become like an island'); see Edward William Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights: Commonly called in England the Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, 3 vols (London: Charles Knight and Co, 1841), vol. 3, p. 7. For a study of the classical and medieval sources, see Cornelia Catlin Coulter, 'The 'Great Fish' in Ancient and Medieval Story,' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 57 (1926), 32–50; see also Burgess, 'The Use of Animals', p. 14.

¹⁶⁷ In the A.N. *Voyage*, the name of Jacoines is uniquely preserved in ms *A* (see Waters, *Voyage*, p. 115); in ms *E* however, the scribe refers to 'La balaine'—the whale, which is the more common interpretation of the episode. Waters' edition has the name (Jacoines) as a proper noun, whereas in Short and Merrilees, the word is in lower case. Although the word is derived from the Irish *iasc*, the *Navigatio* uses it as a proper noun, stating 'Qui habet nomen Jasconius' ('who has the name Jasconius') (Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 10*, l. 26). Therefore, I suggest that Waters is correct in continuing the tradition of it being a proper noun, rather than as a common noun. Ludwig Bieler argues that the *Vita Brendani* in ms Rawlinson B 485 (VB2) spells the name 'Casconius' (twice) as the 'original name of Brendan's beast'; see Ludwig Bieler, 'Casconius, the Monster of the *Navigatio Brendani*,' *Eigse: A Journal of Irish Studies* 5 (1945–1947), 139–40, p. 140.

¹⁶⁸ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 10*, l. 24; *caput 27*, l. 12.

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, the bestiary of Philippe de Thaun (c. 1121), ms Cotton Nero A.v in the British Library; Mac Mathúna observes that the *Physiologus* is probably the ultimate source for the 'animated island' episode of the Brendan versions, Mac Mathúna, 'Contributions to a Study,' p. 171.

¹⁷⁰ 'Deofla wise,' l. 32, 'The Whale,' *The Exeter Anthology*, pp. 272–75.

¹⁷¹ The symbolism of the encounter suggests that the sea represents the world, while the coracle represents the Holy Church in which are the people of God.

¹⁷² G.C. Druce, 'The Legend of the Serra or Saw-fish,' *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London* 31 (1918), 20–35, p. 30.

As part of the didactic message, and unique to the *Navigatio* for the first three encounters, are the symbolic references to fish, which grow in proportion as the monks move further away from the quotidian and closer to the supernatural. In the Deserted Citadel, the fish are served to the brethren as a meal; on the island of the sheep, a multitude of fish teem in the rivers; finally, the monks land on Jasconius, a creature that ultimately assists the monks in getting to Paradise. The symbolic representation of Christ shows that, as the monks move away from what is familiar, 'safe' and 'known', the divine presence becomes clearer to them. In all but the last of these encounters, Brendan meets a messenger from God, who explains what will befall them in the immediate future, emphasising divine guidance in the journey. However, the messenger directs the brethren to Jasconius in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, knowing that the moving island will terrify them.¹⁷³ As Burgess notes:

some suffering, experienced especially when they are alone at sea, is both inevitable and essential. In order to complete their mission, the travellers have to demonstrate that they have accomplished a certain number of deeds and achieved a certain level of knowledge.¹⁷⁴

As shown above, Jasconius itself is God's messenger and a device that God uses to bring about his divine plan, rather than a symbol of the monster that threatens Jonah.¹⁷⁵ The symbolism of Jonah spending three days in the belly of the whale corresponds with Christ's spending three days in hell, the whale, although both in the Bible and in both versions of the Brendan narrative, works according to God's divine plan. In the same way, Jasconius leads the monks back to the Paradise of Birds at the end of the narrative and, from there, the procurator guides Brendan to Paradise. In order to progress towards the fantastic descriptions of Paradise, the authors of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* need to introduce suggestions of the supernatural gradually (even though those examples of the supernatural will ultimately receive a plausible explanation). Both versions achieve this in the scene with Jasconius.

The function of the supernatural in literature is to disturb or keep the audience in suspense: the audience's 'hesitation' creates the fan-

¹⁷³ ““Hac nocte eritis in illa insula quam uidetis prope, et cras usque in sextam horam”, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 9*, ll. 37–38; “Entre en ta nef, Brandan, e va./En cel’ isle anuit estras/E ta feste demain i fras”, Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 424–26.

¹⁷⁴ Burgess, ‘*Savoir and faire*’, p. 257.

¹⁷⁵ Jonah 1:17.

tastic effect.¹⁷⁶ The ‘hesitation’ is initially created when both versions describe the encounter with Jasconius as plausible, so that the fact that he is a fish, rather than an island, remains a surprise to the last possible moment. This is achieved in both versions by the description given by the procurator that Jasconius is an island. Accordingly, the authors of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* introduce a clear didactic message in the scene with Jasconius, even though the vocabulary in the A.N. *Voyage* becomes hyperbolical. Although Benedeit is faithful to the *Navigatio* when recounting the encounter with Jasconius, he elaborates on many of the details from his Latin source. There is no indication of anything untoward about the island until it moves after the monks sit down for their meal.¹⁷⁷ In the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan tells the monks not to panic, but instead to call upon God. There are additional details, which serve to make the scene more realistic, such as when Brendan throws ropes to help the brethren back on board and the description of the monks’ wet clothes. The narrator describes that the fire on the fish’s back can be seen ten leagues away: this serves to enhance the quality of the description and also serves to further distance it from the hagiographic genre.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, both versions emphasise that God protects the faithful, whereas Satan catches the potential deceit of the monks, just as the supernumerary transgresses, despite a direct warning from Brendan. There is a parallel between Jasconius and the fate of the supernumeraries in both versions. Although initially frightening, Jasconius represents a ‘good sea monster’, compared with the monster that both threatens and helps the monks in the battle of the sea monsters and ‘Leviathan’, which is a wholly evil incarnation.¹⁷⁹ The monsters in the A.N. *Voyage* threaten the safety of the monks, yet the author avoids making the scene horrific by having Brendan know what will happen next. Benedeit acts as narrator: he offers a rational explanation for the encounter and the didactic message that the monks must learn.¹⁸⁰

In order to avoid driving the audience towards incredulity, the authors of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* do not present the encounter with Jasconius as supernatural. It is simply unusual. Through the discussion

¹⁷⁶ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Quar la terre tute muveit,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 455.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Dis liwes,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 465.

¹⁷⁹ Job 41; Isaiah 27:1; 1 Enoch 60:7, also Borsje, *From Chaos to Enemy*, p. 35.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Ses merveilles cum plus verrez,/En lui mult mielz puis encerrez;/Mielz le crerrez e plus crendrez,/A sun comant plus vus prendrez,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 475–79.

with the procurator on the Island of Sheep, both versions have already presented a plausible explanation for the enormous creatures in the ocean. Any ideas of the supernatural are diffused in both versions following the plausible explanation of the ‘moving island’, even if the latter is initially presented as a fantastic incident.¹⁸¹ As Carroll explains, ‘the fantastic is defined by an oscillation between naturalistic and supernatural explanations’.¹⁸² Brendan, knowing that the island is, in fact, a giant fish, withholds critical information from the monks. As Burgess observes, Brendan, with his foreknowledge of the encounter, could have prevented his monks from going ‘ashore’, thus avoiding their terrifying experience.¹⁸³ Similarly, the host arranges the deception in both versions by directing Brendan to an island: Brendan and the host prefer to let the monks learn for themselves that things are not always as they seem. The rational explanation of the moving island shows the encounter with Jasconius is only a preparation for the lessons that the monks must learn to complete their journey. It is the first step in strengthening their faith.

Automatism

The idea of an animated island is an example of automatism, defined by Freud as an uncanny doubt that a ‘lifeless object’ may indeed be animate and which can suddenly be revived.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, the conflicting image of the whale, threatening, yet helpful, implies that a definition cannot be fixed upon it. Jasconius is sentient and aware of the monks, but reacts instinctively to the fire on its back. In the *Navigatio*, the author suggests that there is something ‘different’ about the island on which the monks light their fire. He does this by describing the prudent way that Brendan stays aboard the coracle and thus

¹⁸¹ A modern audience could accept these encounters. Darwin speaks of giant sheep in *The Voyage of the ‘Beagle’*; see Charles Darwin, *Charles Darwin’s Beagle Diary*, ed. Richard Darwin Keynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 262; Dominick Daly, ‘The Legend of St Brendan,’ *The Celtic Review* I (1905), 135–47, p. 144. Similarly, Little, writing in the 1940s, describes fishermen who saw an apparently dead whale and landed upon it. The whale was merely sleeping and dived underwater; see Little, *Brendan the Navigator*, pp. 72–73.

¹⁸² Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 145.

¹⁸³ Burgess, ‘*Savoir and faire*,’ p. 263; Carp, ‘Three Late-Coming Monks,’ pp. 134–35.

¹⁸⁴ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 347.

makes the audience aware that something fantastic might happen.¹⁸⁵ Freud observes that 'Apprehension (*Angst*) denotes a certain condition of expectation of danger and preparation for it, even though it be an unknown one'.¹⁸⁶ An astute audience may well hesitate and consider whether the facts with which they are being presented are plausible or not. The 'hesitation' is not evident in the monks, who, unperturbed by their abbot's unwillingness, step on to the island. The suggestion of the supernatural raised by the 'moving island' is a stark contrast to the monks' mundane tasks of preparing a meal and lighting a fire. The conflicting imagery of the supernatural and the mundane causes a 'hesitation' in each audience until Brendan rationally explains that the monks have not been on an island, but a fish. Thus, the imagery is an example of the fantastic-uncanny as described by Todorov. The explanation of such a 'hesitation' would have led each audience to accept that what they have been told is true and that similar events in the future are just as easily explained, so that they would gradually have become more accustomed to the unusual elements in the versions of the narrative and more tolerant of what may initially appear supernatural in future encounters.

Gradation towards the fantastic

The encounter with Jasconius is fraught with uncertainty. Until the explanation at the end of the scene, neither a medieval nor a modern audience would know whether the moving island was a supernatural occurrence or was indeed something living. The uncertainties continue when one considers how Jasconius represents a series of binary oppositions so that each audience remains unsure of where they stand. The coracle acts as a liminal point where the monks are out of the coracle, but they are not on dry land, nor are they safe. Although the ninth-century Irish and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audiences may well have been familiar with the legend of the 'moving island' from the *Physiologus*, the legends are not the same: the authors of the *Vita Brendani* and the 'Twelve Apostles' do not agree whether Jasconius was a fearful encounter, or whether the fish rose in response to Brendan's

¹⁸⁵ 'Sciebat enim qualis erat illa insula, sed tamen noluit eis indicare, ne perterritarentur,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 10*, ll. 7–8.

¹⁸⁶ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 9.

commands.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, even though Jasconius originally appears threatening when the monks light their fire, he is an essential means of assisting the monks to Paradise. These contradictions, compounded with the previous feelings of claustrophobia, could be potentially unsettling. In earlier encounters in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the audiences' own interpretation creates the sense of 'hesitation'. Conversely, the descriptions of Jasconius are detailed in such a way that both versions attempt to establish the expectations of their respective audiences, in order that these audiences may anticipate that the imagery with which they are presented is, in fact, supernatural. Thus, as Todorov's model demonstrates, there is a gentle gradation towards the fantastic, as the authors introduce more apparently supernatural material, only to reveal finally the true nature of the 'moving island'. This gradual introduction of material where the supernatural is presented as plausible, means firstly that, for later scenes, each audience may again think it likely that they will have their expectations subverted and secondly that they may well be willing to suspend their disbelief further in anticipation of the plausible explanation. However, from the next encounter on the island of the neutral angels, the authors attempt to steer the narrative away from any suggestion of the supernatural and re-establish the text as a Christian narrative.

The Neutral Angels

Although plausible thus far, the encounters in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* have become increasingly unbelievable. Both versions have established their own authorities, either through saints, angels or the invocation of the Holy Spirit, at the start of the narrative. The few apparently supernatural elements contained in each version have been modified or suppressed to appear credible. At the same time, divine authority has sanctioned the journey. Because of the rational explanation for the previous encounters, the credibility of both versions can be nudged further towards the meridian line that represents the pure fantastic on Todorov's model. This is the point at which there is a moment of absolute 'hesitation' where neither a medieval nor a

¹⁸⁷ For example VB2 Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, pp. 112–13; Plummer, *L.I.S.* vol. 1, pp. 97–98.

modern audience can say for certain that what they have perceived is fantastic.¹⁸⁸ This section will give a brief overview of possible sources and analogues of the legend of the neutral angels and consider how the scene varies in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, and how it contributes to Todorov's model of the fantastic.

Sources

According to both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, during the battle between Archangel Michael and the dragon (described in Revelation 12:7–12), the neutral angels sided with neither God nor Lucifer. Although they had not fought against God, they had also not taken arms against their adversary and, according to Revelation, apathy is an equally heinous sin.¹⁸⁹ They were not relegated to hell as they had not directly participated in the war in heaven. Similarly, their presence might offer some ray of hope to those fallen angels for whom there is no respite.

The legend of the neutral angels is a heresy that is not contained in the Bible. Indeed, it is so heretical that it is omitted from some of the surviving manuscripts of the Latin and Irish versions of the *Vita Brendani*.¹⁹⁰ The legend possibly developed from a combination of images: the dragon's tail casting a third of the stars from heaven down to earth and the battle between the dragon and the archangels.¹⁹¹ Another possible Biblical influence is the legend of the Nephilim: angels that came down from heaven for sexual immorality with human females and taught them occult learning.¹⁹² As to whether the Apocryphal legend would have been known by an audience contemporary with the audiences of the *Navigatio* or the A.N. *Voyage*, the legend is also mentioned in *Beowulf*: the sword used to decapitate Grendel is the work of the

¹⁸⁸ The moment of the pure fantastic will be discussed in chapter 3 on pp. 138–45.

¹⁸⁹ 'Scio opera tua: quia neque frigidus es, neque calidus: utinam frigidus essem, aut calidus! Sed qua tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te euomere ex ore meo,' Revelation 3:15–16.

¹⁹⁰ For example, Plummer, *L.I.S.*; this version (*VB7*, according to Kenney) mentions the Paradise of Birds, but any suggestion of the neutral angels has been removed.

¹⁹¹ 'Et cauda ejus trahebat tertiam partem stellarum caeli, et misit eas in terram: et drago stetit ante mulierem quae erat paritura; ut cum peperisset, filium ejus devoraret,' Revelation 12:4.

¹⁹² 1 Enoch 7–8; James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), vol. 1, p. 16.

giants (called the Grigori) that the human women bore after intercourse with the Nephilim.¹⁹³

The myth of the Nephilim may have been an influence upon the legend of the neutral angels in the Middle Ages. The legend could also have developed through the Fathers of the Church. Origen, for example, believed that ‘at the end and consummation of the world [souls]…are possessed of free-will and may of their own accord admit either good or evil…angels may become men or demons and again from the latter they may rise to be men or angels’.¹⁹⁴ Origen’s observations suggest that the fate of each mortal after death can ultimately be changed and one may rise from hell or fall from heaven. However, Origen’s assertion runs contrary to Catholic doctrine and was later censured.¹⁹⁵ A further possible influence is a seventh-century Hiberno-Latin treatise, *De ordine creaturarum*, which Bede used in his early works.¹⁹⁶ The treatise describes an area below the firmament, called the *caelum firmamenti*. It details how ‘several catholic authors claim that this space was intended originally as a dwelling place for those angels who fell with their leader’.¹⁹⁷ Smyth says that *De ordine creaturarum* reveals an unexpected amount of interest in the physical world and shows ‘a remarkable degree of resourcefulness and coherence at [its] attempt at understanding the universe’. This suggests that a sort of natural science was being taught in Ireland.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ ‘Geseah ða on searwum sigeacadig bil,/ealdsword eotenisc ecgum ðyhtig,/wigena weorðmynd; Pæt wæs wæpna cyst,/buton his wæs mare ðonne ænig mon oðer/to beadulace ætberan meahte,/god ond geatolic, giganta geweorc,’ Michael Swanton, ed., *Beowulf* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), ll. 1557–62.

¹⁹⁴ Origen, *The Writings of Origen*, trans. Frederick Crome, 2 vols (London: Hamilton and Co, 1869), vol. 1, p. 71.

¹⁹⁵ Origen’s doctrine of *apokatastasis*—a universal re-integration in which he believed that hell would come to an end and the fallen would be restored to a state of blessedness—was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in 543: ‘If anyone says or holds that the punishment of the demons and of impious men is temporary, and that it will have an end at some time, or that there is a complete restoration of demons and impious men: *anathema sit*; see W. Breuning, ‘Apokatastasis: “Restoring all things”,’ *Theology Digest* 31 (1984), 47–50. I am grateful to Monsignor Philip Kerr for his direction on this subject.

¹⁹⁶ Marina Smyth, ‘The Physical World in Seventh Century Hiberno-Latin Texts,’ *Peritia* 5 (1986), 201–34, p. 210.

¹⁹⁷ Manuel C. Díaz y Díaz, *Liber de ordine creaturarum: Un anónimo irlandés del siglo VII*, Monografías de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela 10 (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 1972); ‘Quapropter plurimi catholicorum auctorum illud spatium primitus angelis qui lapsi sunt cum suo principe adserunt ad habitandum fuisse destinatum,’ Marina Smyth, *Understanding the Universe in seventh-century Ireland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 185–86.

¹⁹⁸ Smyth, ‘The Physical World,’ p. 209.

Dando argues that ‘the myth of the neutral angels originated among Irish monastic circles, having been developed by them from early patristic exegeses. The concept spread with Brendan’s *Navigatio* to all regions of Western Europe’.¹⁹⁹

The legend of the neutral angels was relatively unknown when the *Navigatio* was composed; however, the inclusion of the legend in later works, such as Chrétien de Troyes’ *Yvain*, Dante’s *Inferno* and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, attests to its later popularity. Similarly, the concept of human souls or archangels represented as birds appears in the *immrama*. Although the *Immram curaig Máel Dúin* does not include an encounter with the soulbirds, the travellers hear the distant singing of psalms and see an island full of birds.²⁰⁰ The scene in *Máel Dúin* could be a condensed version of the comparative encounter in the *Navigatio*, or perhaps in *Máel Dúin* the angels are so occult that they remain hidden from the text. Here, then, the soulbirds could be considered as *heimlich* in terms of Freud’s definition of something concealed from sight.²⁰¹

A respite from the fantastic imagery?

The first encounter with the neutral angels marks the end of the first year of Brendan’s travels and, according to Illingworth’s discussion of the structure of the A.N. *Voyage*, marks the end of the first third of

¹⁹⁹ Marcel Dando, ‘The Neutral Angels,’ *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 217 (1980), 259–76, p. 275; see also Peter Christian Jacobsen, ‘The Island of the Birds in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*,’ *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 99–116. I have discussed the fate of the neutral angels in Dante’s *Inferno* and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* (‘Between Heaven and Hell: Neutral Angels in Medieval Literature,’ in an unpublished paper presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, 20 July 2002). In summary, I explain that Dante’s apathetic angels are overlooked for eternity and have no hope of salvation. In *Parzival*, Trevirient initially describes the angels as guardians of the Grail, but he later changes his story and describes them as ‘outcast spirits’ (*Geister Zahl*): he claims his lie was to dissuade Parzival from searching for the Grail; see Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, eds U. Bosco and G. Reggio (Florence: Le Monnier, 1979), canto III; Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival* (Leipzig: Berlag von Philipp Reclam, c. 1914), 471 and 798.

²⁰⁰ See Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ p. 493. Similarly, the *Immram curaig Ua Corra* describes a bird flock of angels singing psalms: the Archangel Michael appears as a great bird and one of the supernumeraries dies and reappears as a bird. The *Húi Corra* also mentions soulbirds released from hell on a Sunday in the forms of birds; see Stokes, ‘Húi Corra,’ pp. 33, 42–45 and 48–51. See also Stokes, ‘Snedgus,’ p. 21.

²⁰¹ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 344.

the text.²⁰² It is ironic to think that this scene, which is perhaps one of the most implausible to a modern secular audience, would be one that was most believable to the early Irish and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audiences, who would, of course, have accepted the existence of angels.²⁰³ For the purposes of the narratives of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, this represents a moment of calm for their respective audiences to re-assert that divine authority sanctions the voyage. The Paradise of Birds shows Brendan *physical* evidence of the divine and, in both versions, the neutral angels provide a suitable way of making a prophecy concerning the duration of Brendan's journey and the return to key locations for the principal feast days. It provides a suitable climax to the first third of the narrative without straying too far into the realm of the incredible. So, even though the various medieval audiences believed in the existence of angels, the familiarity of the neutral angels legend would have been enough to re-establish the narrative in what is familiar to the audience and would not have produced the 'hesitation' that the fantastic usually generates.

In the *Navigatio*, the Paradise of Birds is presented neither as fantastic nor supernatural. Indeed, the birds speak only in response to Brendan's prayers. Indeed, the fact that the birds respond to prayers and praise God serves as a respite from the increasing level of fantastic-uncanny imagery shown in previous scenes. Furthermore, it allows the author to re-establish a didactic message for his Irish audiences, rather than the distracting tale of marvels of the ocean.²⁰⁴ The heavy liturgical emphasis of the scene with the neutral angels in the *Navigatio* serves to direct the divine focus of the narrative; at the same time, the attention to the canonical hours and the repetitious lists of psalms have a possible meditative function. The scene is presented as plausible and needs no further validation beyond that the birds are messengers from

²⁰² Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*', p. 217.

²⁰³ Boyde observes that it is 'on the authority of the Bible alone that Christians believe in the existence of angels'; he analyses the Biblical data upon which 'all subsequent speculation depends.' Patrick Boyde, *Dante, Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 179–81. Angels regularly appear in hagiography and drama as a means of indicating divine intervention in human affairs; see Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 102–3. For a discussion of the modern belief in angels, see Emma Heathcote-James, *Seeing Angels* (London: Blake Publishing Ltd., 2002).

²⁰⁴ This device is also used in the *Navigatio* on the Island of the Three Choirs; see my discussion in chapter 3 on p. 169.

God. Indeed, the Latin *angelus* derives from the Greek *angelos* meaning ‘messenger’. Thus, within the confines of the narrative, the Paradise of Birds allows the author of the *Navigatio* to distance himself from the discussion of difficult concepts, in this case the nature of divine forgiveness.²⁰⁵ The fact that Brendan confronts potentially difficult topics on behalf of the audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* opens a prospective discursive space for more general theological understanding. Yet, even though versions of the narrative were censured, Brendan’s piety, together with a lack of overt description of Paradise, reduces the chance of the author being accused of conveying heretical material. Gurevich observes of medieval saints more generally that the fact that their feats ‘are manifested in rejecting this world, and serving others, bears witness to the depth of the reorientation of social consciousness in the Middle Ages’.²⁰⁶ However, Brendan is given mythological status in both versions, as he is both superior to the reader and above the laws of nature by virtue of his faith.²⁰⁷ The didactic message can only serve to impress upon the audience that Brendan is the role model of piety to which they aspire.

The scene of the Paradise of Birds in the A.N. *Voyage* has been significantly reduced by comparison with the description in the *Navigatio*. Unlike other scenes, where he engages his imagination for the vivid enhancement of graphic details, Benedeit does not elaborate on the battle against Lucifer. Furthermore, his descriptions correspond with those presented in the *Navigatio*, although he does include hyperbole concerning a tree that rises above the clouds and the birds’ exceptional plumage.²⁰⁸ In addition, the transformation to bird form is permanent in the A.N. *Voyage*, whereas in the *Navigatio*, the change is only on Sundays and Holy days—at other times, they ‘wander about the

²⁰⁵ This topic is discussed again in relation to when Brendan’s encounter with Judas Iscariot; see chapter 4 on pp. 205–06.

²⁰⁶ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, vol. 14, eds Peter Burke and Ruth Finnegan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 43.

²⁰⁷ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 11.

²⁰⁸ Burgess suggests that the tree could be the Tree of Knowledge, which would be relevant in the context of the balance of good and evil, and also that Brendan must attain a certain level of knowledge before achieving Paradise, Burgess, ‘*Savoir* and *faire*,’ p. 273, n. 9.

air; the earth and the sky, like other spirits on their missions'.²⁰⁹ Thus, the A.N. *Voyage* does not attempt to rein in an audience's imagination after the gradual injections of fantastic imagery that have appeared in previous scenes. Although he mentions that the monks and birds sing hymns together, the exclusion of the psalms (as seen in the *Navigatio*) implies that Benedeit considered that they slowed the pace of the narrative and that he was more interested in continuing the plot, rather than a spiritual refocusing.²¹⁰ However, the scene in the A.N. *Voyage*, contains a didactic message of salvation, rather than damnation: the birds are allowed to worship God, and draw comfort from the monks' presence, and Brendan describes the birds' welcome as an example of God's love for them.²¹¹

As with the *Navigatio*, the scene of the Paradise of Birds in the A.N. *Voyage* is a peaceful respite from the fantastic imagery that has been seen in previous encounters. The scene also represents a physical rest for the monks as they remain on the island for two months; this period allows Benedeit to ground the narrative in the mundane by describing how the monks engage in such practicalities as repairing their vessel.²¹² The birds give Brendan directions toward the Paradise of Delights and also predict great hardships for them. The Paradise of Birds is one of the islands to which Brendan returns for the celebration of a major festival each year.²¹³

Although in both versions, the birds make a prediction concerning the future of the voyage, Brendan has already demonstrated the ability to prophesy. Thus, this is nothing new to the audiences of either the *Navigatio* or the A.N. *Voyage*. This peaceful scene in both versions temporarily halts the gradual injection of the fantastic by including only material with which the audience could well be familiar, in particular the battle between Michael and the dragon in Revelation and the leg-

²⁰⁹ 'Vagamur per diuersas partes aeris et firmamenti et terrarum, sicut alii spiritus qui mittuntur. Sed in sanctis diebus atque dominicis accipimus corpora talia qualia nunc uides et commoramus hic laudamusque nostrum creatorem,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 11*, ll. 41–44.

²¹⁰ Glyn S. Burgess, 'The Anglo-Norman Version,' *The Voyage of St Brendan: Representative Versions of the Legend in English Translation*, eds W.R.J. Barron and Glyn S. Burgess (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), p. 69.

²¹¹ "Avez oïd/Cum cist angele nus unt goïd?/Loëz en Deu e graciez:/Plus vus aimet que ne quiez", Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 565–68.

²¹² 'Lur nef prengent dunc a serrer;/De quirs de buf la purcurent,/Quar cil qu'i sunt a plein usent,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 598–600.

²¹³ See my discussion on pp. 96–98.

end of the neutral angels. Moreover, for Brendan and the monks, the interlude with the neutral angels represents a physical respite from their journey for the duration from Easter to the Octave of Pentecost. Only on their departure, in both versions, are the brethren told that they must travel for eight months in their vessel, filled to capacity, before reaching land once again. Thus, from the tranquillity of the island of the neutral angels, the descriptions of confinement become more overt as the brethren commence the second year of their cyclical voyage.

Given the popularity and the heretical nature of the legend, it is hardly surprising that Benedeit's explanation (that the neutral angels had not shared the full punishment of Satan because they were deceived) was later censured for allowing the angels any improvement of their fate and giving them permission to praise God. A manuscript in Lincoln College, Oxford says that 'This is obviously contrary to Catholic belief. True belief holds that when the chief [that is, Lucifer] fell, none could have fallen with him unless they [too] were doomed'.²¹⁴ Whatever the popularity of the A.N. *Voyage*—and its translation had been commissioned by the wife of Henry I—it was necessary to speak out against the 'heretical' notion of the neutral angels and remind the laity that the only truth was that contained in the Bible, which does not mention the neutral angels, and that the latter played no part in the divine plan.²¹⁵

The encounter with the neutral angels represents a moment of respite for Brendan. In the *Navigatio*, it is a time of spiritual reflection that is repeated in the Island of the Three Choirs and the scene of the Crystal Church. Although the scene contains the most fantastic imagery thus far, it is not presented as a supernatural scene. The early Irish and twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audiences who followed the

²¹⁴ 'Quod est nimis inimicum fidei catholice:/recta quippe fides habet quod, ruente principe,/nullus nisi periturus secum posset ruere,' Meyer, 'Satire en vers rythmiques,' p. 378, ll. 26–29.

²¹⁵ The censuring of the A.N. *Voyage* may have influenced a Middle Dutch version of the Brendan narrative (*De Reis van Sint Brandaan*) composed around 1150. This version fuses the scenes of the Deserted Citadel and the neutral angels. Here they are bestial creatures called the Walseranden—possibly a corruption of the Middle Dutch 'Waltscrat' meaning 'evil spirit'; see Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. James Steven Stally Brass, 4 vols (London: George Bell & Sons, 1883), vol. 2, pp. 478–83. The *Reis* does not give any indication of the final fate of the Walseranden: the creatures hope that God will have mercy on them on Judgement Day. Thus, the Walseranden are unlike the neutral angels from the *Navigatio*, or the A.N. *Voyage*, who enjoy the freedom of a bird form; see Oskamp, *Reis*, ll. 1992–96.

teachings of the Bible would most probably have accepted it. Thus, in relation to Todorov's model, it represents a step away from the fantastic imagery, so that each audience can process the information that has been presented to them and consider it in terms that they would understand, before embarking with Brendan on the next stage of his journey and being presented with more marvellous examples of fantastic imagery, as represented by the community of Ailbe, the island of the Intoxicating Spring and the conflicts of Sea Monsters.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the first third of two versions of the Brendan narrative—the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan*—in relation to Todorov's exploration of the fantastic in literature. Each audience must play their part and accept a willing suspension of disbelief and the fantastic can only be achieved in its pure form when an audience hesitates for long enough at a point between belief and disbelief. Todorov's model shows that the text must oblige the reader by a gradual progression towards the fantastic, rather than an immediate introduction of supernatural material. Thus, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* begin with motifs and genealogies which correspond with my modification to Todorov's model, which includes a discussion of the mundane. Yet, even in the early scenes which discuss the practicalities of preparing for a voyage, one experiences a sense of the uncanny that are the foundation of the later anxieties, all of which play a part in developing elements of the fantastic. Such intertextuality is created by the sense of predetermination, as Brendan predicts the fates of the supernumeraries, by an empathy with the monks who are travelling in an overcrowded coracle, by the lack of provisions, or by the restrictive nature of the cyclical journey.

In both versions, the authors begin by establishing elements that are relevant to their audiences and omitting elements that would not. They also use recognisable stock motifs (such as Barrindus) to establish the text's authority. Each of the encounters discussed in this chapter are ultimately described in plausible terms, although, to the monks and to the respective audiences, the scenes are initially described in supernatural terms. The extent of the fantastic imagery used depends on the general audience at which each version is aimed. The *Navigatio* is aimed at what is essentially a monastic community, whether this audience is the

brethren, the pilgrims or the wider *civitas*. Thus, the emphasis remains on the liturgical calendar, monastic hours and the religious message. By contrast, the A.N. *Voyage* is aimed at a secular, courtly audience. Consequently, Benedeit omits the religious symbolism and liturgical lists in favour of a more dramatic plot, employing hyperbole in order to make the accounts seem grander. His use of exaggeration will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Similarly, as the monks progress on the journey, the uncanny elements in both versions become more pronounced: the darkness in the Desereted Citadel is a metaphor for spiritual blindness. Unlike the *Navigatio*, the A.N. *Voyage* emphasises that the darkness is a representation of moral uncertainty, as Brendan can see without a candle. These opening scenes of both versions establish Brendan as an exceptional man of God with the ability to prophesy and to drive out a devil. However, there are limits to Brendan's abilities. The death of the first supernumerary ensures that no audience assumes that the successful completion of the journey is a foregone conclusion. They realise that two more supernumeraries must be lost before the monks have learned all the lessons necessary to achieve Paradise.

Although the scene in the Desereted Citadel may seem an incredible event, we must remember that both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* were initially presented to audiences that believed in demonic possession and visitations by angels. Nevertheless, the fact that the authors of each version choose to omit details from various scenes can also cause the hesitation required to create the fantastic effect. Many of the encounters contain recognisable elements that overlap with the following scene: the motif of eschatology in the Desereted Citadel continues into the Island of Sheep. Similarly, the sheep and Jasconius are both unusually large creatures. These encounters might initially appear supernatural, although the authors give them plausible, or religious, explanations that neither early Irish audiences nor a twelfth-century courtly Anglo-Norman audience would have reason to question.

The emphasis of this chapter has been on the unsettling imagery that is generated by descriptions in the narrative and by the personal experience of each member of any audience. However, a paradox is also created when one considers that, despite the dangers and distractions of the journey, the cyclical nature provides an environment for spiritual reflection as the monks travel closer to God. The hardships endured by the brethren bring them closer to God and allow the authors to present their doctrine to their respective audiences. Despite unsettling imagery,

there is a continual sense of divine comfort in each scene: God and his messengers constantly provide for the monks, either through the provision of food in the Deserted Citadel, or his messenger. The section ends with a message that pervades both versions of the narrative: God's mercy on the Neutral Angels.

This chapter has focused on the scenes that receive a plausible explanation in both versions of the *Voyage of Brendan*. The narrative in both versions progresses in the way set out in Todorov's model, although the *Navigatio* takes a moment away from fantastic imagery to allow its respective audiences to focus on the didactic messages that have been presented to them with the recital of psalms, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage* this scene is concerned with the nature of salvation which is conveyed in relation to the Apocalyptic descriptions of the war in heaven. The next chapter considers scenes that move towards the 'pure fantastic' which can be attributed to neither supernatural nor plausible explanations. This chapter also discusses those scenes that have passed from beyond the moment of pure 'hesitation' and are infused with marvellous imagery. This is most particularly apparent in the encounters that could be described in plausible terms, but are treated with a supernatural description, thus corresponding to Todorov's subcategory of the fantastic-marvellous.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MARVELS OF THE OCEAN: FROM THE FANTASTIC-UNCANNY TO THE MARVELLOUS

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the progression from the mundane to the fantastic-uncanny and demonstrated that both the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan* can be discussed in relation to Todorov's model of the fantastic. Initial experiences that may appear potentially disturbing include claustrophobia, silence, solitude and darkness. Freud discusses each of these aspects in his essay on the uncanny.¹ These features are not necessarily present in the narratives of the *Navigatio* or the A.N. *Voyage*, but instead each implied audience generates its own anxieties, based on how they identify with the scenes with which they are presented. Whether presented to a ninth-century monastic or secular audience, or a twelfth-century courtly audience, such scenes would have subverted each audience's expectations and expanded their threshold for credulity. As the willingness to suspend disbelief increases, so each audience becomes more accepting of the increasingly marvellous imagery. The marvellous imagery for which there is no plausible explanation corresponds with Todorov's model of the fantastic which will be the subject of this chapter.²

The previous chapter also showed that the narrative of the A.N. *Voyage* divides into three parts of similar lengths.³ The first third concerns the events that occur in the first year of the voyage. In that first year, although presented as supernatural, each of the encounters ultimately receives a plausible explanation. The first third culminates in the peaceful scene of the neutral angels—those angels that sided neither with God nor Lucifer in the battle described in Revelation—where Brendan receives a prophecy that he will indeed achieve the Promised Land of

¹ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"'.

² The model is shown on p. 73.

³ See my discussion on p. 41; cf., Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*'.

the Saints, but that he must travel a further six years in order to achieve this Paradise. From Illingworth's description of the structure of the A.N. *Voyage* it can be seen that the second third of the narrative follows the progression into the sub-categories of the fantastic in accordance with Todorov's model. These scenes elicit the 'hesitation' that Todorov describes in his study of the fantastic, where each implied audience becomes uncertain as to whether the events presented to them are supernatural or plausible. This chapter analyses the progression from the fantastic-uncanny, where the plausible is presented as supernatural, through to the 'pure marvellous' where fantastic imagery becomes either *exotic* or *hyperbolic*.⁴

Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate how, in the middle third of both the *Navigatio* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*, elements of the marvellous are introduced gradually into the narrative and what effect the introduction of the marvellous might have on the respective audiences. Unlike the scenes discussed in chapter 2, where the supernatural descriptions ultimately have a plausible explanation and any sense of the uncanny is generated in the audience, the encounters discussed here explicitly describe fantastic and marvellous events. The analysis will be presented in five sections in relation to Todorov's model of the sub-categories of the fantastic.

The first two sections will analyse the monastic community of Ailbe, which is an example of monastic perfection and provides an ideal backdrop against which the first scenes of the fantastic can be played. The scene in the community of Ailbe serves to recapitulate the previous examples of the fantastic-uncanny discussed in chapter 2, including silence and the unusual tallness of one of the monks. In the second section, however, the monks of the community of Ailbe receive their food from some unseen source and it is unclear whether the narratives are describing a fantastic event or one that is perfectly plausible. This phenomenon corresponds with the meridian line on Todorov's model.⁵

uncanny	fantastic-uncanny	fantastic-marvellous	marvellous
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⁴ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 54–55.

⁵ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 44. See my discussion in chapter 2 on pp. 73–75.

The meridian line represents a moment of the ‘pure fantastic’ which generates the ‘hesitation’ of the implied audience, with the result that it is impossible for any audience to deduce whether the events with which they are being presented are fantastic or not. As Todorov suggests of the fantastic ‘either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is *hesitation* which sustains its life’.⁶ The moment of the ‘pure fantastic’ is brief, however, and the encounter with the community of Ailbe ends with a supernatural event which is presented as commonplace, thus corresponding to Todorov’s subcategory of the ‘fantastic-marvellous’.

In contrast to the first two sections discussed in this chapter that concern a human environment, the scenes in the third section are devoted to the natural. This chapter analyses three ‘negative connotations of water’ that are presented in both versions. The first of these is encountered immediately before the monks join the community of Ailbe. It is unclear whether or not a spring has supernatural properties. The second, the Coagulated Sea, although described in supernatural terms is a natural phenomenon, described by medieval geographers such as Dicuil. The third is an Intoxicating Spring, with supernatural properties that render disobedient monks unconscious, even though it is described as a natural occurrence. These scenes act as a counterbalance to the natural elements that are described in supernatural terms, which was discussed in the previous chapter. They continue the gentle gradation of the narrative through the meridian line of the pure fantastic, into a realm of the ‘fantastic-marvellous’, where supernatural events are described in natural terms.

Having discussed the human and natural aspects of the fantastic as presented in the middle third of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the fourth section of this chapter examines two scenes where descriptions have no frontiers and which engage in purely marvellous imagery without recourse to the plausible. These are the scenes concerning two conflicts of monsters. These scenes correspond to the final subcategory of Todorov’s model, the ‘pure marvellous’ where there is no attempt to present any of the imagery as plausible.⁷ In order to limit the categories of the marvellous, Todorov identifies four sub-genres, two of which, the ‘hyperbolic marvellous’ and the ‘exotic marvellous’ are relevant to

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31, emphasis added.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

the two versions of the Brendan narrative.⁸ Of course, the conflicts of sea monsters appear marvellous to a modern audience, but it is unlikely that many members of the various medieval audiences would have challenged their truth.

Although the focus of this chapter is primarily on the gradual introduction of the marvellous imagery, in the fifth and final section of this chapter examines a scene concerning the Island of Three Choirs. This is included in the *Navigatio*, where it acts as a respite from the monstrous imagery. It is omitted from the A.N. *Voyage* and this chapter considers what its inclusion or omission means to each version.

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the presentation of evidence of the monstrous and exotic helps the monks to understand God's marvels and the physical evidence of the supernatural world: this is discussed in the final chapter, where it will be argued that, even though the various scenes correspond with Todorov's model, the *Navigatio* attempts to maintain a plausible didactic narrative by returning to acceptable scenes that have a heavy emphasis on liturgy. Conversely, the A.N. *Voyage* excises the scenes where nothing 'interesting' happens. Clearly Benedeit's primary concern is to maintain a vivid narrative with exciting descriptions. Following the encounter with the neutral angels, however, both versions focus upon a scene of ideal monasticism, represented by the community of Ailbe. Thus, this chapter, along with chapter 4, will demonstrate the increase in the fantastic imagery in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, from the uncanny, through the pure fantastic, and ultimately to the scenes of the pure marvellous, as suggested by Todorov's model.

*The transition from the 'fantastic-uncanny' to the 'pure fantastic'
and the monastic ideal*

After the brethren depart from the Paradise of Birds and begin the second year of their voyage, their first encounter in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, is on an island that houses an ideal monastic community based upon the hagiographic tradition of St Ailbe. This section analyses this scene which presents each audience with a series of uncanny anxieties that reinforce the unsettling feelings generated

⁸ See my discussion on p. 159.

by the encounters discussed in chapter 2.⁹ Once again, disconcerting feelings are initially generated by each audience's empathy with the situations that the characters face (the threat of dehydration and unnatural silence, for example).

The earlier encounters at the Deserted Citadel and on the Paradise of Birds show that the divine and the diabolical are very real elements for all of the medieval audiences and should be accepted as plausible, therefore, the presence of such elements would not challenge those audiences' acceptance of the narrative. Consistent with Todorov's model, the first unsettling feelings are generated by each audience's own anxieties, thus creating a sense of the 'uncanny', as discussed by Freud. As Todorov suggests, these are elements that are not situated within the narrative itself, but generated by the audience. As such they fulfil a requirement of the fantastic.¹⁰ Thus, each audience has no reason to discredit the text as unrealistic, since they create the 'hesitation' for themselves.

The Island of Ailbe

The departure from the Paradise of Birds marks the beginning of the second year of Brendan's voyage. The monks travel for months before discovering land. It takes a further forty days before they find a safe harbour on the Island of Ailbe, by which time they are dehydrated.¹¹ Historically, the encounter with the monastic community of Ailbe is possibly one of the most plausible of those described in the Brendan narrative. Ailbe is another Irish saint associated with the seafaring tradition. Indeed, the lives of both Brendan and Ailbe are bound together, for example in the *Vitae sanctorum Hiberniae*.¹² As discussed in chapter 1,

⁹ I suggested that the *Navigatio* was developed in Ireland around the start of the ninth century for three distinct audiences: the brethren in a monastery dedicated to Brendan, the pilgrims that the monastery wanted to attract and the non-monks who performed the manual tasks in the proto-urban centres. Conversely, the A.N. *Voyage* was composed for a courtly, secular English audience in the twelfth century; see also my discussion in chapter 1 on pp. 17–19 and 38–41.

¹⁰ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 33.

¹¹ Ailbe is spelled 'Albe' in the A.N. *Voyage* (l. 619), which showed that Benedict was not familiar with the phonetics of the Irish language. The *South English Legendary* includes a phonetic spelling of St Ailbe—'Alvey' (ms Harl. 2277, omitted from ms Laud. Misc. 108) for those unfamiliar with the phonology and orthography of the Irish language.

¹² Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, pp. 46–64; 98–151. See also my discussion on pp. 43–46.

Irish pilgrims travelled across the seas to find the solitude that they needed for their contemplation. Ailbe seeks the life of the *peregrinus*, although his journey is part of the *echtra* genre, that is, a voyage to the Otherworld. In his *vita* he is borne away in a bronze boat and returns to Ireland the following day with a branch as evidence of the Otherworld.¹³ Ailbe and the branch are inseparable for years until an angel takes it from him, an event that corresponds with the saint's death.¹⁴ The legend of Ailbe relates to the subcategory of 'fantastic-marvellous' of Todorov's model, where the supernatural is presented as plausible. After all, the narrative does not concern itself with Ailbe's voyage and simply refers to a three-hour journey.¹⁵ Máire Herbert observes of Ailbe that 'the hagiographer's purpose seems to have been the transmutation of the overseas Otherworld voyage into a voyage of spiritual revelation, presaging the saint's final translation to heaven'.¹⁶ This is also effectively what Brendan's voyage represents. Ailbe had founded the monastic community described in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* some eighty years before Brendan's arrival.¹⁷ Seeking a life of solitude, Ailbe is prevented from leaving by the king of Munster, although the saint succeeds in sending twenty-two men away.¹⁸ Thus, the aesthetic design to re-establish the narrative in the plausible (following the initial suggestions of the supernatural in scenes such as the Island of Sheep and Jasconius) is achieved by presenting Brendan with the ideal monastic community. Each land to which the monks travel contains elements

¹³ The *Life of St Ailbe* dates from the ninth century; Sharpe observes that the Latin text in the Codex Salmanticensis is the best-preserved version of the text as it is substantially unchanged. See Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints*, pp. 332 and 338. For a discussion of the terms 'echtrae' and 'immram' see Dumville, 'Echtrae and Immram'; Herbert, 'Literary Sea-Voyages', p. 184. See also my discussion on pp. 50–59.

¹⁴ The branch, evidence of the Otherworld, corresponds with the silver branch given to Bran and the mystical flower that appears to the twelve Patriarchs inspiring them to travel to the Land of Promise, Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, p. 96. In Irish legend the silver bough is a gift from the queen of the land of the eternal young 'to draw to her domain [the hero] on whose companionship her heart is set,' Hull, 'Silver Bough,' p. 435.

¹⁵ 'Commanentes ibi fratres fere tribus horis, nauem ad se venientem iterum viderunt,' Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, p. 63.

¹⁶ Máire Herbert, 'Literary Sea-Voyages,' p. 186.

¹⁷ 'Ita nutrit nos Christus a tempore Sancti Patricii et Sancti Ailbei, patris nostri, usque modo per octoginta annos,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 12*, ll. 61–63; see also Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 721–22.

¹⁸ Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, p. 61. This monastic community is also mentioned in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, where monks declare that they are the crew from the second boat of Ailbe and that they will stay on an island singing requiems for those drowned at sea until Judgement Day; see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 56–57.

that are generally *heimlich*—familiar, yet with something concealed.¹⁹ Thomas O'Loughlin describes the community of Ailbe as ‘a foretaste of heaven’. The monks accept the monastic ideal.²⁰ In the wider context of the narrative, however, the ‘foretaste of heaven’ stands at a halfway point between secular society and the threshold of Paradise. Although a holy place, it is still a long way from God.

The community of Ailbe represents monastic perfection and familiarity to both the brethren and each audience, although it is not a return to the mundane elements of the early scenes of the *Navigatio* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage* as seen at the beginning of the narrative (such as the recital of Brendan’s genealogical details and the building of the coracle). Details in the *Navigatio* concerning the life of Ailbe are scarce, which suggests that the early Irish audiences for which the narrative was composed were familiar with the legend. The recognisable details would, in turn, present a backdrop for each audience where new, more incredible, elements could be introduced. Conversely, the A.N. *Voyage* describes Ailbe as a rich man who (like the description of Brendan at the start of the narrative) renounced his possessions in favour of the monastic life.²¹ As the elements of Ailbe’s life are unfamiliar to the Anglo-Norman audience, Benedeit cannot use familiarity to build on the anxieties that each audience may have previously generated. Thus, the elements of the fantastic in this scene become more pronounced, and, at the same time, they still correspond with Todorov’s categories of the uncanny and the fantastic-uncanny. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, initial anxieties within each audience could be generated by several further uncanny elements.

Extreme characteristics

The idea of finding a monastic community on one of these islands would be plausible for the earliest audience of the *Navigatio*. That said, the extreme age and height of the monk in the A.N. *Voyage* could evoke similar anxieties to those discussed in chapter 2. Any audience, which had empathised with the monks’ confinement in the coracle and had

¹⁹ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ pp. 343–44.

²⁰ O'Loughlin, ‘Distant Islands,’ p. 17.

²¹ ‘Riches hom fud, de mult grant fiu,/Mais tut guerpit pur icest leu,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 723–24. Waters observes that this biography of Ailbe’s life in the A.N. *Voyage* is ‘probably an expansion due to the poet himself,’ as it bears little resemblance to the life in Plummer’s edition of the *Vitae sanctorum Hibernae*; see Waters, *Voyage*, p. 113; Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, pp. 46–64.

previously felt a sense of claustrophobia before the first encounters, would have had their anxiety increased when considering the amount of time the monks spend in the coracle. Such apprehension increases with the descriptions of desperation as the brethren almost capsize the coracle when trying to reach water. Unlike the feelings of claustrophobia that require empathy from the audiences of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the description of confinement and other elements of the uncanny are *present* in the narrative. They are represented by a land that is familiar and yet strange: it has life-restoring springs from which the monks are forbidden to drink. The A.N. *Voyage* describes how the first monk that Brendan meets on the Island of Ailbe is tall and would have been frightening ‘were it not for his habit’.²² The *Navigatio* implies that the monk is more venerable than in the A.N. *Voyage*, describing him as an old man of great gravity.²³ It is when speaking with the abbot (in both versions) that it transpires that Brendan learns that the monks of Ailbe have lived on the island for eighty years.²⁴ For the A.N. *Voyage*, then, the unsettling feelings are based on the anxieties generated within the courtly audience on the Island of Sheep and Jasconius, while in the *Navigatio* (as well as the A.N. *Voyage*) the effects of the uncanny develop through the silence that pervades the island.

The motif of silence

The uncanny motif of silence has already occurred in relation to the Deserfed Citadel and has a rational explanation in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*: the monks of Ailbe observe a vow of silence. When Brendan demands the same of his brethren, one may consider that, when he demands obedience, he is insisting upon the repression of the natural human instinct to communicate.²⁵ Yet the *Navigatio* indicates that gestures have also been suppressed: if a monk should require anything

²² ‘Ast vus currant un grant veilard./Poür oussent, ne fust l’abit—/Quar moines ert,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 656–58.

²³ ‘Senex nimie grauitatis,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, l. 18.

²⁴ ‘“Octoginta anni sunt postquam uenimus in hanc insulam”,’ Ibid., ll. 116–17; ‘Uitante anz ad que prist sa fin/A saint Albeu le pelerin,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 721–22.

²⁵ Colin Cherry, amongst others, argues that communication relies on far more than speech and writing and that with ‘nods, smiles, frowns...and other gestures we can convey most subtle understanding’; see Colin Cherry, ‘What is Communication,’ *Communication Studies: An Introductory Reader*, eds John Corner and Jeremy Hawthorne, fourth ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 11–14, p. 12.

from the abbot he should ‘request within his heart what he needed’.²⁶ The unspoken dialogue between the abbot and the monk appears, at first glance, to be an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:25, ‘and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest’.²⁷ However, it can also be viewed as a form of telepathy—one of the forms that Freud suggests that the uncanny can take—in that their communication appears ‘accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another...so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other’.²⁸

The enforced suppression of primary human instincts—not simply speech but also gesture—would no doubt have generated a tension in each individual member of the audience as they considered themselves in the position of the brethren.²⁹ The abbot of Ailbe does not allow any communication with Brendan until after the canonical hour has been sung. Yet, this does not bring the same unsettling feelings as experienced in the Deserted Citadel, and the whole encounter generates a sense of the uncanny.³⁰ Brendan *might* have represented anything to the abbot, from passing pilgrim to divine messenger: after all, he is the first visitor to the island in eighty years. The difference between the Irish travellers and the community of Ailbe in both versions is that, for Brendan, there is too much potential for their holy office to be interrupted, for example the ‘sinking island’ that disturbs their Easter celebration. Among the community, however, the monastic discipline is paramount: the liturgy must be completed and the necessary silence ensures that the monks have no distractions. Even though the monks in the A.N. *Voyage* had expressed their anxieties in the Deserted Citadel, the silence in that location was natural, as there was no one present other than the monks. Here, among the community of Ailbe, the silence has been ‘constructed’: the concept of communication without speaking is still uncanny, as it runs contrary to usual human interaction and

²⁶ ‘Postulans in corde suo que necessitas poscebat,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, ll. 94–95.

²⁷ ‘Occulta cordis ejus manifesta fiunt.’

²⁸ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 356.

²⁹ Freud observes that the ‘repressed instinct never ceases to strive after its complete satisfaction which would consist in the repetition of a primary experience of satisfaction,’ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, pp. 52–53.

³⁰ See, for example, Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 669 and 716.

instinct.³¹ Yet, at the same time, the uncanny silence is also seen as the highest monastic ideal.

The paradox of being both at ease and uncomfortable at the same time enhances intense feelings of defamiliarisation, and therefore the uncanny, within each audience. The community of Ailbe is an ideal to which Brendan aspires; indeed, he wishes to stay with the brethren.³² Yet many in a non-monastic audience would view the monastic silence as a form of confinement and would feel a sense of frustration. One further observation about silence is that, after the initial details of the encounter, neither version says anything about Brendan's stay among the community of Ailbe—nor his later return visits—despite the fact that Brendan stays until the Octave of Epiphany. Thus, at the end of the discussion of the community of Ailbe (in both versions) the narrative itself has been silenced.

Repetition

Ironically, the fact that both of these uncanny elements (a large character or creature and an unnatural silence) have been seen before is what creates the third element of the uncanny in the scene of the community of Ailbe: that of repetition. Yet, in the context of returning to Ailbe, the community is only mentioned and no details of the later visits are offered. Thus, it appears that simply mentioning the community should evoke feelings within each audience, either through remembering the legend of Ailbe, or the memories of earlier anxieties. The early audiences may not have been aware of the link between their anxieties in the first scenes because the uncanny elements have not been described explicitly. However, the psychological parallel between the silence of the Deserted Citadel and the Island of Ailbe, is, I think, deliberate. The parallel could create a further subconscious link: in the Deserted Citadel the silence, followed by a feast, ended with the death of a supernumerary. These two elements also occur in the community of Ailbe. It may, therefore, have made the audiences of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* anticipate the fate of the second supernumerary. Associated with

³¹ The Rule of Columbanus and the Penitential of Cummian, drawn up about the middle of the seventh century, both have a rule against one who murmurs. Cummian states that 'He who murmurs shall be put apart and his work shall be rejected; he remain with the due half loaf of bread and water,' Kathleen Hughes, *The Church in Early Irish Society* (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 59.

³² ‘‘Licet nobis nunc hic esse annon?’’, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, l. 123; ‘‘N'est liu si chers/U mansisse si volunteers,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 773–74.

these is the fourth uncanny element: in the *Navigatio*, the abbot of Ailbe is able to predict the fates of the two supernumeraries, just as Brendan did when the monks left Ireland.³³ Thus, the narratives build up and then subvert the expectations of each audience.

The ascent towards the pure fantastic

By gradually introducing fantastic elements, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* generate a familiarity with the supernatural, as both versions progress further along Todorov's model. The gradual ascent toward the culmination of the pure fantastic means that each audience is able to 'follow the process of identification step by step'.³⁴ Familiarity is essential when one considers that the neutral angels represent a pivotal moment leading away from the familiar narrative.³⁵ The myth of the neutral angels was neither widely known, nor generally accepted, at the time of the composition of the *Navigatio*. Rather than presenting his various audiences with more information to digest, the author of the *Navigatio* presents familiar elements such as the *echtra* of Ailbe. For, its earliest audiences (whether the audience consisted of monks listening to the hagiographic tale in the refectory, pilgrims, or the wider monastic community) would, indeed, be familiar with the *echtra* genre.³⁶ The audience of the A.N. *Voyage* might not have the same affinity with Irish heritage, so Benedeit instead focuses on Ailbe's vow of poverty.

The description of tranquil monasticism would be reassuring to the earliest audiences of the *Navigatio*, as it was the environment in which they would most likely be hearing the narrative. For the audiences of both versions, the perfect monastic community provides a respite from the potentially unbelievable marvels of the ocean. An audience that disbelieved the marvels of the ocean might not be receptive to the didactic messages presented in both these versions of the narrative. The community becomes a safe and respectable backdrop against which pure fantastic scenes may be presented. However, despite the introduction of

³³ ‘‘Duo uero, qui supersunt, unus peregrinabitur [in] insula que uocatur anachoritarum, porro alter morte turpissima condemnabitur apud inferos’’, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 12*, ll. 127–30. In the A.N. *Voyage*, the abbot simply predicts that Brendan will eventually return to Ireland to die, Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 777–78.

³⁴ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 89.

³⁵ See my discussion in chapter 2 on pp. 119–22.

³⁶ The Húi Corra also encounter a community of Ailbe's monks; see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 56–57.

familiar elements, the scene still evokes a mild sense of the uncanny for the audience of the A.N. *Voyage*, with the prevalent silence and the tall monk (as he is described in the A.N. *Voyage*), both of which have been seen in earlier encounters. Yet, they are not portrayed as frightening. The fact that the man is a monk dispels the travellers' fear and, if there is any discomfiture because of the silence it is not highlighted, as it had been when the monks visited the Deserted Citadel.³⁷

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the paradox of introducing elements that are at the same time familiar and yet unsettling assists each of the potential audience's acceptance of the text. Familiar elements allow each audience to have a platform in the mundane, from which they must decide of subsequent scenes 'whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion'.³⁸ Although the monastic community of Ailbe contains motifs of the uncanny, it also provides an opportunity for respite, when each audience could reflect upon the unfamiliar imagery concerning the neutral angels, before being presented with a moment of the 'pure fantastic'.

The pure fantastic: the mysterious provision of food and the flaming arrow

The community of Ailbe is presented as the ideal of monasticism: even without the later possible injections of the supernatural, Brendan clearly feels that he has witnessed God's wonders within this insular monastery. However, once monastic perfection has been established, there are two seemingly miraculous occurrences within the community: the daily provision of food and a flaming arrow that ignites the lanterns. The supply of food is never explained adequately, and the explanation for the flaming arrow is swiftly dismissed. The lack of detail creates a 'hesitation' in each audience (whether medieval or modern) which in turn introduces a moment of the 'pure fantastic' corresponding with the meridian line of Todorov's model, where 'the reader is left in doubt over the origins of ... supernatural or natural presences'.³⁹ Without suitable explanation, each audience may *consider* that the evidence presented to them has a plausible explanation, but this hypothesis can never truly

³⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 657–58 and 277–78, cf. p. 118, n. 22.

³⁸ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 41.

³⁹ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 32. See also Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 33, and my discussion in chapter 2 on p. 73.

be confirmed. The feeling of the uncanny lies in the uncertainty of whether what has occurred may be considered likely: the indecision sustains the moment of the 'pure fantastic'.

The provision of food

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the community of Ailbe is sustained by food that arrives each day. In the *Navigatio*, the abbot explains that the food is provided by God's charity. Similarly, in the A.N. *Voyage*, the abbot describes how they neither toil for food, nor see who brings it to them, but assume that it comes from God, presumably so that they can focus on spiritual worship without the distractions of everyday life.⁴⁰ Thus, the monastery of Ailbe represents an idealised state of the world before the Fall, a middle ground between secular society and Paradise. Those living a holy life reap the rewards of piety by receiving their food directly from heaven.⁴¹ The motif of the mysterious provision of food has analogues in the Bible, for example when ravens bring food to Elijah. Thus, the respective audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would probably recognise it.⁴² Although the provision of food is seen potentially as a miracle, a common feature in both versions has been the procurator, who has provided for the brethren on their journey: he *might* also be the provider for the community of Ailbe.⁴³ The abbot's explanation implies that the provision of food is something that simply occurs and that the monks choose not to question it. In the *Navigatio*, when challenged, the abbot is ambiguous as to how the food arrives, whether by alms or by miracle. The explanation is vague and suggests a physical presence *could* provide the food.⁴⁴ Human agency is thus hinted at in the *Navigatio*, whilst the A.N. *Voyage* indicates that it comes from God and the monks 'do not know of anything else'.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ 'N'avum frere de ço se paint./Ici vivum e sanz cure,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 763–64.

⁴¹ Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, p. 119.

⁴² 1 Kings 17:6.

⁴³ I have discussed this character in my unpublished paper 'The Voice of Authority: The Role of the Host in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of Brendan*', presented on 16 July 2003 at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds. Rumsey argues that the Host is an allegorical representation of Christ, see Rumsey, *Sacred Time*, pp. 179–90.

⁴⁴ 'Sed tamen notum est nobis quod ex Dei magna elemosina ministrantur seruis suis per aliquam subiectam creaturam,' Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 12, ll. 55–57.

⁴⁵ 'Panes uero quos uidetis nobis ignotum est ubi preparantur aut quis portat ad nostrum cellarium,' Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 12, ll. 54–55; 'De Deu nus veint—el n'en savum —/La viande que nus avum,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 743–44. Curiously the *South*

The abbot's explanation is disappointing in both versions, although it highlights two important issues. First, just as one should question neither God nor His miracles, so neither ninth-century monastic or secular, nor twelfth-century courtly, audiences should challenge the apparently miraculous elements in the narratives. Secondly, Brendan's visit had been pre-ordained, as the abbot found double the amount of bread that morning.⁴⁶ By underplaying the provision of food, the abbot implies that nothing untoward has occurred, as the event is not presented in a miraculous way. There are no astonishing descriptions to accompany the provision of food, nor even an analogy similar to the burning bush, which is how, in the *Navigatio*, the abbot later justifies the appearance of the fiery arrow.⁴⁷

The provision of food is arguably the first moment of the 'pure fantastic' presented to each audience in both versions of the Brendan narrative examined here. The *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* both convey the message that God provides all necessities and it is not important *how* He does it. There *might* be a plausible explanation, as the food *might* be provided by some human agency. Through the suggestion of a physical presence this fact is not adequately established: as Todorov suggests 'the *fantastic* refers to an ambiguous perception shared by the reader and one of the characters. Within the genre of the fantastic, it is *probable* that "fantastic" reactions will occur'.⁴⁸ The uncertainty caused by the lack of explanation creates the moment of 'hesitation' that Todorov suggests is so important to the fantastic narrative: 'the fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty'.⁴⁹ Thus, the lack of adequate explanation for the provision of food differs from the scenes discussed in chapter 2, where, however unlikely, each scene has a rational

English Legendary unambiguously delineates that the food comes from a human source ('An straunge man eche daye it bringeth') and there is no suggestion of the divine, save the maxim that God shall never fail those who trust in Him; see Carl Horstmann, ed., 'Voyage of Brendan', *The Early South English Legendary or Lives of Saints*, EETS, OS 87 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1887), ll. 292 and 294.

⁴⁶ Wooding argues that the author of the *Navigatio* appears to have used the *Vita Pauli* by St Jerome as a source, which includes the provision of a double quantity of food when Paul is visited by Anthony of Egypt; see Jonathan M. Wooding, 'Introduction to the Latin Version,' p. 21.

⁴⁷ Exodus 3:3; 'Sagitta ignea,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 12*, ll. 131–32; dismissed in the A.N. *Voyage* as 'En noz lampes fou recevum,/Ne pur l'arsun que cist fous fait/Cire ne oile le plus n'en vait,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 758–60.

⁴⁸ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 46 (his emphasis).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25 and 32.

interpretation. Instead, the provision of food is the first time that perceived supernatural occurrences have not had a plausible explanation, even though an acceptable solution could possibly be found.

The audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would not necessarily have deemed introduction of the provision of food as miraculous.⁵⁰ Each audience would be approaching the narrative with a logical mind, albeit a mind open to the text. In general, it appears that the respective audiences of the Brendan narrative were credulous of tales concerning visions and miracles as a means of accounting for phenomena that defied explanation (simply because there was not the scientific understanding).⁵¹ So, where Todorov suggests that reason ‘rejects the marvellous’, it becomes inappropriate to question how the miraculous is perceived, when the only evidence is divine in origin.⁵² During times when each audience may experience famine or the threat of invasion, the fact that the community of Ailbe could sustain themselves and that the monks are free from any illness and infirmity must surely be of more interest than *where* the food comes from. Yet, health is another of the rewards of faith received by the monks of Ailbe, as the community is an example of human perfection.⁵³ Such perfection would have been alien to *all* medieval audiences, as disease and infirmity affected all

⁵⁰ A parallel is found in the Legend of Benedict, when Benedict tells the monks afflicted by famine that ‘today’s dearth will be tomorrow’s plenty’; the following day they find ‘two hundred measures of flour...but by whose hands [it was sent] it is not known.’ (‘Hodie quidem minus est, sed et crastina abundanter habebitur. Sequenti autem die ducenti farine modii ante fores celle in saccis inuenti sunt. Quos omnipotens deus quibus deferentibus transmisisset, nunc usque manet incognitum’), Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2nd ed., 2. vols (Sismel: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), vol. 1, p. 317.

⁵¹ Le Goff, however, argues that representations of the miraculous would have been more of interest to the audiences of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (thus, the courtly Anglo-Norman audience) as the Church at this time considered marvellous narratives to be ‘less threatening’ and that could be turned to advantage in conveying the didactic message, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 29. Sumption observes ‘medieval men...had no reason to doubt that miraculous events occurred...with such regularity as to be almost part of the natural universe’, although he adds that ‘their understanding of “the normal course of nature” was limited’, Sumption, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 54 and 65.

⁵² Gurevich applies such psychology to the Middle Ages to observe that ‘not every miracle was given credence and a boundary...between the natural and the supernatural, was certainly recognised’, A.J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*, trans. G.L. Campbell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 179; cf. Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 122.

⁵³ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 12*, ll. 120–22; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 741–42.

levels of society. The absence of infirmity in the community of Ailbe represents a kind of limbo, where the monks are living the divine ideal, yet not living with any free will. They are dead to society, yet they are not dead. They exist in a society in distant waters and have no means to sustain themselves, so it is nothing less than a miracle that they have been able to survive for so long.

For a single moment, then, there is uncertainty as to the origin of the provisions. A modern audience might consider that it is a human agency that brings the food, but in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* we are unsure. The abbot will not offer a concrete explanation and no audience can dispute whether it is a human or supernatural phenomenon. Therefore, like the uncanny, the ambiguity of the provision of food is, as Bennett and Royle describe it, concerned with the ‘troubling of definitions’.⁵⁴ A lack of meaningful signification is, according to Todorov, the major defining feature of the fantastic.⁵⁵ The provision of food could potentially provide *evidence* of the divine and yet, in both versions, the abbot chooses not to seek the answers, perhaps because to seek answers would distract attention from worship. Thus the ‘hesitation’ created by a potentially miraculous event is a deliberate construction within the narrative created by a disappointing explanation and not something that audiences bring with them. The lack of evidence becomes a metaphor for the faith of the abbot of Ailbe: he trusts fervently in the mercy of God and does not need to concern himself with how God dispenses that mercy.

The flaming arrow and other elements

The *Navigatio*, having presented each of its audiences with a fleeting moment of the ‘pure fantastic’ through the mysterious provision of food, differs from the A.N. *Voyage*. In the *Navigatio*, the encounter with the community of Ailbe culminates in the first *definite* moment of fantastic imagery, although, as discussed below, this is not necessarily the case in the A.N. *Voyage*, where Brendan does not witness the fantastic events at first hand.

⁵⁴ Bennett and Royle, *Literature, Criticism and Theory*, p. 33.

⁵⁵ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 44; Freud spends pp. 341–47 discussing various definitions of the ‘Uncanny’, concluding that ‘heimlich’ is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it concludes with its opposite, *unheimlich*, Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ p. 347. See also Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 38. Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 9–11.

The *Navigatio* describes how Brendan watches a fiery arrow ignite the lanterns in the church.⁵⁶ However, the fiery arrow is not presented as supernatural imagery and it is substantiated by a scene from the Bible. When in the *Navigatio*, Brendan asks about how these lanterns can burn without oil or wax, the abbot equates the unnatural phenomenon to Moses and the burning bush.⁵⁷ The abbot feels that no further explanation is necessary.⁵⁸ Therefore, this description relates to the ‘fantastic-marvellous’ as presented in Todorov’s model, where the supernatural is passed off as commonplace and is supported by the abbot’s unsatisfactory explanation concerning the provision of food.⁵⁹ The flaming arrow is the first time that Brendan witnesses a marvel that he does not fully understand and he fails to appreciate what the analogy of the burning bush has to do with this phenomenon.⁶⁰

In the *Navigatio*, supernatural descriptions are suppressed in the account of the community of Ailbe in order to maintain the credibility of the narrative. The focus of the scene in Ailbe is on the spiritual discipline of the monks, although there are descriptions of the altar and crystal holy vessels. No doubt these features are intended to direct each audience to the familiar material context of religious devotion and to guide them through the didactic message, rather than to distract them from the marvellous descriptions.⁶¹

⁵⁶ ‘Ecce illis uidentibus sagitta ignea dimissa per fenestram incendit omnes lampades que erant posite ante altaria… Tamen lumen preciosum remansit in lampadibus,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, ll. 131–34.

⁵⁷ ‘‘Nonne legisti rubum ardenter in monte Sinai? Et tamen remansit ipse rubus inlesus ab igne’’, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, ll. 141–42.

⁵⁸ Moran’s edition of the *Navigatio* includes a further line where Brendan says ‘I have read of this [burning bush on Mount Sinai]. What analogy has it to this case?’ (‘Legi. Quid ad hec?’) suggesting that he, Brendan, cannot fully comprehend the parallel; see Moran, *Acti Sancti Brendani*, p. 107. Moran’s edition is taken from the manuscript Z.3.1.5 in Archbishop Marsh’s Library in Dublin; it is known as the *Codex Kilkenniensis* or *Codex Ardmachanus*. Beazley suggests that the imagery was inspired by the miracle of the holy fire at Jerusalem, see Beazley, *Dawn of Modern Geography*, vol. 1, p. 238.

⁵⁹ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 52; see my discussion on p. 73 above.

⁶⁰ In the life of St Peter, Martyr, the Golden Legend describes how ‘the lamps around his tomb have several times lighted up by divine action, without any human assistance; it was indeed appropriate that for one who had shone so brilliantly with the fire and light of faith, so singular a miracle of fire and light should occur’ (‘Post mortem ipsius lampades ad sepulchrum ejus dependentes pluries per se ipsae absque omni humano studio et ministerio divinitus sunt accensae, quia conveniens nimis erat, ut qui ignis ac luminis fidei excellenter claruerat singulare de ipso ignis ac luminis miraculum appareret’), de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, pp. 282–83.

⁶¹ ‘Erat enim quadrata tam longitudinis quam et latitudinus, et habebat septem luminaria, tria ante altare quod erat in medio, et bina ante alia duo altaria,’ Selmer,

Unlike the *Navigatio*, the A.N. *Voyage* expands the description of the church to include precious metals and stones that would appeal to a courtly, secular audience.⁶² Benedeit omits the mathematic perfection of the altar from the description of the church of Ailbe, as it is described in the *Navigatio*, and thus avoids alluding to the descriptions of Paradise and anticipating the ending of the A.N. *Voyage*.⁶³ Also, unlike the *Navigatio*, the A.N. *Voyage* explains that neither wax nor oil are used up.⁶⁴ However, in the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan does not witness this marvel for himself, nor does the abbot use Biblical authority to substantiate it. Thus, unlike the *Navigatio*, where Brendan witnesses the marvel at first hand (even though it is presented as commonplace), the A.N. *Voyage* sustains the moment of the ‘pure fantastic’, as the ‘hesitation’ occurs as each individual must ascertain whether the event that the abbot describes is true.

The principal difference between the two descriptions of the flaming arrow, therefore, is that in the *Navigatio* it is presented as ‘fantastic-marvellous’, whereas the A.N. *Voyage* presents it as ‘pure fantastic’. In the A.N. *Voyage*, as Brendan does not witness the event at first hand, the audience must decide for themselves whether the event is true and do not need to rely on Biblical authority to substantiate it. Even so, the abbot’s explanation, however vague, lends authority to the description. Even though the community of Ailbe contains the first potentially supernatural events, the encounters that is consistent with the ‘fantastic-marvellous’ (according to Todorov’s model) only begin in the following scene in the A.N. *Voyage*, which describes how a ‘natural’ spring induces a supernatural sleep. Conversely, a possible explanation for why the earliest audiences of the *Navigatio* would have accepted the abbot’s description of the flaming arrow (in addition to the Biblical authority) can be found in an analogous scene in the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*, corresponding to the temptation of the bridle thief in the *Navigatio*. One

Navigatio, *caput* 12, ll. 83–86. The imagery of the crystalline chalice will be discussed in chapter 4.

⁶² ‘En Arabie nen at si sor-/Od jagunces e sardines/Forment grandes e entrines;/ Od tupazes e od jaspes/Itant cleres sunt les haspes,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 684–88, for example.

⁶³ Benedeit also avoids the description in relation to the Crystal Pillar for the same reason.

⁶⁴ ‘“Cire ne oil le plus n’en vait”,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 760. Thus, the fire in Ailbe is not about burning, but about enlightenment and refining, see Smyth, *Understanding the Universe*, p. 67.

of Máel Dúin's supernumerary foster brothers steals a necklace. The guardian of the citadel is a small cat, who turns into a fiery arrow and incinerates the transgressing brother. Thus the fiery arrow that lights the lamps for the community of Ailbe carries with it a sinister, or at least admonitory, undertone: obedience is compulsory.⁶⁵

A vital ingredient in the gradation towards the fantastic

The island of the community of Ailbe appears to be a means of adding something novel to something that would already be familiar, a procedure that Freud discusses in 'The "Uncanny"'.⁶⁶ In order to create a 'familiar' encounter, the author of the *Navigatio* re-used the uncanny elements previously included in the earlier scenes, as well as using a popular legend of another seafaring saint. However, in the scenes discussed here, both fantastic and uncanny elements are already present. Certainly, a plausible explanation *could* be found for both the fantastic elements, but one is not offered. The previous chapter discussed how the apparently fantastic elements had a rational explanation, although much of the perceived sense of the uncanny is that which each member of the audience brings with them. The encounter with the community of Ailbe contributes to the general gradation towards the fantastic; here, as well as a lack of supernatural description, the narrative is lacking in explanation. The lack of detail in both versions ensures that the sense of 'hesitation', which may have already been brought to the narrative by the audience's own anxieties, is *also* present in the text, creating both uncanny and fantastic moments and leading each audience towards an acceptance of the supernatural. The purpose of Brendan's voyage is to see *all* of God's wonders. Such wonders are not restricted to hell, Paradise and the marvellous islands. The Island of Ailbe shows monks who are able to maintain their monastic discipline for eighty years without the need to distract their worship with material things. On each of the islands, Brendan and his monks receive food, water, shelter and rest. Although there is very little that can interrupt their divine worship, at Ailbe, as we shall see, the distractions *are* there and can be in the forms of natural phenomena, for example the encounters with springs that frame the scene.

⁶⁵ Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 476–79.

⁶⁶ Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 341.

The negative connotations of water

The first sections of this chapter demonstrated how, in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the encounter with the community of Ailbe demonstrates a gradual and progressive movement from the ‘fantastic-uncanny’ to the ‘pure fantastic’ (or perhaps even to the ‘fantastic-marvellous’, as the boundaries of each sub-category are blurred) in accordance with Todorov’s model. These sections have focused on the monastic ideal, most particularly for the Irish audiences of the *Navigatio*. These audiences would no doubt have been familiar with the legend of Ailbe, whose monks would have served as a model of piety. The legend would have offered, for obedient pilgrims and the wider monastic community, a promise of spiritual rewards. The scene of the community of Ailbe culminates in pure fantastic imagery raising questions as to whether the provision of food and the flaming arrow (provision of nourishment and light) are miraculous. However, scenes that deal with water frame the encounter with the community of Ailbe.

In the *Navigatio*, there are two cautionary scenes concerning water, immediately before the brethren encounter the community, where the monks are warned about the effects of the water, and two further scenes after they leave the community, where their knowledge is put to the test. Conversely, in the A.N. *Voyage*, there are only three scenes concerning the negative effects of water on the monks and their vessel. They show, nevertheless, that how the monks respond to nature is just as much a part of their testing. This section will focus on these examples of water, which can hinder the monks on their journey and can potentially lead to spiritual ruin. These examples are: the test of obedience of the two springs before the Ailbe episode; the Intoxicating Spring and the Coagulated Sea. When considering these examples with regard to the fantastic, we might categorise them as follows:

- 1) The Spring on the Paradise of Birds (unique to the *Navigatio*), also the springs of Ailbe: *might* be supernatural, but this is never put to the test;
- 2) The Intoxicating Spring: has unusual qualities to incapacitate the monks, although, if the effects are supernatural, this is not explained;
- 3) The Coagulated Sea: described in supernatural terms, but the unusual description is substantiated by medieval geographers.

These examples will be discussed in relation to Todorov's model and assess the relationship between fantastic imagery and the didactic message, as well as considering the *order* in which these scenes occur within the two versions and discuss what effect the author of the A.N. *Voyage* creates by altering this order.

The spring on the Paradise of Birds

In the *Navigatio* only, when the monks rest at the Paradise of Birds, the procurator warns them that a spring on the island is 'strong to drink' and that it would send anyone who imbibed it to sleep for twenty-four hours.⁶⁷ Thus, this scene serves to foreshadow the later encounters at the springs in the community of Ailbe and the Intoxicating Spring. For the audiences of the *Navigatio*, the procurator's warning creates a sense of anticipation: anyone who appreciates the parallels will see that each spring holds unseen, potential danger. The omission of this caution from the A.N. *Voyage* means that Brendan's prediction concerning the effects of the Intoxicating Spring appears as supernatural (or, at least, as an inherent saintly ability). Thus the effects of the spring would come as a surprise to a twelfth-century audience. The warning from the procurator in the *Navigatio* means that the monks' anxieties concerning the possible detrimental effects of the spring are justified.

The springs on the Isle of Ailbe

The scenes that frame the encounter with the community of Ailbe in the *Navigatio* both involve a spring.⁶⁸ In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* the monks discover two wells, one that is muddy and the other clear.⁶⁹ As with other elements in the episode, one cannot be sure of the meaning of the two springs to the community in either the *Navi-*

⁶⁷ 'Fortis namque est ad bibendum,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 11*, l. 82.

⁶⁸ In the A.N. *Voyage*, the scene of the Coagulated Sea comes before the Intoxicating Spring.

⁶⁹ The motif of two springs may derive from Plato's *Critias* (trans. Diskin Clay, *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Ltd., 1997), 1294–1306, p. 1302). It is echoed in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra* where the community of Ailbe of Emly have two springs, as described in the *Navigatio*. The penitents ask permission to drink, but the liquid induces a heavy sleep. The inclusion of this episode in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra* is a conflation and borrowing from two episodes in the *Navigatio*, as there is no apparent moral about disobedience concerning the spring, see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 58–59.

gatio or the A.N. *Voyage*. However, the purpose of the muddy spring is later explained by the Abbot in the *Navigatio*: feet of the brothers are washed every day in the warm water; this detail is omitted in the A.N. *Voyage*. Despite the fact that the monks are dehydrated after months at sea, Brendan cautions them not to take the water.⁷⁰ Strangely, then, the procurator's earlier warning has no resonance in this scene in the *Navigatio*: the monks resist temptation because of Brendan's command and his promise that the elders of the island would freely give them what they would furtively take.⁷¹ Conversely, in the A.N. *Voyage*, the warning about the spring is practical: the monks do not know the nature of the streams and need to speak to someone about them first.⁷² Symbolically, the monks only drink once the abbot has given permission; in the *Navigatio* they drink together three times, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage*, the water is described as 'sweeter than mead'.⁷³ The overall moral of this scene is that the slightest action in life must be performed with God's consent. It is implied that, even though the monks were on the verge of dying of dehydration, Brendan would rather that they lost their lives than allow them to sin. The restraint of the brethren not drinking from the fountains mirrors that of the Ailbe monks. They must wait for their own meal until Brendan's monks have finished eating. Again, this is a practicality: they do not have enough benches to seat everyone.

Neither the *Navigatio* nor the A.N. *Voyage* describe the springs on the Island of Ailbe described in supernatural terms. The didactic message of the spring is conveyed without fantastic imagery. Any unspoken anxiety concerning the nature of the spring and *why* the monks must abstain is generated by the audience, although we can assume that, had the monks succumbed to temptation, the outcome might have been similar to that of the Intoxicating Spring. This unspoken concern generates a further sense of the uncanny in each audience and these feelings are exploited further within the descriptions of the community itself, as discussed in the previous section. Brendan's command that

⁷⁰ 'Nolite peragere illicitam rem sine licencia seniorum qui in hac insula commorantur,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, ll. 14–15; 'Prendre si tost jol vus desent,/D'ici que avum parlé od gent,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 649–50.

⁷¹ "Ex hoc fonte quem hodie furtum bibere uoluitis, ex eo modo facite caritatem cum iocunditate et timore Domini", Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, ll. 51–52.

⁷² "Quel nature nus ne savum/Aient li duit trovez que avum", Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 651–52.

⁷³ 'Biberunt tribus uicibus,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 12, l. 70; 'Aigue dulce plus de murét,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 706.

the monks restrain themselves from drinking until they either obtain permission from the owners (the criterion in the *Navigatio*) or learn the nature of the springs (as described in the A.N. *Voyage*) overrides the monks' desperation to drink.

Although the discipline of abstaining from drinking from the springs is another example of monastic obedience, it should also be considered in relation to Freud's discussion of the Death Drive. The brethren are desperate: the A.N. *Voyage* describes how the monks run to the fountain on account of their thirst and the *Navigatio* describes how the monks' strength has almost failed because of their exhaustion. Furthermore, prior to their arrival at the Deserted Citadel, the monks had been so desperate for water that they had nearly capsized their vessel.⁷⁴ Thus, as with the later imagery on the island (the tall monk, the silence and repetition) the restriction of not being allowed to drink, even in the monks' desperation, is a further example of claustrophobia, because the brethren are unable or forbidden to respond to human bodily necessities. Thus, any audience that had previously empathised with the monks in their confinement would be aware that the brethren were dehydrating and unable to express their predicament. Indeed, as Royle observes, the Death Drive 'works in silence'.⁷⁵

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the spring is natural and the water is a gift from God. Thus, the brethren do not voice any objection to a command that could potentially lead to their death. Indeed, it is only a short time later, in the *Navigatio*, that Brendan forbids the brethren even from speaking, lest the brethren of the island be 'defiled' by their speech.⁷⁶ Thus, the scene emphasises the lesson that was presented to the monks in the Deserted Citadel: that taking without permission, no matter how insignificant the item, is a sin that must be punished.⁷⁷ It also shows that the monks, at least partially, have learned the lesson of obedience first demonstrated in the Deserted Citadel. Despite receiving the reward for their patience and abstinence

⁷⁴ 'Fratres enim uexati erant ualde de fame et siti. Singuli uero acceperunt uascula ut aliquid de aqua potuissent sumere,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, ll. 18–20.

⁷⁵ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 86.

⁷⁶ ‘‘Custodite ora uestra a locucionibus, ne polluantur isti fratres per uestram scurilitatem’’, Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 12*, ll. 30–31.

⁷⁷ The apocryphal *Testament of Solomon*, where Solomon is punished for dedicating five locusts to Raphan and Moloch: it is not the size of the creature, but the act of dedicating it to a demon that is a sin, see *Testament of Solomon* 26:5 in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, p. 986.

when among the community of Ailbe, the monks do not remember this lesson and their first encounter after leaving the community of Ailbe is with another spring. On this occasion, the detrimental effects of the water are explained to each audience as a demonstration of the punishment for disobedience.

The Intoxicating Spring

Unlike the two springs on the Island of Ailbe, the island of the Intoxicating Spring continues to generate uncanny anxieties that pervade the monastery.⁷⁸ As with the provision of food, the Intoxicating Spring is a phenomenon that *appears* natural, but contains some supernatural qualities, in both versions, in that it instantly incapacitates the brethren that imbibe it. However, it is presented as a natural occurrence and, thus, corresponds with Todorov's description of the 'fantastic-uncanny'. There is a further sense of uncanny predestination surrounding this scene. In the *Navigatio*, the monks were warned not to drink from the Intoxicating Spring, as well as facing the cautionary example of drinking without permission from the springs on Ailbe.⁷⁹

In the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan commands the monks to take the intoxicating water in moderation, but they 'secretly' take what they want. The language of this scene is harsher: when speaking about the amount of water that the monks may drink, Brendan literally measures their obedience.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Intoxicating Spring presents a conscious attempt to mislead the audiences into a sense of misplaced trust: the land described is similar to Barrindus's description of Paradise with many herbs and vegetables around a spring of clear water. Benedeit describes this as divine comfort after their labours; the *Navigatio* asserts that the monks are greatly loved by God as this blessing shows.⁸¹ One would believe that this island provided a temporary respite from the

⁷⁸ The *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* contains a scene where the juice of a fruit casts Máel Dúin into slumber for a day. However, Máel Dúin declares of the fruit 'great is its excellence' and mixes the juice with water to moderate its intoxicating power, Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite)', p. 71.

⁷⁹ ‘‘Cauete ne supra modum utamini his aquis, ne grauius uexentur corpora uestra,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 13, ll. 16–17. The motif of how a group drinks water is also seen in the way that Gideon selects his army, Judges 7:5–6.

⁸⁰ ‘‘N'aiez cure/De beivre trop sanz mesure,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 805–6.

⁸¹ ‘‘Deus dedit nobis hic consolacionem post laborem,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 13, ll. 12–13; ‘E bien sevent li afamét/Que de Deu sunt forment amét,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 797–98.

fantastic and the lessons that the monks must learn. Yet, believing that the water will bring them refreshment, the monks fall into a stupor. It is their disobedience that causes them to sleep.⁸² Thus, through the supernatural qualities of the springs, the message against complacency is conveyed, as well as the fact that not all things that appear good can be trusted. This episode uses fantastic imagery to convey the knowledge that the monks are not only subject to dangers, but also vulnerable to them as well. However, the principal crime here is that the brethren have disobeyed their abbot's command and they have not learned the lesson that they should have learned at the two springs on the Island of Ailbe. It is not enough that the monks must simply 'pass tests' that they face in each encounter: they require a long-term understanding so that they do not fail again. This, paradoxically, only comes about by failing the test and then learning from that mistake, provided that the monks do not lose sight of God's mercy and His capacity for forgiveness.⁸³

As always in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, when the monks face spiritual danger, there is no physical combat between the protagonist and the threat that challenges him, even though the monks are often in physical danger: this remains the case when Brendan witnesses the conflicts of monsters. However, this scene of the Intoxicating Spring is one of the few where we find the monks (other than the supernumeraries) tempted. Indeed, in the same way that the *puer niger* enters the supernumerary in the Deserted Citadel, the devil gets 'inside' the monks through the intoxicating waters. The A.N. *Voyage* spells out the uncanny pre-ordination that this failure is destined—*destinee*—to happen, as Brendan makes the monks understand their fault upon waking.⁸⁴ As Burgess observes, the monks realise that such disobedience is 'totally opposed to the *savoir* they require' in order to reach Paradise.⁸⁵ As with the scene in the Deserted Citadel and the two springs at Ailbe, this is a lesson in obedience and discipline in the face of temptation. It also shows that, although the Intoxicating Spring is described as clean, not all that 'seems' pure is *actually* pure. Sneddon reads this scene as a demonstration that Brendan himself can harrow hell and restore the souls

⁸² ‘‘Dominus enim dedit nobis pastum, et uos fecistis inde detrimentum,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 13*, ll. 25–26.

⁸³ See the discussions on pp. 101 and 214.

⁸⁴ ‘Trent tele lur entrec/Cum se lur fust destinee,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 799–800.

⁸⁵ ‘Des que en lur sens cil revindrent,/Pur fols forment tuit se tindrent,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 817–18; see also Burgess, ‘*Savoir* and *faire*,’ p. 266.

of his disobedient monks.⁸⁶ Sneddon's view of the symbolism of the Intoxicating Spring is confirmed by Brendan's ability to intervene and procure a further day of respite for Judas Iscariot: he is likewise able to save the intoxicated monks by the power of his prayers. However, this is not always the case: Brendan is unable (or unwilling) to intercede on behalf of the supernumerary who is damned at the volcano. Instead, as Bray suggests of the *Navigatio*, the encounter of the Intoxicating Spring is an allegorical representation of 'the kind of inexorable death which could overcome them [the monks] if they falter'.⁸⁷ In this regard, the 'death' of the monks is linked with the feelings of the uncanny, in that they are unable to move and could be perceived as dead, yet later they are reanimated. This corresponds to a primary fear: that of being buried alive. It also emphasises Brendan's role as spiritual protector in addition to that of navigator. The unnatural sleep thus becomes a form of automatism, stirring further uncanny anxieties within each audience. The monks' bodies are manipulated by forces beyond their control, paralysed by the effects of the water.⁸⁸ This is also what happens to the coracle when they reach the Coagulated Sea.

The scene of the Intoxicating Spring is not so much uncanny as unsettling, although the spring no doubt is a parallel to the cautionary episode of the two springs on the Island of Ailbe. This is a deliberately constructed scene that underscores the message of the springs on the Island of Ailbe and demonstrates that what appears to be harmless is actually a device that can lead to spiritual ruin. On the one hand, it explains that even a 'minor' sin is punished quickly, as with the transgression in the Deserted Citadel; on the other, it shows that the devil can take the form of even the most unlikely of disguises. The scene creates a paradox as far as the fantastic is concerned. Effectively, both versions present the spring as a natural feature having supernatural qualities. However, at the same time, the scene also represents the supernatural (the devil) affecting the monks through a commonplace element. Despite this juxtaposition, the spring is clearly an example of the 'fantastic-marvellous' in accordance with Todorov's model, as the spring has supernatural properties that are presented as normal.

⁸⁶ Sneddon, 'Brendan the Navigator,' p. 217, n. 27.

⁸⁷ Bray, 'Allegory in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*,' p. 9.

⁸⁸ Compare this with the unwilling love triangle created by Tristran and Iseut, who have no choice but to obey the effects of the love potion that they have taken. Tristran says 'Q'ele m'aime, c'est par la poison,' Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, l. 1384.

The spring also presents to the audience of both versions a serious didactic message: on the Island of Ailbe, the monks recognised the temptation for what it was, based on a moral obligation to ask before taking. Conversely, they failed at the Intoxicating Spring, despite the fact that in the *Navigatio*, the procurator had given them advance warning of the nature of the spring.⁸⁹ In the *Navigatio*, as the monks eventually learn the lesson of the Intoxicating Spring, they are allowed to collect ‘as much fish as you may want for a meal on every third day’ as a reward.⁹⁰ In the A.N. *Voyage* the monks are not offered this reward. The allegorical message is not enough and the last couplet of the scene, unique to the A.N. *Voyage*, is a maxim that echoes the discipline that the monks showed with the two springs: ‘It is preferable to suffer honest hunger than to forget God and his prayers’.⁹¹ Curiously, in the A.N. *Voyage*, the four lines of the scene with the Coagulated Sea (described below, pp. 154–56) are placed *before* that of the Intoxicating Spring. Its purpose is to lengthen the journey time from leaving the community of Ailbe.⁹² This means that the narrative of the A.N. *Voyage* moves from the scene with the Intoxicating Spring to a location where the mysterious procurator gives them provisions. There is no sense of tension, save when the monks, fearing for themselves, are delivered from the Coagulated Sea by a storm. Just as the ‘island fish’ initially seemed threatening but proved to assist the monks, so the storms that Brendan feared before arriving at Ailbe now help them to progress on their journey. In the A.N. *Voyage*, the next trial for the monks is that of the Intoxicating Spring.

Water is the essential source that sustains the monks and therefore the temptation at the Intoxicating Spring is understandable, even though the implication in both versions is that Brendan would rather the monks faced dehydration than succumb to sin. This is, as Burgess observes, just one of the examples through which the natural elements (in this case water) can both sustain and harm the monks.⁹³ Another example of

⁸⁹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 11, ll. 81–84.

⁹⁰ ‘Accipere dispendia de ipsis piscibus atque preparare quantum necesse est per triduum,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 13, ll. 27–28.

⁹¹ ‘Mielz vient suffrir honeste faim/Que ublier Deu e sun reclaim,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 821–22.

⁹² ‘E la mer fud tant paisible/Pur quei le curs unt peinible:/Espesse fud cume palud:/Tel i out enz ne creit salud,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 791–94.

⁹³ Glyn S. Burgess, ‘Les fonctions des quatre éléments dans le *Voyage de saint Brendan* par Benedeit,’ *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale Xe–XIIe siècles* 38 (1995), 3–22.

water helping and hindering the brethren is the sea, which is the ‘terrain’ that the monks must traverse in order to reach Paradise. However, even though the Intoxicating Spring has apparently supernatural qualities to render the monks immobile, a feature of the sea that impedes the progress of the coracle—the Coagulated Sea—is natural and discussed by medieval and classical geographers.

The Coagulated Sea

Although the details of the Coagulated Sea vary depending on the source, they generally describe a stagnant body of water that is impossible to navigate. Geographers such as Pytheas of Massalia, writing around 320 BC, describe a ‘frozen sea’ near ‘Tyre’ or Thule—the northernmost island of the world which lay six days north of Britain—now assumed to be either Iceland or Norway.⁹⁴ The phenomenon of the Coagulated Sea has also been described by, amongst others, Virgil.⁹⁵ It appears in the *Navigatio* described as ‘mare...quasi coagulatum’.⁹⁶ As a physical obstacle, Wooding suggests that one could equate the Coagulated Sea with the northern ice pack.⁹⁷ This is how it has been interpreted by such commentators as Little and Severin.⁹⁸

Another suggestion for the phenomenon of the Coagulated Sea is that of the Sargasso Sea, a two million square mile ellipse in the North Atlantic. The exceptionally clear and blue sea is often regarded as being lifeless owing to the amount of salt it contains; however, it actually contains an abundance of plant life in the form of floating algae, called *sargassum*. The sea in this area is deadly calm, although the body itself changes position according to currents, seasonal weather and temperature patterns. The possibility of Brendan travelling by way of the Sargasso Sea is perfectly plausible, especially considering that on the

⁹⁴ ‘Sed nauigatione unius diei ex illa [Thule] ad boream congelatum mare inuenunt,’ Tierney, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, p. 74, ll. 31–32.

⁹⁵ ‘Tibi serviat ultima Thule,’ Virgil, *Ecllogues*, *AEneid I–VI*, *Georgics*, I, 30; ‘sed mare pigrum et grave remigantibus perhibent ne ventis quidem perinde attolli,’ Tacitus, *Dialogus*, *Agricola*, *Germania* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1914), *Agricola* 10, p. 186; see also Isidore—*Etymologiae*, 14.6.4; 13.19.3; Wooding, ‘Monastic Voyaging,’ pp. 241–44; Barry Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 126.

⁹⁶ The Coagulated Sea also appears in the Middle Dutch *De Reis van Sint Brandaan* and *Herzog Ernst* where it is described as the ‘Liver Sea’, Strijbosch, *Seafaring Saint*, p. 70.

⁹⁷ Wooding, ‘Monastic Voyaging,’ p. 228.

⁹⁸ Little, *Brendan the Navigator*, p. 91; Severin, *The Brendan Voyage*, p. 246.

next shores that Brendan reaches in the A.N. *Voyage*, Benedeit describes how there is an abundance of fish and herbs.⁹⁹ These are items that Brendan would have been more likely to find in the more temperate climate closer to the Tropic of Cancer, rather than the Arctic Circle.

Brendan's landing and the discovery of herbs and fish is not described in the *Navigatio* where Brendan and his crew travel to the Island of the Procurator after leaving the Coagulated Sea. Short and Merrilees have described the lines in the A.N. *Voyage* as 'obscure and [have] puzzled copyists'.¹⁰⁰ However, although it is unclear as to the source that Benedeit used, it is an example of realistic touches in the A.N. *Voyage* narrative.

At first glance, although the concept of the Coagulated Sea *appears* fantastic, geographers have described it as a natural phenomenon; however, it could also be used as a rhetorical device suggesting spiritual disorientation. The positioning of the encounter with the Coagulated Sea in the *Navigatio*—after the Intoxicating Spring—shows that the divine provision of food and the lighting of the lamps in Ailbe have taught Brendan to trust God. There is, therefore, no point in fighting the elements on their voyage, since God commands them. The brief description of the Coagulated Sea in the *Navigatio* appears natural, but the narrative describes how the sea is so calm it appears *as if* congealed—'quasi coagulatum'. Todorov argues that the use of '*as if*' is 'precisely what the supernatural interpretation suggests'.¹⁰¹ The use of *quasi* implies that there is an uncanny division between what *seems* real and what *is* real. The uncertainty forces each implied audience to look for a fact that can be substantiated. In the case of the *Navigatio*, such a fact is Brendan's order that the monks cease rowing and remove the sails, which reaffirms *absolute* trust in God to guide their coracle. The fact that they are delivered to the Island of the Procurator and rewarded with food and fresh garments shows that the monks have been forgiven for their transgression at the Intoxicating Spring. In this way, this scene re-establishes Brendan as the *peregrinus* and further re-affirms the sanctity of their quest.

The scenes of the Coagulated Sea that appear in both versions indicate that Brendan and his crew are in danger, but the extent of

⁹⁹ 'Un duit unt cler e pessuns denz/Si em pernent a plus que cenz./Mester lur unt virun l'umeit/Herbes qui sunt el betumeit,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 801–804.

¹⁰⁰ Short and Merrilees, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 80.

this danger depends upon the placing of the incident in relation to the Intoxicating Spring. The *Navigatio* confirms that the monks have indeed learned their lesson of obedience. However, in the A.N. *Voyage* the Coagulated Sea appears as an unspoken warning that danger always waits for Brendan and his crew, just like the threat of temptation. Nevertheless, the monks later learn the lessons of obedience, caution and trust in God. Thus, they are able to overcome the obstacles. Only through their piety can they be saved and reap the rewards of God's love. Both versions show a natural phenomenon described in supernatural terms, correspond with the category of the fantastic-marvellous of Todorov's model. The variation between the two texts at this stage demonstrates the different approaches of these two versions of the Brendan narrative. Although both versions tell an adventure story, the *Navigatio* is more concerned with the pious acts of an abbot and the marvellous imagery that he witnesses on his journey, whereas the A.N. *Voyage* contains more romance elements, showing the brethren gaining progressive understanding of the marvels of the ocean.

The significance of these scenes

The three scenes described above, with their negative connotations of water, show the ease with which the monks could fall into spiritual disorientation. The monks' success in 'passing' the test of the springs on Ailbe shows their virtue in resisting temptation—even in the face of death. The encounter on Ailbe contains no supernatural imagery, so as not to dilute the power of the descriptions of the provision of food and the fiery arrow. I also suggest that, as there is no fantastic imagery, the monks simply obey their abbot, without considering the consequences if they had chosen to drink. In this regard, the springs on the Island of Ailbe represent *blind* obedience: although the monks follow without question, they do not understand the adversities that they face.¹⁰²

The Coagulated Sea, although a natural phenomenon, can be viewed as a metaphor for spiritual disorientation and a foretaste of the punishment if the monks do not obey their abbot. As with the Deserted Citadel, these scenes show the value of obedience, as the monks face temptation and do not heed their abbot in the face of a direct warning.

¹⁰² See also my discussion on p. 103 where I argue that darkness and blindness in the Deserted Citadel are metaphors for spiritual disorientation.

The fact that the monks later ‘fail’ the test at the Intoxicating Spring shows that they need to have a practical understanding of the nature of sin: obedience to the abbot is simply not enough.

The supernatural imagery of the Intoxicating Spring conveys the didactic message in both versions of the narrative, although it is more pronounced in the A.N. *Voyage* as Brendan delivers a cautionary couplet.¹⁰³ The fact that something as simple as a sip of water could lead to spiritual ruin must have generated a sense of anxiety within each of the implied audiences. The result is not damnation, but the monks’ sleep does represent a lapse and, as the result was unexpected, it would serve to shock each audience out of any complacency that the journey that Brendan undertakes (which can be read as a metaphor for spiritual growth) is not without its dangers. Just as Brendan stayed awake when the demon tempts a supernumerary in the Deserted Citadel, he remains awake to pray for and protect his monks by the Intoxicating Spring.¹⁰⁴ It shows that the monks are not infallible, but are just as subject to temptation as the supernumeraries, whereas those who are obedient will ultimately reap the rewards of their honesty. In both versions, these scenes show that the monks still have a long journey on their spiritual pilgrimage. They also present a warning against complacency to those in the audience, who will no doubt find themselves wanting if they compare their own lives against those of the monks. The hierarchy of each encounter and the familiar entities, against which the audience can compare themselves, show even the saintly Brendan to be much less pious than the angelic hermit, Paul, and this is will be discussed in chapter 4.

In order to offer the audiences a chance to contemplate the significance of these scenes of obedience, spiritual disorientation and temptation, the authors of both versions take a pause from the supernatural. They return to now familiar encounters, before presenting their audiences with the further lessons in faith: that even the monstrous (represented for us by the final category of Todorov’s model) is subject to God’s will. From a structural point of view, the presentation of what should be considered as marvels, as mundane events, acts as a counterbalance

¹⁰³ ‘‘Mielz vient suffrir honeste faim/Que ublier Deu e sun reclam,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 821–22; in the *Navigatio*, Brendan simply say: ‘‘Dominus enim dedit nobis pastum, et uos fecistis inde detrimentum,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 13*, ll. 25–26.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Jesus praying in Gethsemane while his disciples sleep, in Matthew 26:40–2; Mark 14:37–42 and Luke 22:45–6.

to the earlier scenes where, what *had* been presented as supernatural, in fact, had a plausible explanation. The mundane imagery of building the coracle and the sea voyages without incident at the beginning of the narrative is juxtaposed by the marvellous and violent imagery of the attacking sea monsters. Once the monks understand the lessons of faith (such as the three examples of water) as well as the rewards of faith (demonstrated earlier by the neutral angels and the community of Ailbe) they are able to progress to the violent wonders of the ocean. It is these creatures that will be the focus of the next section of this chapter.

The conflicts of monsters

Thus far, this chapter has addressed the various aspects of the fantastic that appear in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. Up to this point in the narrative of both versions, the appearance of the fantastic has relied either on the audiences' empathy with the situation in which the characters find themselves (uncanny); natural elements being described in supernatural terms, but ultimately receiving a plausible explanation (fantastic-uncanny); a hesitation as each audience attempts to determine whether or not the facts with which they have been presented are plausible or not (pure fantastic); or supernatural events that are presented as commonplace (fantastic-marvellous). This section examines two scenes from the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* that appear to be consistent with the final subcategory on the extreme right of Todorov's model of the fantastic, the 'pure marvellous'. The 'pure marvellous' differs from the 'fantastic-marvellous' as it is here that the supernatural elements 'provoke no surprise' and the fantastic descriptions have 'no distinctive frontiers'.¹⁰⁵ Thus, there is no attempt to present any of the imagery as plausible. This section therefore considers what the inclusion of this violent imagery contributes to the different versions of the Brendan narrative and how the authors convey the didactic message to their intended audiences.

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the two scenes containing the conflicts of monsters can be discussed in relation to the Todorov's description of the marvellous as a genre where 'supernatural elements

¹⁰⁵ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 53 and 54.

provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or in the implicit reader. It is not an attitude towards the events described, which categorises the marvellous, but the nature of these events'.¹⁰⁶ Thus, supernatural elements are described without the necessity of relating them to any particular factor with which the implied audience might well be familiar. However, as discussed above, no text exists in isolation, so there could be some familiarity through the bestiary tradition.¹⁰⁷

The *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* have similar descriptions of the two conflicts of monsters, although this is one occasion when there is a notable difference between the monsters in the scenes owing to Benedeit's editing. Nevertheless, in both versions, the conflicts of monsters are consistent with two of the four possible subcategories of the 'pure marvellous' that Todorov identifies. The first of these is the 'hyperbolic marvellous' whereby 'phenomena are supernatural only by virtue of their dimensions'.¹⁰⁸ Thus, in the *Navigatio*, the first creature that threatens the monks' coracle is a giant fish.¹⁰⁹ However, the effect of those encounters was to create unsettling scenes that then had a plausible explanation, rather than to suggest that such creatures were commonplace. The second subcategory of the marvellous that Todorov proposes is the 'exotic marvellous' where fantastic elements are described as an everyday occurrence.¹¹⁰ This definition does not include the provision of food in the monastery of Ailbe as, although unlikely, a plausible explanation cannot be dismissed.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁰⁷ This was certainly the case for the twelfth-century courtly Anglo-Norman audience: Philippe de Thaun dedicated his Bestiary to Adeliza, see, for example, Holzknecht, *Literary Patronage*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁸ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 54. The two other sub-categories are *instrumental marvellous*, which concerns marvellous gadgets such as flying carpets; and the *scientific marvellous* (science fiction) 'where the supernatural is explained in a rational manner, but according to laws which contemporary science does not recognise,' p. 56.

¹⁰⁹ I have already discussed the anxieties generated by creatures such as the unusually large sheep and Jasconius, pp. 107–14.

¹¹⁰ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 55.

¹¹¹ The fiery arrow might also be considered as another example of the 'exotic marvellous', to a modern audience, although a medieval audience giving credence to divine power would certainly have accepted the abbot's limited explanation on account of the Biblical parallels of the burning bush. Cf. the discussion on pp. 142–45.

The first conflict

The first conflict of monsters scene originates from the *Vita Brendani*, although in that legend the fight is between a giant sea cat and a whale.¹¹² In the *Navigatio*, this is the only example of the hyperbolic marvellous and, in both versions, the first monster is a large fish or a beast of unusual size.¹¹³ The imagery of a giant fish is already familiar through the encounters with Jasconius and, although it is marvellous imagery on this occasion, the marvels have already been contextualised by that which is already known and understood by the audiences. In this scene, what *had* been familiar imagery has now been subverted: where Jasconius had been passive in the encounter, *this* fish is represented as a hostile aggressor, spouting foam from its nostrils. Unlike the previous encounters, this scene in the *Navigatio* introduces dramatic imagery: it describes waves surging before the beast. The beast is ultimately defeated in two ways: by Brendan's prayers for deliverance and by a second creature that appears, Christ-like, from the west. However, aside from the initial dramatic imagery, there is little conflict, although the narrative reports that the second creature spouts flames as it appears. The battle is over, without details of the fight and without drama. As the creature is cut into three parts, Brendan observes the moral of obedience of the creature to its creator.¹¹⁴ This scene emphasises that the *Navigatio* was composed chiefly for spiritual direction: despite clearly marvellous imagery, the author does not want to distract his audience from the Christian elements by adding superfluous details.

In the A.N. *Voyage*, the first creature is a sea serpent—*marinz serpenz*—and it appears violent as it threatens the monks and most particularly through the way it emits flames. This is one of the occasions when Benedeit fully engages imagery to evoke the marvellous for the audi-

¹¹² Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 77–78. There is a comparable scene in the appendix to the Middle Irish *Bethu Bríte* (Life of Brigit). Here, when the sea creatures attack each other, one calls upon St Patrick and then Brendan before invoking St Brigit, whereupon the second creature admits that, with Brigit's protection, it cannot be injured. Brendan then composes the poem *Brigit bē bithmaith* in praise of Brigit. Jacqueline Borsje suggests that the superiority of Brigit in prayers 'may have had a political background in rivalries in monasteries connected with the saints', see Borsje, *From Chaos to Enemy*, p. 63. For further discussion see A.C.L. Brown, *The Origins of the Grail Legend* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), pp. 321–22; D. Ó hAodha, *Bethu Bríte* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978), §6.

¹¹³ 'Bestia immense magnitudinis,' Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 16, l. 3; see also Burgess, 'The Use of Animals', pp. 17–19.

¹¹⁴ 'Videte obedienciam bestiarum creatori suo,' Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 16, ll. 18–19.

ence. Although adapting a Latin legend into the vernacular, Benedeit is clearly unaware of some Irish influences: Gerald of Wales asserts that St Patrick drove out all venomous reptiles from Ireland, thus the sea serpent would have been *particularly* anathema to any Irish people who knew this legend.¹¹⁵ If the author of the *Navigatio* had chosen to include this imagery, it would have suggested that the first creature was truly an enemy of God and St Patrick. However, the author of the *Navigatio* was not interested in creating distinct monstrous allegories and preferred to allow the imagination—however limited—of the audience to create the image of the *bestia immense magnitudinis*. By contrast, the hyperbolic description of the creature in the A.N. *Voyage* announces that ‘its body is great beyond measure, it bellows more loudly than fifteen bulls’.¹¹⁶ The hyperbole continues with the excessive precisions of the number of people who would flee from the creature.¹¹⁷ So, unlike in the *Navigatio*, there is graphic description of the combat between two sea monsters in the A.N. *Voyage*, where the creatures breathe fire and the waves turn red with blood. The attacks culminate with the second creature tearing the first into three pieces (also seen in the *Navigatio*) and then returning—rather anticlimactically—back to its abode.¹¹⁸

In the A.N. *Voyage*, the combat is an excellent opportunity for the author to deploy fantastic imagery for many lines of graphic description for the entertainment of his audience. This contrasts with the *Navigatio*, where there is a brief description of how the creatures gave battle.¹¹⁹ The violence is used sparingly in the A.N. *Voyage*, so that the audience is shocked by its viciousness when it comes. Presumably, the

¹¹⁵ Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John O’Meara (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982), p. 50. The fact that St Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland is first recorded by Gerald, although the legend has been known since Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Angelorum* who suggests of Ireland ‘nullum ibi reptile videri soleat, nullus vivere serpens valeat; nam saepe illo de Britannia allati serpents, mox ut proximante terris navigio, odore aeris illius attacti fuerint, intereunt; quin potius omnia pene, quae de eadem insula sunt, contra venenum valent,’ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Angelorum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, 2 vols (London: Sumptibus Society, 1888), vol. 1, p. 11. I am grateful to Elva Johnston for this reference.

¹¹⁶ ‘Sanz mesure grant ad le cors,/Plus halt braiet que quinze tors,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 915–16.

¹¹⁷ This is a common trope in medieval literature and is seen, for example, in *La Chanson de Roland* when the eponymous hero explains how many times Durendal will strike the Saracens, see F. Whitehead, ed., *La Chanson de Roland*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946), l. 1078.

¹¹⁸ ‘Realat a sa remanance,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 956.

¹¹⁹ ‘Statim irruit bellum contra illam,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 16*, ll. 16–17.

vivid imagery appealed to the courtly audience who were interested in ‘an account of the exciting and dramatic happenings at sea’.¹²⁰ This scene is one of the most excessive and, like the scene describing Judas Iscariot’s torture that are also unique to the A.N. *Voyage*, it is designed to shock the audience out of their complacency.¹²¹ As the sea serpent is clearly identified in the A.N. *Voyage* as a creature that is not of God (the imagery of the serpent echoes that of Genesis and Revelation) so, its defeat demonstrates that any creature that deviates from the will of God is beaten, one way or another. The violence of this scene engages the imagination of the audience and forces them to consider the lesson with which they are being presented. A maxim sits at the centre of the encounters—those who trust God should not fear any creature.¹²² The moral follows on from the example of the punishment of the transgressing supernumerary in the Deserted Citadel and is most poignantly demonstrated by the departure of the supernumerary at the Smithy of Hell. The conflict of monsters represents a turning point in the narrative of the A.N. *Voyage*: from here on the monks understand something of the working of God’s will. Unlike in the *Navigatio*, the A.N. *Voyage* describes how the monks no longer despair in the face of adversity and instead they trust in God’s love and protection.¹²³

Although it would not be inappropriate for the authors of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* to describe a scene of excessive violence—one need only need consult the Virgin Martyr stories for descriptions of brutality—they instead use the imagery of a storm as a metaphor for the horror of the event. The marvellous attacks on Brendan’s vessel echo the brutality of torture and martyrdom of the hagiographic virginity texts. For the author of the A.N. *Voyage* the lack of physical violence makes the later descriptions of Judas’s tortures more effective. There are few storms in both versions and so the authors make the most of them when describing them, thus adding a realistic detail to the narrative. The major storm occurs just after the first of the monstrous conflicts. The fact that the monks are able to shelter from the storm

¹²⁰ Glyn S. Burgess, ‘The Anglo-Norman Version,’ *The Voyage of St Brendan*, p. 70.

¹²¹ See my discussion on p. 222. Botting, discussing fear, observes that ‘terror activates the mind and the imagination, allowing it to overcome, transcend even, its fears and doubts, enabling the subject to move from a state of passivity to activity;’ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 74–75.

¹²² ‘‘Quar qui Deus prent en sun conduit/Ne deit cremer beste qui muit,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 927–28.

¹²³ ‘‘Quar bein savum que nus ad chers,’’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 966.

demonstrates that they were never truly in danger during the conflict of monsters, on account of God's protection. The island, upon which the monks shelter from the storm, is characterised in the *Navigatio* by descriptions that echo the flora of the island of the Intoxicating Spring. This time, however, there is no danger from the water: the monks have already learned the lesson of obedience. The A.N. *Voyage* omits the description of the spring, as no doubt the images of two springs so close together would have slowed the narrative. Instead, the monks' brief stay on the island concerns the practicalities of gathering food, water and firewood. Thus, this scene truly represents a respite from the supernatural imagery in both versions, even though it adds an extra depth to the violence of the previous encounter and foreshadows the next conflict of monsters.

The second conflict of monsters

The second conflict of monsters echoes the first, save that the battle occurs between two aerial creatures. As with the previous conflict, a monster threatens the coracle. In this instance it is a griffin.¹²⁴ Another creature (this creature is a bird in the *Navigatio*, presumably from the Paradise of Birds, and is replaced by a dragon in the A.N. *Voyage*) intervenes and the monks escape unscathed. The descriptions of the violence are more graphic than the previous scenes: both versions use the *topos* of David and Goliath to show that the smallest of creatures can defeat the most fearsome of opponents.¹²⁵ In the *Navigatio*, the bird succeeds in defeating the griffin by tearing out its eyes. The final moments before the creature's death are narrated using heroic vocabulary to celebrate the triumph of good over evil.¹²⁶ In the A.N. *Voyage*, the description of the griffin is longer and more frightening: the creature breathes fire, its claws could wreck the planks of the monks' vessel and the beating

¹²⁴ For a discussion of the symbolism of the griffin see, for example, Peter Armour, *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World: A Study of the Earthly Paradise (Purgatorio, Cantos xxix-xxxiii)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); see also Burgess, 'The Use of Animals', pp. 19–22.

¹²⁵ 'Libera seruos tuos, sicut liberasti Dauid de manu Golie gigantis,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 16, l. 13.

¹²⁶ E.g. 'abstulisset oculos'; 'cadauer... cecidit in mare,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput*, 19, ll. 10, 12 and 13. Freud suggests the tearing out of the eyes symbolised castration and an uncertainty of sexual identity, as shown in his literary criticism of Hoffmann's 'The Sandman', adding feelings of the uncanny to an already unnerving encounter; see Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' p. 352.

of its wings could cause the vessel to capsize.¹²⁷ This creature is more than a metaphor for the monks being blown from their spiritual path: it also represents a fearsome physical danger to them. However, despite their anxiety, in the A.N. *Voyage* the monks have learned the lesson of the battle of the sea monsters and *know* that God protects them at a time of crisis. This marvellous imagery both highlights and exaggerates the dangers that the monks face in the A.N. *Voyage*. The scene demonstrates that the monks are solid in their faith, whereas, in the *Navigatio*, the conflict of monsters represents a practical understanding of God's protection.

In the A.N. *Voyage* the intervening creature is not a bird and therefore to maintain a balance in the marvellous imagery, Benedeit introduces another air/fire creature—the dragon.¹²⁸ Thus, Benedeit continues the dramatic imagery in the combat, using hyperbole to describe the attacks as resembling a thunderstorm.¹²⁹ The exaggeration would increase the tension for the audience and heighten their admiration for the faith of the monks who, observing the battle, declare that they are confident that God is protecting them. However, by this point of the narrative in the A.N. *Voyage*, the monks have already understood what is relevant for the ocean: this encounter merely serves as confirmation that they are ready to learn the divine mysteries of the Crystal Pillar and the volcano. When the attack occurs in the A.N. *Voyage*, the violence is graphic: Burgess observes that the fire breathed by the griffin is a glimpse of hell which the monks themselves will soon see, whereas the dragon breathes the refining fire to show the spiritual energy of God.¹³⁰

The credibility of the conflicts of monsters

In both these versions of the narrative, conflicts of monsters represent the first excursion into the marvellous and engage two of Todorov's subcategories: the exotic and the hyperbolic. Previously, there had always been an element of the plausible in the narratives. There was also a

¹²⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1011–18.

¹²⁸ Benedeit omits a scene where a bird delivers grapes to Brendan, described in the *Navigatio* as 'Et ecce subito auis, que illis altera uice portauit ramum cum fructibus,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 19, ll. 7–8.

¹²⁹ 'Li fus d'els dous fait grant esclair,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1024.

¹³⁰ Glyn S. Burgess, 'Repetition and Ambivalence in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan*,' *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Studies*, ed. Ian Short (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1993), 61–74, pp. 63–64.

line into the marvellous over which the authors would not have crossed in order to maintain credibility. It appears that that line has now been breached. However, one has to consider three things in relation to maintaining belief in the story. First, the teaching in which both audiences would have trusted, the Bible, speaks of huge monsters in the sea, for example the whale that swallowed Jonah.¹³¹ Even an illiterate audience would have heard these texts as cautionary sermons in Church or seen their depictions in stained-glass windows.¹³² Secondly, the majority of the audience would not necessarily have been to sea, but would have no doubt heard exaggerated stories by fishermen and travellers that spoke of dangerous encounters with the monstrous. Finally, by making the earlier encounters ‘familiar’, this new departure represents an excursion into the ‘unfamiliar’, which is similar to the encounter with Jasconius, except that the latter was given a plausible explanation. As we shall see later in the next chapter, many of the ‘exotic motifs’ are repeated, such as an encounter with the monstrous (the Smithy of Hell) and a spring (the island of Paul the Hermit). Furthermore, in the *Navigatio* these are intermixed with scenes of Christian piety, to give authority to the narrative and to maintain the belief that the tale and the didactic message are true.

Although the scenes of the conflicts of monsters are obviously implausible to a modern audience, for both versions of the Brendan narrative, the credibility of these encounters relies on the fact that there were few in either audience who could argue against the existence of monstrous creatures, especially since they were substantiated by the Bible.¹³³ Furthermore, particularly in the *Navigatio*, these encounters have a familiar *topos*: defeating an adversary despite overwhelming odds. The audiences of the *Navigatio* may well have recognised these themes, but would probably not have had the experience to challenge the marvellous elements in the scenes.¹³⁴ So, even though the imagery allows the audiences to exercise their imagination, the two scenes are

¹³¹ This is further underscored by the fact that Brendan mentions Jonah when praying for salvation, “Sicut liberasti Ionam de uentre ceti magni,” Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 16*, l. 14.

¹³² Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, pp. 108 and 145.

¹³³ See, for example, Job 41; Isaiah 27:1; Revelation 12:13; 2 Esdras 6:49. Burgess suggests that this scene, realistically represents a battle between a giant squid and a sperm whale, Burgess, ‘The Use of Animals,’ p. 32.

¹³⁴ Freud observes that ‘the realm of phantasy depends for its effect on the fact that its content is not submitted to reality-testing,’ Freud, ‘The “Uncanny”,’ pp. 372–73.

brief and, particularly in the *Navigatio*, they become absorbed in the liturgical imagery of the Island of the Three Choirs.¹³⁵

The two scenes of the conflicts of monsters mark the beginning of a stream of unbroken fantastic imagery in the A.N. *Voyage*, which concludes with Brendan's departure from Paradise. Conversely, the violent scenes in the *Navigatio* are punctuated by peaceful interludes, including the respite from the storm and a return to the community of Ailbe.¹³⁶ These moments of tranquillity offer each audience a break from the violence of the imagery in order to digest the didactic message with which they have been presented. Within the context of the narratives, these short intervals may be read as symbolic periods of spiritual focusing, through which the monks purge themselves after their contact with evil, in order to ensure that they remain on course spiritually. This is most prominently demonstrated in the scene of the Island of the Three Choirs, a scene that is omitted from the A.N. *Voyage*, as the author remains intent upon maintaining the narrative tension for the courtly audience.

The rewards of faith—A temporary respite from the fantastic?

Although this chapter has concentrated on the progression of the narrative of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* from the elements of the 'fantastic-uncanny' through to the 'pure marvellous', there is a scene that is unique to the *Navigatio* and acts as a hiatus between the violent imagery of the two conflicts of monsters. Despite the fact that, when using Todorov's model, an analysis of the *Navigatio* as a whole shows a steady increase in the fantastic imagery, the scene concerning the Island of the Three Choirs can be read as almost devoid of fantastic imagery. Thus, this section considers possible reasons why the scene has been included in the *Navigatio* and excluded from the A.N. *Voyage*.

On the Island of the Three Choirs, Brendan discovers three generations of monks—boys, young men and elders.¹³⁷ The inhabitants incessantly sing psalms and move around the island, each generation

¹³⁵ See my discussion on pp. 168–70.

¹³⁶ As with their previous visit to the community, there are no details of what the monks do there.

¹³⁷ ““Unus puerorum, et alias iuuenum, tercius seniorum,”” Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 17*, ll. 3–4.

remaining a certain distance from each other. During this encounter in the *Navigatio*, Brendan reveals that the second supernumerary will remain on this island, although to dwell here is a blessing, particularly in comparison with the fate of the other supernumeraries.

Initially, the Island of the Three Choirs appears only to slow the pace of the narrative with long lists of psalms: three for each of the essential hours of the monastic day. Like the scene with the neutral angels in the *Navigatio*, the episode of the Island of the Three Choirs offers a respite from the fantastic imagery, particularly in the context of the violence of the conflict of monsters and the attack of the griffin. Such breathing space is not present in the A.N. *Voyage*, where the attacks are consecutive and exhausting. Waters considers that Benedeit shows skilful editing in omitting the scene that would have slowed the pace of the continuing marvellous imagery of his narrative.¹³⁸ However, as has been demonstrated with other scenes, Benedeit does not fully understand the heritage of the material that he uses, as the encounter on the Island of the Three Choirs has its roots deep in Irish lore. The choirs could be a representation of the three orders of the saints of Ireland, as described by St Patrick.¹³⁹ There is also a parallel with the Islands of Laughter that appears in the *immrama*. In the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*, for example, one of the supernumerary foster brothers is left on the island: immediately after he touches the shore, his incessant laughter makes him indistinguishable from the island's other inhabitants and prevents him from returning to the coracle. Clearly the scene of the Three Choirs in the *Navigatio* needs to be read in the context of *Máel Dúin*: the fact that, in the latter the Island is a place of happiness, may explain why Brendan is willing to leave the supernumerary in their company.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the Island of Wailing in *Máel Dúin* may equate to the damnation of the final supernumerary in the *Navigatio*.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, a possible explanation for why the choirs move around as they do in the *Navigatio* is because they are reflecting the involuntary movements of the characters on the Island of Laughter. An unspoken homage to *Máel Dúin* is the only plausible explanation for the automatism that

¹³⁸ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xcii.

¹³⁹ de Paor, *Saint Patrick's World*, pp. 225–26. Brendan himself is included in the second order.

¹⁴⁰ Strijbosch, *Seafaring Saint*, p. 156.

¹⁴¹ See my discussion on pp. 192–93.

has the three choirs moving around the island, but also maintaining a certain distance from the other groups.

The curious movement of the Three Choirs suggests that they are not in control of their actions. Thus, the inexplicable and inescapable movements of the Three Choirs must have created some confusion and uncertainty in the minds of each audience of the *Navigatio*. Ironically, then, an encounter that may have been included to suppress the fantastic imagery of the previous scenes actually enhances these unnerving feelings. Although Brendan tells the supernumerary that God has granted him a special favour by allowing him to stay on the island, the incessant movement and chanting neither implies Christian free will nor obedience, but controlled servitude.

The scene of the Island of the Three Choirs describes the mysteries of faith in the *Navigatio*. Indeed, seeing a parallel with the *Vita Kentigern*, Carney suggests that the scene ‘seems to reflect some type of liturgical reception in the early Irish Church’.¹⁴² During the celebrations on this island a blinding cloud descends, which represents the mysteries of faith. In the context of the supernumeraries and their search for Paradise, the cloud becomes a metaphor for the transcendence of a supernumerary, in the same way that the cloud at the smoke-capped mountain obscures the death of the final supernumerary and that the darkness of the Deserted Citadel obscures the temptation of the first supernumerary.¹⁴³ However, unlike the other examples, the cloud on the Island of the Three Choirs is one of brightness rather than obscurity.¹⁴⁴ The Book of Revelation speaks of the two witnesses who are killed by the beast from the Abyss ascending into heaven in a cloud.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the departure of the supernumerary suggests salvation.

The cloud of light is therefore a mystical experience and a completely different one from the darkness of the Deserted Citadel, which represents spiritual blindness. On the Island of the Three Choirs, the cloud represents a point where the monks reach the limits of their human ability to comprehend the information presented to them.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Carney, ‘*Navigatio* (Review),’ p. 43.

¹⁴³ In addition, there is a cloud surrounding the Island of the Host in the *Navigatio* (Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 15, l. 1) and a barrier of mist concealing the *Terra re promissionis sanctorum* in both versions (*Ibid.*, *caput* 28, l. 6; Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1650).

¹⁴⁴ ‘Nubes mire claritatis,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 17, l. 34.

¹⁴⁵ Revelation 11:12; cf. 2 Kings 2:11 where Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.

¹⁴⁶ See my discussion on vision in the Deserted Citadel in chapter 2 on p. 103.

The scene of the Island of the Three Choirs represents a break from the fantastic: one of the few aspects that might be regarded as supernatural would be the appearance of the cloud of blinding light that appears during the singing of the psalms. When comparing the *Navigatio* with the A.N. *Voyage*, this scene highlights the difference of the genres of the two versions. Although the *Navigatio* has all the elements of an adventure story and gradually expands the boundaries of the fantastic imagery, the details still show that the narrative is an ecclesiastical text, which uses Biblical *exempla* to highlight its message. In this case, it is the lists of psalms that give the narrative ‘an excessively ecclesiastical flavour, such as the Anglo-Norman poet avoided’.¹⁴⁷ No doubt the long lists of psalms would have slowed the pace of the narrative for the secular audience of Adeliza’s courtiers, especially when accompanied by the dramatic prose that precedes and follows this scene in the *Navigatio*. Indeed, in the *Navigatio*, the format of the scene reads like a Church service, with the *scaltæ* (fruits the size of apples) representing Holy Communion.¹⁴⁸ In addition, the ‘elder’ group of the choirs are clad in purple, which is a representation of sanctity in Irish art.¹⁴⁹ The repetition of psalms acts devotionally to focus the minds of the respective audiences of the *Navigatio* upon God, as has been suggested in relation to the neutral angels. It serves to reaffirm that the *Navigatio* is a pilgrimage to find the *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* and not simply a series of fantastic encounters.

The imagery of communion, and the mysteries of faith represented by the cloud, may well link to the descriptions of the Crystal Pillar.¹⁵⁰ In both versions, Brendan takes a chalice in order to serve God. (In the A.N. *Voyage* this echoes the supernumerary’s theft of the chalice

¹⁴⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xcii.

¹⁴⁸ The fruit is referred to as *scaltis* (Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 17, l. 14). This is difficult to translate: it could be a flower or a fruit; see A. Harvey and J. Power, ‘Hiberno-Latin *Scaltæ*’, *Ériu* 48 (1997), 277–79. Later in the *Navigatio*, a giant bird, ‘auis grandissima,’ (Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 18, l. 2) drops grapes into Brendan’s lap; presently, he finds an island where the trees are weighed down with giant fruits (cf. Numbers 13:24). Although there is no explanation for this uncannily large produce, we may consider that, as on the Island of the Sheep, fruit grows in abundance because it is not subject to ill climate or disturbed by human activity. It should not, therefore, be considered under the same mantel as the hyperbolic marvellous, as discussed by Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁹ The *Book of Leinster* contains an illumination of Christ wearing purple as he appears to St Mulling; see also F.E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, 2nd edition by Jane Stevenson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1987), pp. 123–24.

¹⁵⁰ See my discussion on pp. 182–83.

from the Deserted Citadel). In the A.N. *Voyage*, Benedeit describes how Brendan reflects that he must not look for God's mysteries.¹⁵¹ Burgess observes that this is the first example of the term *secret* in French and it is appropriate when considering that the emphasis in the Island of the Three Choirs is on the mysteries of God.¹⁵²

There is a further disturbing undercurrent in the scene of the Three Choirs: despite this being an encounter demonstrating Christian perfection, it still has its roots in pagan heritage. The source imagery of this scene was influential on both the *Navigatio* and the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin*. The scene is vital to the *Navigatio* for two reasons. First, it explains a level of piety not previously discussed in any of the versions: the dedication of the supernumerary to the Three Choirs earns him a higher reward than a man committing himself to the monastic way of life. The second, subtler, reason is that, for the *Navigatio*, this scene serves to break up the relentless barrage of marvellous imagery. The audience may well experience a feeling of the marvellous with the appearance of the cloud of brightness. However, no satisfactory explanation is given as to whether or not the cloud is a supernatural element. As with the community of Ailbe, on the Island of the Three Choirs this final veil remains and there is no reasonable explanation for why the monks should behave in this way. The audience never knows whether this is a divine revelation or a natural phenomenon: they merely have to accept that it happens.

The omission of the scene of the Three Choirs in the A.N. *Voyage* loses some of the Irish heritage of the *immrama*, but then this was never a principal concern for Benedeit, as this liturgical material was not of interest to the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman audience. However, the exclusion of this scene offers an insight into the structure of the A.N. *Voyage*: there is an unbroken stream of fantastic imagery for 911 lines (ll. 897–1808). This is exactly one half of the poem according to Waters' edition, if we exclude the eighteen lines of salutation at the beginning. This observation confirms that Benedeit was more concerned about telling a cleverly constructed adventure story than a series of connected morals leading to a didactic message. These sections and recurrent

¹⁵¹ ‘Brandans en prent purpens en sei/Ne deit querre le Deu secrei,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1093–94.

¹⁵² [pers. comm.].

themes would no doubt make it easier for the mnemonic process when the poem was performed orally.¹⁵³

The exclusion of this scene from the A.N. *Voyage* potentially leaves the fate of one of the supernumeraries unresolved. Given the tight structure of the narrative, omitting the fate of one of the monks might have disappointed the twelfth-century courtly audience, since the anticipation of the supernumeraries' departure had been established from the early scenes.¹⁵⁴ In the A.N. *Voyage*, the fate of each of the supernumerary monks is that they all die: one of them dies in the Deserted Citadel and, in the *Navigatio* his soul is received by the angels, whereas, in the A.N. *Voyage* he goes to Paradise. Another of the supernumeraries is dragged to hell at the volcano. If the A.N. *Voyage* had included this scene, then the final fate of the monk would have been salvation among the three choirs. However, Benedeit excised this scene, possibly because of the long lists of psalms that slow the pace of the narrative, but most likely because he could not see the relevance of the scene, because of its Irish heritage.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

This chapter, together with chapter 2, has shown how the sequence of events in the first two thirds of both versions can be discussed in relation to Todorov's model of the fantastic. The narrative begins grounded in the mundane and then introduces elements of the fantastic by 'first speaking vaguely, then more and more directly' about the supernatural.¹⁵⁶ The opening scenes of building the coracle and the journey represent the subcategory of the uncanny in Todorov's model. These elements are not contained within the narrative and are created by an audience's personal anxieties. Similarly, the scenes of the Island of Sheep and Jasconius, although also containing some uncanny anxieties, show a tendency towards the fantastic, even though the encounters are ultimately explained in a plausible and convincing manner.

¹⁵³ Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*', p. 227.

¹⁵⁴ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 199–202.

¹⁵⁵ For the fate of the third supernumerary in the A.N. *Voyage*, see my discussion on pp. 192–93.

¹⁵⁶ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 87.

However, as discussed in this chapter, the scene in the community of Ailbe, which opens by re-iterating the ‘fantastic-uncanny’, presents the audience with a rare moment of ‘pure fantastic’, a thin line between the plausible and the incredible elements of the narrative. At this moment of ‘hesitation’, the uncertainty concerning whether the provision of food *might* be from a divine or human source makes it impossible even for a modern audience to do anything but speculate.¹⁵⁷ At this moment, the audience cannot be certain whether or not a supernatural phenomenon has occurred. However, from this point, although the encounters are presented as everyday occurrences, they are unbelievable. Even though the dramatic imagery culminates with displays of the monstrous, it is still a useful medium for conveying a didactic message. The extent of the monstrous imagery depends, however, on whether the narrative is intended as a means of spiritual edification or for the entertainment of a secular, courtly audience.

The emphasis of the narratives is dependent on the audiences for which each version was composed. The *Navigatio*, as hagiography, is vague in its descriptions of the marvellous, although the author prefers to veil the monstrous imagery with psalms that read like a rosary to keep the audience focused on the spiritual aspects. Conversely, in the A.N. *Voyage*, composed for a secular audience, Benedeit excised scenes that he considered laborious, yet fully embraces the monstrous images with vivid descriptions. Indeed, the graphic descriptions culminate in the descriptions of hell and Paradise that will be discussed in chapter 4. Yet, both versions show that this middle third of the narrative displays Brendan’s leadership over the brethren, the rewards of faith and the punishment for disobedience.

The conflict of monsters, although frightening, proves to the monks that all things come together to serve the will of God. From here onwards in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, it becomes difficult to use Todorov’s model, as the events in the narrative have passed from the marvellous and into the supernatural. However, the theories of the fantastic and the uncanny remain useful for this discussion. Medieval audiences, of both versions, would have believed without question that the divine and diabolical existed and many natural phenomena were attributed to God or the Devil. Even though the laity may not be fully

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

aware of supernatural presences in the world around them, the Church assured them that these divine realms existed.

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the scenes thus far have focused on how Brendan has passed from the world of the mundane to a point where the scenes of the conflicts of monsters depict the marvellous in its pure form. Almost all the scenes described in chapters 2 and 3 encompass Todorov's model of the fantastic, beginning with the details of the familiar and then gradually increasing the descriptions of the supernatural. The two exceptions to this are the scenes describing the Paradise of Birds and the Island of the Three Choirs, which, although containing fantastic imagery, offer a respite from the supernatural so that the respective audiences can assess the information with which they have been presented. However, the aim of Brendan's journey is to learn the obedience and faith necessary to understand the marvels of the ocean in order to cross into the Otherworld. The authors of both of these versions present the final stages of the journey, the passing into the Otherworld, as a series of binary oppositions. These are the extremes of nature (ice and fire, represented by a Crystal Column and the Smithy of Hell) and of humanity (the most wretched sinner and most pious hermit). Brendan stands at a middle point between the extremes with which he is presented, in order that he can measure himself against them. Todorov's model remains useful, although the final scenes of the narrative, which concentrate on the divine and the diabolical, are not presented as marvels, but as mysteries beyond human comprehension. Nevertheless, these extremes (which are sometimes allegorical) are represented by imagery that each audience would recognise from the Bible, church iconography or hagiography. Thus, the respective audiences would have little cause to doubt the authenticity of the imagery with which they were being presented. The final chapter considers the elements of the final third of the narrative, to show how the authors of both versions portray Brendan's piety and what happens when he finally achieves Paradise.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MIRRORS OF SALVATION

Introduction

The two previous chapters have shown how it has been useful to discuss two versions of the Brendan narrative—the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan*—in relation to Todorov’s model of the fantastic in their gradual ascent towards the marvellous. On the left-hand side of Todorov’s model I added a category (the ‘mundane’) for elements that would be familiar to the respective audiences. Examples include the topographical or genealogical details presented to the early Irish ecclesiastical audience and the regal salutation and the description of riches presented to the courtly Anglo-Norman audience.¹ This chapter will consider the final scenes of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, in particular to see how they relate, if at all, to Todorov’s model. These scenes represent Brendan’s encounters with the supernatural in the forms of exotica (a glacial front and an erupting volcano); the extremes of humanity (Judas Iscariot and Paul the Hermit); and finally Paradise itself. The final third of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* is made up of binary oppositions representing good and evil with Brendan in a middle—or liminal—point between them through which he gains the understanding to achieve Paradise. This chapter will also examine some of the sources and what each of these scenes contributes to the narrative as a whole.²

¹ See the discussion in chapter 1 (pp. 17–19 and 38–42) where I suggest that the intention, in respect of the audience of the *Navigatio*, was to describe the pious life of the founder of the monastery to inspire the brethren of the monastic community. It is also aimed at attracting pilgrims, and, more importantly, it was a didactic tale for the spiritual instruction of the wider monastic community in early medieval Ireland. The earliest audience of the A.N. *Voyage* would, on the other hand, have been a secular, courtly audience that was more specifically interested in an exciting narrative.

² For a discussion of ‘liminality’ see Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1987), p. 25.

Todorov's model

Todorov's model of the fantastic has provided a useful springboard for discussion of both narratives and, although his ideas are still sound, his model does not adequately cover an area that is *beyond* the marvellous.³ Given that the *Navigatio* was composed for ecclesiastical direction, it is reasonable to assume that the various audiences would have believed in the divine and diabolical realms without question. In the scenes that present the Crystal Column and the Smithy of Hell in both versions, the fantastic is created by the examination of two diametrically opposite forces: natural phenomena are presented as supernatural occurrences. Of course, each audience of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would have seen this device for creating fantastic impressions through encounters such as the Island of Sheep and Jasconius. However, the earlier scenes ultimately received plausible explanations. This is not the case in these later scenes of the narrative. Indeed, rather than demystifying the exotica, the authors establish them instead as spiritual or demonic realms, places of sanctity or damnation.

The discussion of the divine and the diabolical presents a potential problem for a theoretical approach that uses the fantastic as its foundation. A modern audience might not accept the existence of heaven and hell and would therefore categorise the descriptions of the supernatural as the 'pure marvellous', as depicted on the right hand side of Todorov's model. However, the original audiences of both versions would have been fervent believers in the Christian faith. From a theoretical point of view, these last scenes should be considered in relation to the audiences' ardent faith. It is to overcome this problem that I have modified Todorov's model to include a sub-category entitled 'beyond comprehension' as it would be both unhelpful and wrong to gloss over this belief by describing it as 'pure marvellous', as it was very real to the faithful, even though the mysteries of faith were beyond their comprehension. This chapter, then, discusses the last third of both versions of the Brendan narrative, which deal with the extremes of the divine and the diabolical depicted in nature and humanity. These extremes convey a didactic message by demonstrating how the individual measures against the extremes of humanity, as well as conveying the rewards of faith and the punishment of the damned.

³ See my modifications to Todorov's model in chapter 2 on p. 75.

The three parts of the chapter

The second violent conflict of monsters in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* is the final event of the marvels of the ocean that Brendan witnesses before progressing to divine and diabolical marvels. This chapter demonstrates how the scenes that follow the conflicts of monsters in both versions show a gradual progression towards the divine from the earthly realms, by presenting natural exotica as supernatural forms (a glacial front as a place of prayer and spiritual respite and a volcano as an entrance to hell and damnation) as well as the extremes of humanity. Most particularly, the first part examines those natural elements that are presented as supernatural and are given no plausible explanation.

The scenes discussed in the second part of this chapter are those through which the authors convey the didactic message. Brendan is presented with characters from the Bible—Judas Iscariot—and hagiographic legend—Paul the Hermit—illustrating the extremes of human faith: the damned and the pious. Thus, what had hitherto been presented as historical or mythological is, within the confines of the narrative, presented as factual. These characters are presented as being alive, or at least sentient, in Brendan's present. The final scene, discussed in part three, is the discovery of Paradise. This receives a different treatment in the *Navigatio* from that in the A.N. *Voyage*.

Part One

Natural Exotica as supernatural forms

The Crystal Pillar

In both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the first of the encounters with natural exotica presented as supernatural is the discovery of a Crystal Pillar. The pillar appears without explanation of its significance in either version: the *Navigatio* simply describes that the column appeared 'one day'; the A.N. *Voyage* describes how the brethren 'saw a giant pillar in the sea'.⁴ The pillar is not described directly: it is instead illustrated in

⁴ 'Quadam uero die,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 22*, l. 1; 'e veient cler/ En mer halte un grant piler,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1067–68.

terms of comparisons and uncertainties which fail to provide a suitable explanation. These uncertainties serve to confuse and unsettle each audience. The *Navigatio* describes a structure that ‘seemed quite near’ and yet it is a three-day journey to reach the column.⁵ As discussed in chapter 3, the figurative language enhances the disquieting feelings for each audience, as the descriptions—a series of comparisons and similes—do not provide any exact details of the structure. The author of the *Navigatio* is ambiguous even about the texture of the pillar, whether a hard rock like marble, or a soft metal like silver.⁶ Indeed, the *Navigatio* explains that, even having arrived at the column, Brendan cannot see the summit, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage*, the narrator explains that it ascends into the clouds and goes down to the bottom of the sea.⁷ By describing the structure only through comparisons, the author of the *Navigatio* avoids offering any explanation of what the column represents, only that it is a miracle created by Christ.

A natural phenomenon

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated how the earlier encounters are consistent with Todorov’s model of the fantastic in two ways: first, that apparently supernatural imagery receives a plausible explanation and second, that supernatural imagery is dismissed as commonplace. Unlike those encounters, the Crystal Column (and the scene that follows in both versions, the Smithy of Hell) is described only in supernatural terms, even though it is highly likely that the author of the *Navigatio* was describing a natural phenomenon. Gustav Schirmer was among the first scholars to identify the column as a melting iceberg.⁸ This description is entirely plausible—colossal icebergs have been recorded (up to 78km² in the northern hemisphere and a height of twenty metres above the water level). Icebergs melt fastest at the waterline by the action of the waves. It is easy to accept, therefore, that this natural phenomenon

⁵ ‘Sed non poterant ante tres dies appropinquare,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput*, 22, ll. 2–3; in comparison, Severin and his crew travelled approximately 500 miles in three days in similar waters (26–29 May 1977), see Severin, *The Brendan Voyage*, pp. 184–85.

⁶ ‘Habebat colorem argenti, sed tamen durior illis uidebatur quam marmor,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput*, 22, ll. 7–8; Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 80–82. See also the discussion on pp. 154–55 above.

⁷ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 22, ll. 3–4; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1073–74.

⁸ Gustav Schirmer, *Zur Brendanus-Legende*, Habilitationsschrift, Leipzig (Leipzig: Pöschel & Trepte, 1888), p. 53.

could be mistaken for a location of supernatural and divine significance, although it would not have the mathematical perfection that the narrator of the *Navigatio* describes.

Schirmer's hypothesis of the iceberg is one that is widely accepted by Brendan scholars: Wright suggests that 'the sight of a great iceberg flashing in the sun gave rise to the story of the crystalline column and...the canopy represented curtains of fog hanging down its flanks'.⁹ However, I consider it unlikely that the phenomenon described is an iceberg given that both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* describe Brendan travelling *inside* the structure. If this is a description of a natural phenomenon, then it is more likely that the author is describing a glacial front, that is where an extensive glacial ice shelf meets the sea: the caverns in the structure would be caused by erosion in the ice by tidal forces. Stefansson observes that 'such a front might be a good many hundred feet sheer from the water; there would be caverns hollowed out by the waves through which a boat could enter'. He continues that, from a distance, such a glacier could appear to merge with the island ice and give the illusion of rising two miles into the sky, which would be in keeping with the descriptions in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*.¹⁰ Thus, the description of a glacial front would echo the journey of Eirik the Red in the *Vinland Sagas* where Eirik sees glaciers, but not icebergs, off the coast of Greenland.¹¹ It is not directly described in any of the versions of the narrative that this encounter occurs in the summer months: the *Navigatio* simply says that it was 'on a certain day' after three masses that the monks saw a column in the sea.¹² Still, as the encounter follows the festival of St Peter (29 June) and as Brendan spends Christmas through to the octave of Pentecost re-visiting previous encounters, one might infer that the monks travelled in the summer months, during which the sea ice would be less extensive.¹³

A widely-read secular audience of the *Navigatio* would have had some familiarity with natural features like icebergs through descriptions by

⁹ John Kirtland Wright, *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1965), p. 198.

¹⁰ Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Greenland* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1943), p. 41.

¹¹ *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*, trans. Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (London: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 50 and 77.

¹² Selmer, *Navigatio*, caput 22, ll. 1–2.

¹³ Kirsten A. Seaver, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America ca. A.D. 1000–1500* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 220.

geographers such as Dicuil.¹⁴ The exaggerated description of seeing the structure three days away may be a further example of hyperbolic marvellous as discussed in the previous chapter—an attempt by the author of the *Navigatio* to impose a divine form on what is clearly a natural structure without blurring the description. If this were the case, then this encounter marks a clear distinction between an attempt to make the fantastic appear natural and the presentation of natural exotica as supernatural occurrences. Wondering whether a medieval audience would have understood the metaphor based on the verbal transmission of knowledge, Smyth says:

the Irish Augustine need not necessarily have turned to Saint Augustine's commentary on Psalm 147 to find that 'rock crystal' is solidly frozen snow: this could have been something he simply 'knew'—he certainly seems to have taken it for granted that the readers knew it.¹⁵

Fantastic-uncanny

Although the hypothesis of the Crystal Column being a metaphorical description for a natural structure is plausible, this is never suggested in the narrative. The column is presented as a marvel. In this regard, the Crystal Column falls into Todorov's category of the 'fantastic-uncanny' as it is a natural structure presented as supernatural.¹⁶ Already fascinated by the descriptions of icebergs through the writings of Dicuil, a discerning Irish audience that recognised the column as a natural feature would have had to suspend their own *disbelief* and accept the author's assurance that these were divine marvels. However, the 'fantastic-uncanny' ultimately requires some explanation of the supernatural, whereas the Crystal Column remains beyond the comprehension of each audience. Todorov observes that one cause of the supernatural in a text is that each audience takes 'a figurative sense literally'.¹⁷ Therefore, lacking any concrete portrayal, it is easy to impose a divine form on a natural structure, simply because the description is achieved through comparisons. The ambiguity is a means by which the author of the *Navigatio* (and the author of the A.N. *Voyage* whose description is

¹⁴ Dicuil describes that a frozen sea is found after sailing north one day from Thule, see Tierney, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, p. 74.

¹⁵ Smyth, *Understanding the Universe*, p. 31.

¹⁶ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 44.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

more mysterious) makes the natural appear supernatural, thus serving to mystify the crystal structure. In the *Navigatio*, the accuracy of the structure is measured over four days, echoing the description of the temple in Ezekiel.¹⁸ The symmetry of the structure removes any suggestion that it is a natural feature, but instead it is one that has been specifically *created* for divine worship.

Religious symbolism

Although the *Navigatio* appears to be describing a natural phenomenon in supernatural terms, the lack of detail concerning the Crystal Column in both the *Navigatio* and the *immrama* suggests that there is a shared source of understanding of the symbolism for the early Irish audience that has since been lost. Silver columns appear in *immrama* such as the *Imram curaig Máele Dúin* and the *Imram curaig Ua Corra: Mael Dúin* describes a silver column with a net and, like Brendan, he is unable to see the summit. Elva Johnston observes that the column is described as *airgid* (silver) rather than *glau* (glass/purity) but further notes that *airgid* is often associated with the Otherworld because the otherworldly king, Nuada, is known as *Airgelám* (silverhand) when he appears in *Cath Maige Tuired* (Battle of Moytura) a text contemporary with *Mael Dúin*.¹⁹ In *Mael Dúin*, one of the crew tears away some of the mesh to offer on the altar of Armagh—this event corresponds with Brendan's taking the chalice from the column and the silver branch brought back from the Otherworld by Ailbe and this symbolism may provide the key to unlocking this section of the narrative of the A.N. *Voyage*.

Benedeit also maintains a sense of ambiguity as the monks approach the column in the A.N. *Voyage*. He achieves this vagueness by using the imperfect tense: 'it seemed to him a long time before he arrived there'.²⁰ This modalisation acts, as Todorov observes of ambiguity in the fantastic, as an 'introductory locution which, without changing the meaning of the sentence, [modifies] the relation between the speaker and his

¹⁸ 'Tunc sanctus Brendanus mensurabat foramen unum inter quattuor chonopeos, quattuor cubitis in omnem partem,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 22*, ll. 21–22; Ezekiel 40–42.

¹⁹ Pers comm.; see also Squire, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 51.

²⁰ 'Ainz qu'i venget *semblet lui tart*,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1080, my italics. The modalisation is also used in association with time when the brethren explore Paradise: 'L'urel *semblet* forment poie,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1774.

utterance', or, in this case, between the narrator and his description.²¹ This use of ambiguity creates a doubt in each audience. It is only later, when Benedeit assures the monks that there is no danger here, that the courtly Anglo-Norman audience may take a moment to relax before the violent imagery of the damnation of the supernumerary and the description of Judas Iscariot's tortures. However, unlike the ambivalence in the description of the pillar in the *Navigatio*, Benedeit clearly describes the column in similar terms to the lists of precious stones that adorn the foundations of the New Jerusalem in Revelation.²² Such descriptions of riches would appeal to the courtly Anglo-Norman audiences, but perhaps they are also used because Benedeit does not fully understand the symbolism of the pillar that was apparent to the Irish audiences of the *Navigatio* and the *immrama*.

Sources

The earliest audience of the *Navigatio* may well have been more familiar with the pillar because of its significance in Celtic mythology where crystal pillars act as a conduit through which the souls of the dead can travel from earth to heaven. Alternatively, the Crystal Pillar could be a Christianisation of the pillars of Hercules, which marked the outermost limits of the habitable world.²³ The pillar has two counterparts in the A.N. *Voyage*. The first is the tree in the Paradise of Birds, which is also tall with a canopy.²⁴ Burgess observes that the 'vertical displacements in space create a tie between earth and the sky. The earth rises as the mountains toward the sky... but a very tall tree could fulfil the same function'.²⁵ Thus, in the A.N. *Voyage*, there is a polarity between the Paradise of Birds and the Crystal Church. The tree upon which the birds praise God is the representation of their fall and their imprisonment within the physical world. Conversely, the Crystal Church is the passageway through which Brendan must pass to see the divine and the

²¹ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 38.

²² 'Li sacraires fud sardoine,/ Li pavemenz calcedoine,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1085–86; cf. Revelation 21:19–21.

²³ E.C. Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, revised ed. (London: Wordsworth Reference, 1993), p. 836.

²⁴ 'Muntout l'arbre sur la nue;/ Des le sumét desque en terre/ La brancheie mult la serre/ E ledement s'estent par l'air.' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 496–99.

²⁵ Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 13. My translation.

diabolical features of the supernatural realms. A second corresponding element for the Crystal Column is in the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* itself, where the mountain upon which Brendan sees Paradise is tall, 'like a cypress tree'.²⁶ Of course, the summit of the mountain is not obscured, as clarity of vision to describe spiritual piety is an important motif in the A.N. *Voyage*. However, the veiling of vision is caused by the fact that Brendan possesses too little knowledge to further understand the glory of Paradise.²⁷ One of the three symbols linking earth to heaven (the tree in the Paradise of Birds, the Crystal Pillar and the mountain in Paradise) appears in each of the three sections of the A.N. *Voyage*, as described by Illingworth in his tripartite analysis of the narrative.²⁸

As with other encounters in this version, Benedeit describes the pillar in terms of its riches appealing to the courtly Anglo-Norman audience. It is made of blue jacinth, bringing to mind the 'mountains of magnificent stones by the pillars of heaven' in the Book of Enoch, one of which is also made of jacinth.²⁹ Enoch does not explain the significance of these mountains, whether they are related to the pillars of heaven, or to the seven planets.³⁰ However, the similarity with the mountain of jacinth, placed, as it is, before the pillar of fire in the Book of Enoch, suggests that, at the very least, the author of the A.N. *Voyage* saw a parallel between the *Navigatio* and the Book of Enoch. We might also consider the 'hollow' places of the western 'high mountain of high rock' as places where the souls of the dead gather until Judgement Day.³¹ This would further establish the pillar as a spiritual location and a portal to the 'Otherworld'. It would also explain the necessity for the crews in the *immrama*—the Húi Corra and Máel Dúin—of bringing some proof back to their homeland. The canopy of the pillar is finely worked gold in the A.N. *Voyage*.³² The crewmen of Máel Dúin and the Húi Corra both take a part of the net that surrounds the Crystal Pillar; conversely, in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan takes a religious object from inside. In the *Navigatio*, Brendan takes a chalice

²⁶ 'Cume ciprés,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1782.

²⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1793–1800.

²⁸ Illingworth, 'The Structure of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*'.

²⁹ 'De jargunce fud saphire,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1071. Cf. 1 Enoch 18:7 in *The Book of Enoch*, p. 45.

³⁰ 1 Enoch 21:7, p. 47.

³¹ 1 Enoch 22:3–4, p. 47.

³² 'De or precius uvrét util,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1077.

and a paten in testimony to others of his visit.³³ Thus, in both versions of the Brendan narrative, it is necessary to return to Ireland with some proof of this portal to the Otherworld, just as Ailbe brings back a silver branch. This additional embellishment serves to enhance the otherworldliness of the structure. Performing the divine office within the Crystal Pillar leads the brethren one step closer to achieving Paradise. However, in the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan's taking the chalice from the altar mirrors the first supernumerary taking the goblet from the Deserted Citadel.³⁴ In that scene, the supernumerary attains salvation, but dies after receiving the Sacrament.³⁵ Now, by taking the chalice to perform the divine office, Brendan and his monks will not die (except for the remaining supernumeraries). However, as well as seeing Paradise, they *will* see the mouth of hell and hear a firsthand account of one who has experienced it. When the monks return to Ireland, they will all become missionaries telling of their learning. The chalice and paten provide tangible evidence of divine mercy to assist in the salvation of the people of Ireland.

Unlocking the symbolism

In both versions of the narrative, as well as in the *Vita Brendani*, the *immrama* and the Book of Enoch, there is no explanation as to what the pillar represents. Indeed, the significance is lost on a modern audience that does not understand the imagery. One clue to unlocking this symbolism might lie in the text of *Baudouin de Sebourg*. This tale postdates the A.N. *Voyage* by approximately 250 years, although some imagery is clearly derived from the Brendan narrative.³⁶ In one encounter, when Baudouin and Polibant arrive at the gate of a crystal church, they find Enoch and Elijah waiting outside.³⁷ Thus, this tale weaves the threads of the symbolism together. Enoch is associated with the Crystal Church, and the additional presence of Elijah suggests an eschatological message: according to legend, Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven

³³ ‘Ut ostendatur multis ad credendum mihi dedit ista [bina] munera,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 22*, ll. 33–34.

³⁴ See pp. 100–02, in chapter 2, above.

³⁵ ‘Itaque accepta eucharistia, anima fratris egressa est de corpore,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 7*, ll. 21–22; ‘Des que receut cumungement,/ Veanz trestuz la mort le prent,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 347–48.

³⁶ *Baudouin de Sebourg* was composed c. 1360–70.

³⁷ McNamara, ‘Liturgical, Apocryphal and Irish Tradition,’ pp. 185–86.

without first suffering death, just as Brendan will also witness the marvels of heaven and hell without dying. The crystal pillars in the Book of Enoch imply that the Crystal Church is a means of conveying souls to the Otherworld. Furthermore, the association with Enoch and Elijah, as well as the similarity with the New Jerusalem, implies that we are dealing with apocalyptic imagery. Once the audience understand the lakes of sulphur as seen in Revelation 20:10, combined with Brendan's next encounter, they will, at last, recognise the descriptions of Paradise by comparison to what has gone before. When this scene is compared with the descriptions of the temple in Ezekiel and the New Jerusalem in Revelation, the Crystal Church is a representation of Paradise on earth. It is a symbol of the passing into the realms of the Otherworld. The later rendition of the scene in *Baudoin* makes the symbolism much clearer. It appears, therefore, that the author's intention is that the pillar should symbolically represent Brendan's passing into the underworld. At this point, then, the narrative moves at its closest to *echtra* rather than *immram*.³⁸ Indeed, the fact that the monks are *in* the Otherworld is confirmed shortly afterward when, in both versions, Brendan cautions the brethren that they are in the confines of hell.³⁹

Despite the ambiguity in the marvellous description of the Crystal Column, it *is* a sacred space in both versions of the narrative and it is a place from which the respective audiences can take a brief respite from the monstrous imagery immediately preceding this scene. It is a moment of calm before the barrage of descriptions of the demonic and the terrors that are to follow. The precision of measuring the column and the repetition of the number four is reminiscent of the *Tetragrammaton*, representing the consonants of the unspoken name of the God of the Israelites.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the monks find a chalice with which they can celebrate mass. Thus, even if an audience recognises the pillar as a natural structure, the symmetry of the column and the presence of the chalice suggest that this is not a natural structure at all. The chalice in the Crystal Column suggests that there was previously a human presence that used this place for divine worship. Just as with the Deserted Citadel and the Island of Sheep, the absence of

³⁸ See the discussion of the terminology on p. 14, n. 2.

³⁹ 'Quia sumus in confinibus infernorum,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 23*, l. 36; 'sachez/Que a enfern estes cachez,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1119–20.

⁴⁰ Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, p. 1070.

humanity underscores the eschatological suggestion of being lifted up to heaven at the end of the world.⁴¹

The description of the Crystal Column in the *Navigatio* is a spiritual image that draws upon images of the Otherworld from Irish mythology. However, although the narrative appears to be discussing a natural phenomenon, the symmetry of the structure and the vague descriptions only serve to defamiliarise the mundane and to describe exotica as supernatural. By drawing from otherworldly imagery—and the motif is repeated in the *immrama*—the *Navigatio* suggests that Brendan himself is travelling to the Otherworld in order to hear the final lessons before achieving Paradise. This is underscored by the fact that the column echoes details of the temple in Ezekiel and the New Jerusalem. This scene provides a moment of respite from the violence of the previous encounters and those that follow.

For the audiences of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, the encounter at the Crystal Pillar represents a change of direction within the narrative: it is the deliberate presentation of a natural element as a supernatural phenomenon without any attempt to establish its plausibility. Earlier scenes, such as the apparently supernatural element that receives a plausible explanation or the supernatural that is established as commonplace, have served to accustom each audience to fantastic elements.⁴² However, as shown in chapter 3, the focus of the narratives of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* changes according to the audience that they are attempting to reach. The *Navigatio*, written for spiritual edification, breaks the fantastic imagery with peaceful scenes such as the Island of the Three Choirs, in order to allow the respective audiences a moment to reflect on the messages of salvation with which they are presented. Conversely, although in the A.N. *Voyage* the Crystal Church demonstrates a change of pace that contrasts with the violent imagery of the conflicts of monsters, the ensuing descriptions of the entrance to hell and the damnation of the supernumerary also represent, for the courtly audience, another scene in the unbroken stream of fantastic imagery. This fantastic imagery continues in both versions in a scene that represents the antithesis of the sacred Crystal Pillar (or glacial front): the gate of hell (or volcano).

⁴¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

⁴² Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 52.

The Smithy of Hell as a representation of evil

The scene that immediately follows the tranquillity of the encounter at the Crystal Column, in both versions of the Brendan narrative, appears to be a volcanic eruption, although it is described in terms of smiths' forges.⁴³ Indeed, the entire scene is charged with contrasts: whereas the monks had said mass at the Crystal Column and anticipated eternal life, Brendan fears the encounters on the shores of hell, which conclude with the damnation of one of the supernumeraries. In contrast to the symmetry of the Crystal Column, the rough and rocky land is presented as chaotic, a land forsaken by God and characterised by red and black colouring.⁴⁴ Brendan declares that he has no wish even to approach the island. However, the monks are powerless against the strong winds that drive them, automaton-like, to the shores. Thus, Brendan must obey the will of God in order to learn the lessons of hell.⁴⁵

A natural phenomenon or a supernatural experience?

As with the parallel imagery of the Crystal Pillar and the glacial front, neither the *Navigatio* nor the A.N. *Voyage* suggest that the Smithy

⁴³ 'Plenam officinis fabrorum,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 23*, ll. 2–3; 'Jetant flammes de sa gorge,/ A granz salz curt en sa forge,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1145–46.

⁴⁴ 'Ualde rusticam, saxosam atque scoriosam'; 'Erat ille hispidus ualde et igneus atque tenebrosus,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 23*, ll. 1–2 and 12–13.

⁴⁵ As with other scenes in which a supernumerary leaves, this scene has a parallel in the *Imram curaig Máele Dúin*. Máel Dúin, fearing an attack from the island's inhabitants, orders his crew to row in reverse to avoid the smiths suspecting that they are fleeing. The smiths notice the deception and attack, but the crew escape unscathed. Just as with the parallel scene at the Crystal Column, there is no explanation as to what this encounter represents, other than the *Imram curaig Máele Dúin* paying homage to the *Navigatio*, Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite),' pp. 53–55. Perhaps this is an allusion to an older tale—Aeneas describes the eruption of Etna as his ship draws near to the Cyclopean coast, see Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*, *Aeneid* bk. III, ll. 568ff. The surviving member of the Ithacan crew does not mention the scene where the Cyclops hurls a pinnacle of rock at Odysseus; however, given Virgil's debt to Homeric sources, the audience of the *Aeneid* might well have had this encounter at the back of their minds, Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. E.V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1991), Book 9, ll. 480ff; Robin Sowerby, *The Classical Legacy in Renaissance Poetry* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), pp. 46–47. Heinrich Zimmer argued that the author of *Máel Dúin* used the *Aeneid* as a direct source for his material. This argument was refuted by Thrall. However, Wooding suggests that, despite Thrall's compelling argument, the *Aeneid* has been 'neglected as a possible source for the *imrama* and the *Nauigatio Brendani*,' Wooding, 'Introduction,' p. xvi; cf. Zimmer, 'Keltische Beiträge,' pp. 129–220 and 257–338; Thrall, 'Zimmer's Theory,' pp. 449–74.

of Hell should be equated to a volcano. This is partially to maintain the otherworldliness of the narrative and to veil the encounters with the fantastic, so that the respective audiences of neither the *Navigatio* nor the A.N. *Voyage* consider the imagery with which they have been presented in the context of natural exotica. The defamiliarisation of the volcano only serves to represent the divine and diabolic realms as something vaguely familiar that is, at the same time, described as supernatural. Even if such a parallel were drawn, the natural exotica were at the periphery of human understanding, as there was a widespread medieval belief that volcanoes represented an entrance to hell. Pope Gregory II (669–731) ‘gave the weight of his authority to the belief’ that volcanoes were the entrance to hell.⁴⁶ Amongst others, Isidore of Seville supported the legend by describing the volcanic Mount Etna as an entrance to hell.⁴⁷ Furthermore, as Celtic mythology describes how a mortal may gain access to the Otherworld through a fairy mound, it is not difficult to marry this mound with the lakes of sulphur described in Revelation, in order to envisage a burning mountain as an entrance to hell.⁴⁸ Thus, a member of a lay audience, who might be familiar with *exempla* of volcanoes representing the mouth of hell, might still see them only in the allegorical terms represented in the *Navigatio*. Brendan’s anxiety shows that this is a place that should be feared. However, the subsequent description of the smiths is in bestial terms—hairy and barbaric—rather than one using demonic imagery.⁴⁹ However, this is one of the most frightening sections of the *Navigatio*. The fiery missiles, which the creature hurls, pass *over* the coracle, showing that the brethren were in range of the demonic forces. The damnation of the supernumerary, discussed below, is the culmination of the horror of this scene.

Throughout the narrative, the effect of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* is to maintain a sense of moving progressively closer to hell

⁴⁶ J.A. MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1932), p. 98.

⁴⁷ *Elymologiae*, 14, 6, 32–37; Thomas O’Loughlin, ‘The Gates of Hell: From Metaphor to Fact,’ *Milltown Studies* 38 (1996), 98–114, pp. 102–6. Michael Scot, a thirteenth-century astrologer to Emperor Frederick II, believed that there was only one mouth of hell, but that volcanoes were passages to that entrance which opened in Iceland and Sicily, Lynn Thorndike, *Michael Scot* (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 49.

⁴⁸ Howard Rollin Patch, *The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 46; Revelation 20:10.

⁴⁹ ‘Hispidus’ and ‘barbarus,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 23*, ll. 12–13 and 17.

through the adversaries that the monks face. The gradual introduction of fantastic material has opened the minds of each audience to the possibility of the existence of the pure marvellous. The conflicts of monsters and the departure of one or more supernumeraries may make each audience aware of the potential dangers of the ocean, which increase as Brendan approaches hell, and of the fact that not all of the brethren will survive the journey. As there is no overt description of the phenomenon in anything other than supernatural terms, it follows that neither the early Irish nor the Anglo-Norman audiences can create a fixed image of the scene in their minds. Thus, the only boundaries to the horror of these scenes are the limits of the audiences' imagination.

The arrival at the Smithy of Hell is one of the pivotal moments in both the *Navigatio* and the *A.N. Voyage*: it is the first time that Brendan admits that he is not in control of their destiny.⁵⁰ The descriptions of the demonic in the *Navigatio* would no doubt demonstrate, to any pilgrims visiting an ecclesiastical house dedicated to Brendan, the strength of faith of a monk who faced demons. The presence of the demonic had the potential of creating a very real fear in the hearts of any audience. A secular audience may well have correlated the allegory of the demonic smith with the vivid Biblical descriptions of hell and this may have shaken them into considering their own salvation.⁵¹ In the *Navigatio*, the encounter at the Smithy of Hell avoids any overtly graphic descriptions: the *Navigatio* was composed for spiritual edification to encourage its respective audiences towards God and salvation. Its principal message is of mercy, rather than of terror. Thus, as the narrative progresses towards its final scenes, the audience may well have generated an empathy with Brendan. Carroll, writing about the horror genre more generally, observes that 'the emotions of the audience are supposed to mirror those of the positive human characters in certain, but not all, respects'.⁵² This empathy would, I suspect, lead each audience to consider the nature of their sin more generally, but, with a role model such as Brendan, they might draw strength from the

⁵⁰ 'Angustia est mihi de hac insula, [quia] nolo in illam ire aut etiam sibi appropinquare, sed uentus illuc subtrahit nos recto curso,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 23*, ll. 4–5; 'Mult s'esforcent de ailurs tendre,/ Mais ça estout lur curs prendre,/ Quar li venz la les em meinet,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1115–17.

⁵¹ Biblical descriptions of hell include 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9 and Revelation 20:10.

⁵² Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, p. 18.

narrative and face up to their transgressions. Thus, this section of the narrative could serve to instil courage into a secular audience, so that they follow Brendan's example and seek their own salvation.

Unlike the author of the *Navigatio*, who shies away from truly horrific descriptions, Benedeit, in the A.N. *Voyage*, embraces the opportunity to enhance the details and turn the encounter into a horrifying experience. The embellished description of the island appeals to all senses through the thunderous roaring of the smiths' bellows, the huge burning blades and the rocks.⁵³ Thus, the graphic details of the narrative for the courtly audience cause the same rush of adrenalin that a modern audience receives from watching a suspense film. Both the A.N. *Voyage* and the modern suspense film allow their respective audiences to experience fantasies within a safe environment. Unlike many such films, however, the A.N. *Voyage* also contains a moral: the 'gloomy valley' echoes the 'valley of shadow' of Psalm 23:4. In the same way, the malign presence in the *Navigatio* is not described as demonic but as savage. The emergence of the demon in the A.N. *Voyage* gives Benedeit the opportunity for an elaborate and terrifying description of a giant with flaming eyes, spewing fire and carrying a fiery blade similar to the Greek deity Hephaestus, who is described as the 'personification of terrestrial fire of which volcanoes were the most terrifying manifestation'.⁵⁴ Benedeit then conveys a series of destructive images to show how the monks face a very real threat: the missile hurled by the demon is described in terms of a sling-shot, a crossbow bolt and a whirlwind.⁵⁵ He also applies the same hyperbole that was used in the fight of the sea serpents, describing the missile as 'a load enough for ten oxen' serving to emphasise the size of the giant demon.⁵⁶ The tension climaxes with the blade splitting before passing over the monks and falling into the sea, where it remains burning 'like heather in a clearing'.⁵⁷ This simile of the burning heather would have probably been the most effective

⁵³ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1128–33.

⁵⁴ No doubt the identity of the classical deity was diluted by the time the legend had become synonymous with the legends that volcanoes represented the entrance to hell, which were common in the Middle Ages. Hephaestus was the Greek god of fire. His worship was also adopted in volcanic regions, for instance the Lipari Islands, whence it spread to Sicily and parts of Campania; see Felix Guirand (ed.), *Mythology*, trans. Richard Aldington and Delano Ames (London: Batchworth Press, 1959), p. 139.

⁵⁵ 'Esturbeiluns', 'arbaleste', 'galeste', Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1153, 1155 and 1156.

⁵⁶ 'Fais a dis bofs bien i aveit,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1150; see also l. 918.

⁵⁷ 'Cum brüere en un asart,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1162; cf. 'En une lande, a une part/ Ourent arshi villain essart,' Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 3035–36.

in conveying a message to a medieval audience: unless whipped into hysterical frenzy, the courtly audience would be unlikely to see a demon, whereas they would empathise with the fact that an uncontrolled fire could destroy property, crops or livestock and could be ruinous.

Although one may read the imagery of the Smithy of Hell as an extension of the fantastic imagery previously demonstrated in the A.N. *Voyage*, Benedeit makes it clear that the Crystal Column is a transition from the real world into the Otherworld: Brendan himself warns the brethren that they are 'compelled to go to hell'.⁵⁸ The association with death, particularly with the subsequent damnation of the supernumerary, may well evoke, in the courtly Anglo-Norman audience, an uncanny sense of being buried alive. These anxieties would be further enhanced by the claustrophobic feelings of the monks being unable to steer away from the island. This inability to move away from the island is a form of automatism as the monks are no longer in control of their actions.

Religious significance

Of course, the obligation to visit the infernal realms was the result of Brendan's desire, expressed at the beginning of the A.N. *Voyage*, to see the rewards of *both* good and evil deeds.⁵⁹ The previous encounters strengthened the faith of the monks and perhaps the comment 'they would not be very welcome' in hell should be read as a grudging irony, rather than any lack of faith.⁶⁰ Unlike in the *Navigatio*, in the A.N. *Voyage* Brendan makes the sign of the cross over himself as well as the brethren, showing that, from this point onwards, they are all equal. There is no longer any distinction in the knowledge between the three groups that need to learn from this encounter: the abbot, brethren and courtly audience all hear about the mysteries of the ocean at the same time. It falls on the wisdom of each, however, to accept fully and understand the lessons that are being taught.

⁵⁸ 'Que a enfern estes cachez,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1120.

⁵⁹ 'Quel sed li bon devrunt aveir...Enfern pried vetheir oveoc,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 62 and 65.

⁶⁰ 'La ne erent guaires goït,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1114.

Claustrophobia

Although he has confronted the demon smith and successfully fled from him, in both versions Brendan's encounters at the shores of hell culminate in the damnation of one of the supernumeraries.⁶¹ The power of the damnation of the supernumerary in the *Navigatio* derives not from what is described in this scene, but from what is left *unsaid*. The narrative describes the 'unhappy' supernumerary, burning among a multitude of demons, while Brendan impassively observes: 'Woe is yours, my brother, that you have received so evil an end to your life'.⁶² The supernumerary's actions are involuntary and his transgressions are never explained. Indeed, he cries out to Brendan that he is 'forcibly torn away', then, reaching the shores, he is dragged away by a multitude of demons, burning among them.⁶³ Even for a modern audience, the actions of the supernumerary may evoke thoughts of somnambulism or epilepsy. The fate of the supernumerary also underscores the fear of being buried alive, the most extreme form of claustrophobia, to which all audiences of both narratives have been subjected in earlier scenes.⁶⁴ However, any anxieties in previous encounters were generated by an audience empathising with situations with which the characters were presented, for example a sense of claustrophobia in a crowded coracle. The horror of the damnation of the supernumerary derives from the fact that the monk is actually alive as he is taken into hell. The A.N.

⁶¹ In the *Navigatio*, this is the third and final supernumerary, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage* it is the second supernumerary: the third supernumerary departs after Brendan's encounter with Judas Iscariot.

⁶² 'Ve tibi, fili, quia receperisti in uita tua meriti talem finem,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 24*, ll. 15–16. The *Imram curaig Mæle Dúin* parallels this encounter when a supernumerary steps on to the Island of Wailing. As with the demons or the smiths described in the versions of the Brendan narrative, the characters on the island in *Mæl Dúin* are black 'both in body and raiment', see Stokes, 'Mæl Dúin', p. 485. A lot falls on one of the foster brothers to land on the island, after which he becomes indistinguishable from those in the wailing group. The group attempts to retrieve the foster brother, but they are unsuccessful and the supernumerary remains on the island. Chapman, amongst others, arguing for the plausibility of this scene, suggests that the supernumerary explores a sandbar on the coast of Iceland and finds that it is in fact a bed of volcanic ash, see Paul H. Chapman, *The Man Who Led Columbus to America* (Atlanta: Judson Press, 1973), p. 154.

⁶³ ‘‘Predor a uobis, et non habeo potestatem ut possim uenire ad uos,’’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 24*, ll. 10–11. The A.N. *Voyage* adds that this punishment is on account of his sins ('Pur mes pecchez'), and that there were a hundred demons, see Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1204 and 1206.

⁶⁴ Discussed above on pp. 86–99; cf. Royle, *The Uncanny*, pp. 142–71.

Voyage describes how the monks can see ‘hell quite open’.⁶⁵ Thus there is no need for Benedeit to release any details on how he perceives hell at this point. He allows his courtly Anglo-Norman audience to draw on sermons and *exempla* that they might have heard in order to imagine and address their own interpretations of the torments.⁶⁶ However, each audience would recognise elements associated with the Biblical descriptions of hell as the mountain spews forth fire, pitch and sulphur.⁶⁷

A safe environment for discussing damnation

The encounter at the Smithy of Hell in the A.N. *Voyage* ends with the message that hardship in the service of God is ultimately rewarded. Although the imagery in the A.N. *Voyage* is more violent and graphic than that of the *Navigatio*, the use of horror in this version is not designed to terrify the courtly audience, but instead provides a safe environment for discussing damnation. The scenes of the fantastic-marvellous present as normal something which each audience would consider horrific and would usually be unwilling to confront (in this case, damnation). Paradoxically, there is a wish both to fulfil and to suppress a terror. It is in the damnation scene that the A.N. *Voyage* allows the courtly audience to experience this. The Anglo-Norman audience would believe neither that they were looking at the entrance to hell, nor that they were facing damnation themselves. Instead, they experience the horror of the damnation through an empathy with the monk and a fear for his soul. However, they are also able to distance themselves from the events, as described below.

The forum

The means by which the Anglo-Norman audience would have distanced themselves from the horror of the narrative (more so than their early Irish predecessors listening to the *Navigatio*) would have been the forum in which the narrative is presented. The A.N. *Voyage* would have been read or sung either in court itself, or perhaps in the Queen’s chambers in Arundel and Salisbury, for the benefit of those courtiers who did not

⁶⁵ ‘Enfern veient tut aüvert,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1210.

⁶⁶ Benedeit, however, presents his audience later with graphic details of Judas Iscariot’s punishment.

⁶⁷ ‘Enfers jetet fu e flammes... Peiz e sufre desque as nües,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1211 and 1213.

understand Latin.⁶⁸ Thus, these environments are not charged with the same spiritual authority as the monastic setting in which those Irish secular and lay audiences would have heard the *Navigatio*.

The form

Both Matilda and Adeliza were patrons of literature. Both invited troubadours to England and would therefore know that they could expect an exciting narrative, rather than a hagiographic text charged with miracles and morals.⁶⁹ The metrical form of the A.N. *Voyage* is octosyllabic couplets. This medium provides a means of increasing rhythm and therefore creates a sense of urgency; however, it is also a carefully constructed arrangement. The familiar sense of rhythm could unconsciously remind the audience that this is an artificial construction. It may also have been sung, which, in the early twelfth century may have been seen as an inappropriate manner of conveying a didactic message.⁷⁰ Admittedly, later chronicles were written in Anglo-Norman verse, but it is likely that Adeliza commissioned the first of these when David the Scot wrote his Life of Henry.⁷¹ Furthermore, by the beginning of the twelfth century, there would have been a greater circulation of visions of the Otherworld such as the *Fis Adamnáin* and the *Visio Wettini*. There was also a rising interest in the use of the dream vision as a literary device, due to the popularity of the *Navigatio* in Europe.⁷²

Conversely, as the *Navigatio* was more concerned with spiritual edification, its transmission to both a secular and a lay audience would have been within a monastic environment. Both the environment and the fact that the narrative was read by a member of holy orders would give it a spiritual authority. Thus, the *Navigatio* was preserved as a true account of the deeds of a pious saint in an environment where such readings would not be questioned. To each audience, this scene would have presented a moment of considerable fear. Confronting their

⁶⁸ Legge, 'Anglo-Norman Hagiography and the Romances,' p. 41; Holmes, 'Anglo-Norman Rhymed Chronicle,' p. 233.

⁶⁹ William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, p. 494; Holzknecht, *Literary Patronage*, pp. 32, 48 and 219.

⁷⁰ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 262.

⁷¹ Holmes, 'Anglo-Norman Rhymed Chronicle,' p. 234.

⁷² Over a dozen manuscripts of the *Navigatio* still survive dating from before the composition of the A.N. *Voyage* as a testament to the popularity of the Latin narrative, see Selmer, *Navigatio*, pp. 105–16; also Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan*, pp. 13–20.

fears acts as a catharsis for each audience. Although the horror in the *Navigatio* serves to terrify each audience, it also serves to reaffirm their self-image, knowing they still have an opportunity to repent before death. Thus, it allows them to play out their worst fears within a safe environment. By confronting the fears, each audience no longer has a fear of the unknown, but, essentially, what they most fear is something that is now familiar.

The significance of the Crystal Pillar and the Smithy of Hell

The Crystal Pillar and the fiery mountain are exotica that would have been familiar to each audience through medieval geographers' writings, but the authors of each version have defamiliarised these elements to give them a supernatural quality. Thus, the two exotica are familiar, yet unfamiliar at the same time. They represent elements of our oceans that have been transposed into a supernatural realm and this vagueness of description gives them an ethereal quality. The exotica are presented as two polarities with a series of oppositions: ice/fire, light/darkness, symmetrical/craggy, calm/fear, salvation/damnation. The audience of each version must consider the nature of sin in relation to these extremes. The damnation of the supernumerary shows that even among the brethren there is evil that must be excised before Paradise can be achieved. Having presented each audience with these extremes in nature, the authors of both versions present an equivalent in human terms: humans that are able to answer questions in relation to their damnation or their impending salvation. Once again, the narratives distinguish two extremes of humanity with which each audience would identify. Before reaching salvation, Brendan will speak with the angelic hermit, Paul. However, as they are close to the entrance to hell, Brendan first speaks to the betrayer of Christ, Judas Iscariot.

The scenes with the Crystal Column and the Smithy of Hell serve to counterbalance each other. On the one hand, we have the column presenting a message of hope to each audience. It is also described in terms of being light, symmetrical and tranquil. The descriptions echo those of the temple of Ezekiel, in the *Navigatio*, and the New Jerusalem, in the A.N. *Voyage*. Thus, the column is charged with positive Biblical symbolism. It is linked with the Otherworld through its association with apocryphal or classical symbolism and it concludes with a Christian mass, symbolising eternal life. On the other hand, the Smithy of Hell is

a noisy and violent place, distinguished by its red and black colouring. The horrific descriptions, presented in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, are not dissimilar to the volcanic entrances to hell as described by medieval geographers. The Smithy of Hell should be considered as such, especially with the damnation of the supernumerary. The passage from the Crystal Column, to the Smithy of Hell and then to the descriptions of hell provided by Judas Iscariot, suggest a fall from salvation, which can only be arrested by the discipline as described by Paul the Hermit.

Each of the previous encounters has served to introduce the fantastic to each audience. These fantastic elements reach their zenith with the presentation of the Crystal Column and the Smithy of Hell, as each audience has witnessed the full spectrum of fantastic experience based on human anxieties, marvellous creatures and supernatural realms. The gradual introduction of these elements means that each audience should accept the final didactic messages concerning the nature of salvation and damnation as presented by Paul the Hermit and Judas Iscariot.

Part Two

Human representations of the diabolical and the divine

The previous part discussed representations of good and evil as depicted by the natural exotica in both versions of the Brendan legend. This section considers the final two encounters, where the extremes of humanity are given a voice through which they can convey the ultimate mysteries of heaven and hell before Brendan and his monks see Paradise. In particular, this section considers the hierarchy of the scene as a gauge against which each audience may measure themselves and consider themselves in relation to salvation. Thus, the previous section presented a visual description of the fiery entrance to hell, and the encounter that follows provides a personal account of hell from the betrayer of Christ, Judas Iscariot.

Judas Iscariot

Sources

Scholars who read Brendan's voyage as an *actual* journey (or, at least, a conglomeration of voyages describing features and locations in the Atlantic Ocean) argue that Judas's respite from hell was on the island of Rockall. This island, which is only nineteen metres high, twenty-five metres across and thirty metres wide, is situated some 300 miles off the coasts of Scotland, Ireland and Iceland (57°N, 13°W). Rockall is a barren, uninhabitable island; its isolated bleakness provides a realistic setting where one may conjecture that Judas spends his respite.⁷³

Brendan's encounter with Judas is one of the most popular elements of all the Latin and vernacular translations.⁷⁴ It also exists, in a slightly different form, in the *Vita Brendani* and the *Betha Brénnain*.⁷⁵ The *Vita Brendani* (VB3) also has perhaps the earliest account of Brendan's meeting with Judas: on a journey in foul weather, a monk asks if the weather in hell could be so bad.⁷⁶ Brendan describes how, when they saw Judas, both fiery and icy waves beat the rock. Judas explains that what Brendan feared to be a terrible punishment was, in fact, a release from the torments of hell for the good deeds Judas performed in his lifetime. Hence, Brendan surmises that punishment in hell is worse.⁷⁷ However, neither Judas's virtuous acts nor Brendan's intercession for the additional hours' rest are included in the *Vita*. Thus it lacks the moral of later versions of the legend. The *Vita* cautions about punishments in hell without detailing them. Instead, it creates an image of appalling weather conditions with which the audience would identify.

⁷³ Severin makes no reference to Rockall on his journey to Newfoundland, but his intention was not to visit all the places where Brendan allegedly made landing, but to prove that an Atlantic voyage in a coracle was possible. For a discussion of Judas on Rockall, see Little, *Brendan the Navigator*, pp. 91–93.

⁷⁴ This scene is likely to have occurred in all the vernacular versions of the *Voyage of Brendan*, although as the Norse version is no more than a fragment it is not possible to say this conclusively; see Barron and Burgess, eds, *The Voyage of St Brendan*, pp. 93–97 (Anglo-Norman); 120–22 (Dutch); 145–46 (German); 202–7 (Venetian); 243–47 (Occitan); 257–59 (Catalan); 311–15 (Middle English).

⁷⁵ See, for example, Heist, *V.S.H.*, pp. 72–74; Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 66–68.

⁷⁶ 'Frigus inferni non est majus hoc frigore,' Moran, *Acti Sancti Brendani*, p. 22.

⁷⁷ Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 1, p. 147.

The scene that follows in the *Vita*, that of the crystal pillars, concludes the message: fear hell and trust God.⁷⁸

Judas's day of respite is not canonical. The story concerning Christ's betrayal is well known and need not be addressed here.⁷⁹ However, Matthew is the only evangelist who describes Judas's repentance and his attempt to return the silver to the priests because he 'betrayed innocent blood'.⁸⁰ The priests refuse the money. Unable to buy a clean conscience, Judas hangs himself. The Biblical character of Judas has no psychological depth; he is merely an instrument of the devil. Thus, from the time the gospels were written until the Middle Ages, there was a concentrated effort to blacken Judas's name. This maligning of Judas's character was initially achieved through stories about similar betrayals described in the Apocryphal New Testament, and the medieval laity were 'not trained to discriminate between the canonical books and the Apocrypha, or even between the Scriptures and the legends of the saints'.⁸¹ The blackening of Judas's character in the Middle Ages was also achieved through the circulation of the Medieval Legend of Judas, which has Judas as an Oedipus-like figure, guilty of the crimes that subvert the natural order.⁸² However, there are also a handful of occasions where medieval writers attempt to encourage some sympathy for Judas. For example, the thirteenth-century 'Ballad of Judas' describes how Judas tried only to obtain the money that was stolen from him by his 'sister'.⁸³ Other narratives that evoke sympathy for Judas include

⁷⁸ The Sunday respite is also described in the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*. Here the emphasis is on birds, and the story is affected by the neutral angels motif. Archangel Michael appears as a 'bright bird', one of the supernumeraries dies and appears as a bird and bird/souls are released from hell on Sunday. The bird/souls imagery appears in several of the *immrama*, for example the *Immram Snédgusa ocus Maic Riagla*, but the *Huí Corra* is the only *immram* to mention a Sunday rest, Stokes, 'Snedgus,' p. 21; see also Patch, *The Other World*, pp. 35–36.

⁷⁹ I have discussed this subject in my paper 'Kissing Heaven's Door: The Respite of Judas Iscariot in *The Voyage of Brendan*', unpublished paper presented at the York/Canterbury Conference, 13 June 2003.

⁸⁰ Matthew 27:4.

⁸¹ Brander Matthews, *The Development of the Drama* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 107–46, p. 139; James, *Apocryphal New Testament*.

⁸² Paull Franklin Baum, 'The Medieval Legend of Judas Iscariot,' *PMLA* 31 (1916), 481–632. Cf. Richard Axton, 'Interpretations of Judas in Middle English Literature,' *Religion in the Poetry and Drama of the Late Middle Ages*, eds Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 179–97 and N. Reider, 'Medieval Oedipal Legends about Judas,' *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 29 (1960), 515–27.

⁸³ 'Judas,' in *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 168–69; Donald G. Schueler, 'The Middle English *Judas*: An

Brendan's encounters with him in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. In these versions, Brendan's encounter is described at first hand. The prevailing wind blows the coracle away from the fiery mountain and the damnation of the supernumerary. The monks then find Judas on a rock, wearing a cloth caught on two iron hooks, which, whipped by the storm, lashes his eyes and face.⁸⁴ This is not a punishment, but a weekly release from hell on account of the few virtuous acts he performed in his lifetime. Judas begs Brendan to keep the devils at bay until dawn. The devils, who return to hell empty-handed, come back at sunrise the following day, threatening Judas with double punishment for the next six days, but Brendan forbids them to give him any more than he received before. Brendan and his crew set sail and the devils take Judas back to hell.⁸⁵

The concept of a respite from hell may derive from the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of relief from the working week.⁸⁶ However, the clearest influence on this encounter is the fourth-century *Apocalypse of Paul*.⁸⁷ In 2 Corinthians, Paul describes how he met a man 'caught up to the third heaven', which no doubt influenced the *Apocalypse*, describing judgements of the righteous and sinners and the ensuing blessings and punishments.⁸⁸ Augustine denounces it as 'full of fables', and the

Interpretation,' *PMLA* 91 (1976), 840–45. Cf. Paul Franklin Baum, 'The English Ballad of Judas Iscariot,' *PMLA* 31 (1916), 181–89.

⁸⁴ 'Et uelum ante illum a longe quasi [mensura] unius sagi, pendens inter duas furcellas ferreas,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 25, ll. 3–4.

⁸⁵ McNamara, 'Liturgical, Apocryphal and Irish Tradition,' pp. 172–82.

⁸⁶ Israel Lévi, 'Le Repos sabbatique des âmes damnées,' *Revue des Études Juives* 25 (1893), 1–13. Plutarch's account of Thespesius's encounters in hell may be one source for this respite. Having given freedom to the Greeks, Nero is not changed into a viper, as previously threatened, since, according to Plutarch, one good deed has a more positive effect than many evil acts; see Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (London: UCL Press Ltd., 1993), pp. 81–82.

⁸⁷ The theme of a respite also appears in the apocryphal *Apocalypse of the Virgin*, where Mary secures a respite on behalf of the sinners, see James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 563.

⁸⁸ 2 Corinthians 12:2–5. One of these tortures evokes the imagery of Judas on the rock: stones pelt a corrupt bishop, wounding his face 'like a tempest' (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 543). Similarly, Brendan's grief at Judas's punishment in the A.N. *Voyage* reflects Paul's anguish at the torments in hell ('Pur le plurer Brandans ne pout/ Avant parler, mais dunc se tout,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1267–8). However, the angel in the *Apocalypse* rebukes Paul, wondering if he is more merciful than God (James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 546). Only when Christ appears do the sinners plead for 'refreshment', to which Jesus demands 'What good works have ye done?' Yet, the sinners receive grace because of Paul's intercession for them (pp. 548–49). For other sources on the

Gelasian Decree condemns it, but Le Goff argues that the *Apocalypse* 'had the greatest influence on medieval literature concerned with the afterlife in general and with Purgatory in particular'.⁸⁹ The addition of Christian holidays in the *Navigatio* may have contributed towards a further Christianising of the myth.⁹⁰

One of the debates among the Fathers of the Church concerned why punishment was meted upon the dead, rather than the living and whether there could be any respite from hell.⁹¹ They conjectured that sinners could achieve a place in heaven following a purging trial between death and the Last Judgement, in a 'middle space' between heaven and hell, where the prayers of those still living could bring some release from their punishment.⁹² These ideas developed until the twelfth century, even though the Bible does not mention the concept of Purgatory, which is still a principal disagreement between divisions of the Christian Church.⁹³ The Catholic Church, in particular, has never sanctioned the concept of a day's respite from hell.

Apocalypse of Paul see James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 525–26 and E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL. Wilson, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, 2 vols (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), vol. 2, pp. 755–59.

⁸⁹ James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 23 and 525. See also Chester D. Hartranft, 'Sozomenus: Church History from A.D. 323–425,' *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), vol. 2, p. 390. Augustine (in *Tractatus in Joannem* 98.8) writes:

Some presumptuous men, some very stupid men, have invented the *Apocalypse* of Paul, which the Church rightly does not recognise and which is full of I know not what fables. They say that this is the story of his being carried off to the third heaven and the revelation of the ineffable words he heard there, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Is their audacity tolerable? When Paul says that he heard what it is not lawful for a man to utter, would he then have said what it is not lawful for a man to utter? Who are they who dare to speak with such impudence and indecency?

See also Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 35–36. The *Apocalypse* enjoyed an octosyllabic Anglo-Norman free translation in the twelfth century; see Paul Meyer, 'La Descente de Saint Paul en enfer,' *Romania* 24 (1895), 357–75, p. 364. The popularity of the *Apocalypse* is also attested by Dante's reference 'Io non Enëa, io non Paulo sono,' Dante, *Inferno*, canto II. l. 32.

⁹⁰ Paull Franklin Baum, 'Judas' Sunday Rest,' *Modern Language Review* 18 (1923), 162–82, p. 180.

⁹¹ Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, pp. 271–72.

⁹² 2 Maccabees 12:44–45. See, for example, Augustine, *Enchiridion*, chapters 109–110; Augustine, *City of God*, chapters 21 and 26. For further discussion see Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, pp. 61–85.

⁹³ The Protestants rejected the concept of Purgatory in Period III of the Council of Trent (1562–63).

The moral treatment

It is against this unorthodox backdrop that Brendan learns the penultimate lesson before achieving Paradise. In both versions, Judas begs Brendan to procure an extra day of respite, before the devils continue his torment, and describes his punishment. In the A.N. *Voyage*, the six days of torture mirror the six occasions that Judas witnesses Jesus's suffering, with the alternate lines beginning 'when I saw...'⁹⁴ Judas's days of torture are described in graphic detail. The audience of both versions may feel anxious about the descriptions of tortures in hell. Indeed, some of the more educated members of an audience might feel uncomfortable if they recognised heretical details. However, this encounter offers hope to those who have none. It is for this reason that it is one of the most appealing of the encounters in any version of the Brendan narrative. Judas is not represented as an unrepentant betrayer, stating he is 'the most unhappy of traffickers,' as an acknowledgement of his guilt.⁹⁵ He accepts his punishment and is grateful for his respite, explaining in the *Navigatio* that this 'torment' is a 'Paradise of Delights'. This is a disturbing sadomasochistic image, although the pain is mild compared to the punishments of hell.⁹⁶

The author of the *Navigatio* is neither as condemnatory as those who declare that there is no redemption for Judas, nor as forgiving as those who perceive him as genuinely repentant or as the means of fulfilling God's will. Instead, Judas is dealt with sympathetically. Genuinely repentant, he is grateful for the mercy shown to him. He is neither rejected from hell, nor accepted by heaven, but in a middle space. Indeed, he serves to blur further the perceptions of the audience, as he inverts their expectations. He is not the traitor one sees in the Bible or in most subsequent medieval literature. He speaks nothing but truth to Brendan; he repents for his crimes in the past and is grateful for the brief respite from hell, although he does beg Brendan to save him from another day of torment. In the case of the Crystal Column and the volcano,

⁹⁴ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1289, 1291, 1293, 1295, 1297, 1299.

⁹⁵ 'Ego sum infelissimus Judas atque negociator pessimus,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 25*, ll. 18–19.

⁹⁶ 'Paradiso deliciarum,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 25*, l. 23. The A.N. *Voyage* describes how he suffers in both hells, but one is worse than the other in some respects: 'Mais jo chaitis ai amedous./ L'uns est en munt e l'autre en val... Cil del munt est plus penibles,/ E cil del val plus horribles;/ Cil pres del air calz e sullenz,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1344–5 and 1349–51.

good and evil had clearly been delineated. In this case, although Judas is portrayed as the ultimate sinner, he acts as a means of blurring the boundaries between good and evil and inverts the expectations of each audience that anticipates his character to be that of the vile betrayer. Subsequently, each audience has sympathy with Judas because of the torments he endures. Yet one feels that the monk who is dragged into hell deserves his fate.

The punishments

As with other encounters, compared with the graphic imagery of the A.N. *Voyage*, the *Navigatio* glosses over many of the punishments, summarising them in descriptions such as a ‘burning like a mass of molten lead’.⁹⁷ Thus, the author makes a suggestion of the horrors of hell without actually describing the suffering. These descriptions create mental images, but they cannot make the audience view the intensity of the torment. However, Benedeit also creates sympathy for Judas by describing him as ‘plucked bare and pulled about, lacerated and torn’.⁹⁸ He speaks in a hoarse and weary voice.⁹⁹ The A.N. *Voyage* also embellishes Brendan’s sorrowful weeping.¹⁰⁰ Judas then begs Brendan, through ‘the Redeemer of the World’, to intercede with Christ on his behalf, so that the devils cannot drag him to his ‘heritage of pain’.¹⁰¹ Indeed, in the A.N. *Voyage*, Judas’s twelve-line lamentation moves Brendan to tears.¹⁰² Both the A.N. *Voyage* and the *Vita Brendani* describe Judas’s torments in daily detail, which include being bound to a spiked bed, subjected to extreme heat and cold and being flayed and rolled in salt.¹⁰³ Indeed, three of the manuscripts of the A.N. *Voyage* have the additional embellishment of ornate capital letters to show the beginning of each day’s torture.¹⁰⁴ These additions might suggest that the manuscripts were

⁹⁷ ‘Nam ardeo sicut massa plumbi liquefacta in olla die ac nocte in medio montis quem uidistis,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 25 ll. 24–26.

⁹⁸ ‘Pelfiz e detirez,/ Delacherez e descirez,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1227–28.

⁹⁹ ‘Cil respundit a voiz basse-/ Mult ert roie, forment lasse,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1269–70.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Quant le oit Brandans issi plaindre,/ Unches dolur nen out graindre,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1255–56; see also ll. 1267–68 and 1445–46.

¹⁰¹ ‘Per Redemptorem mundi,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 25, l. 34; ‘Ad malam hereditatem,’ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 25, l. 37.

¹⁰² Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1433–44.

¹⁰³ See also Plummer, *V.S.H.*, vol. 2, pp. 287–88; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1390–1432.

¹⁰⁴ MSS London, British Library, Cotton Vesp. B. x (I) fo 1–11 r^o; Paris, Bibliothèque

commissioned for a semi-literate audience, that is one that would have seen the importance of each day's torture, because of the emphasis on each working day. Alternatively, they might have served as instructions to the reader to place extra emphasis, when presenting these passages to the listeners. Keith Busby observes

The marking of the moral with a capital is particularly interesting (although not surprising in the case of openly didactic works) as it is also found in *fabliaux*... suggesting that these outlandish stories were susceptible to interpretation as in some way edifying; the *mise en page* would thus accentuate the disbelief and outrage provoked by the text itself.¹⁰⁵

Either way, the illuminated letters emphasise the importance of this passage in relation to the overall narrative. Thus, the illuminated letters in the manuscripts of the A.N. *Voyage* appear to correspond, in part, to stage directions in a printed play. They provide a cue to the orator to include additional vocal embellishment in the readings of each daily damnation. This is a further example of the dramatic nature of the A.N. *Voyage*.

In the A.N. *Voyage*, Judas describes how there are two hells, and he is the only one who experiences the suffering in both. He explains that one of these hells is on the mountain, the other in the valley. The Bible, in fact, uses three different Greek words that are all translated as 'hell' in the King James Bible: *Hades* (*Sheol* in Hebrew); *Tartarus* and *Gehenna*.

Hades, or *Sheol* corresponds to the modern word 'grave'. In this condition there is no conscious awareness of the state of death.¹⁰⁶ This is where the dead will sleep until the Resurrection. *Tartarus* in Greek mythology is the name of a prison where the wicked are punished: it is the place where Sisyphus pushes his boulder up the hill. The Bible uses the verb *tartaroo*—to imprison—where Peter explains that the fallen angels were cast into 'gloomy dungeons' to await judgement.¹⁰⁷ *Gehenna* refers to a real place south west of Jerusalem, the Valley of Hinnom,

Nationale de France, nouv. acq. fr 4503, fo. 19 v^o– 42 r^o; Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 3516 (formerly BLF 283 fo.) fo. 96 r^o col c.100 v^o. Another manuscript (ms Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Lat. 2333A, fol. 144v) has a caricature of Judas peering from between the two columns of text.

¹⁰⁵ Keith Busby, *Codex and Context—Reading Old French Verse Narrative in Manuscript*, 2 vols (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2002), vol. 1, p. 197.

¹⁰⁶ Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10. Cf. Psalm 16:10; Ezekiel 32:27–29; Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Acts 2:31.

¹⁰⁷ 2 Peter 2:4; cf. Jude 6,7.

where in the Old Testament the Israelites sacrificed their children.¹⁰⁸ Later it was a place where Jerusalem's rubbish was destroyed in constantly burning fires; thus it is a term used to signify the burning fires of hell, with the parabolic interpretation of total annihilation of the soul.¹⁰⁹ In Revelation, this distinction of different hells is made most clear where John describes how 'death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death'.¹¹⁰ The 'second death' is total annihilation: those who do not suffer the second death live with Christ in eternal life.

Of these three definitions of hell, then, only two suggest torture: in *Hades* the soul is oblivious until the Day of Judgement. It is these two hells that Judas suffers in the A.N. *Voyage*. Judas describes how in one hell he is 'removed and roasted, bound to a post between two fires', which is clearly a description of *Gehenna*.¹¹¹ He then describes how he is put in a dungeon where he endures the tortures ascribed to that day.¹¹² Judas is denied the oblivion of *Hades* and must endure the daily tortures of *Tartarus* and *Gehenna*.

In the A.N. *Voyage* Benedeit has Judas describe his tortures in extensive detail.¹¹³ Although there were many methods of torture employed around the time of the composition of the A.N. *Voyage*, many of the descriptions of torture could be found in texts that discussed the Christian martyrs, or even books of the Apocrypha. The fourth book of Maccabees contains a list of torture devices that could be used, some of which, we may conjecture, were the same kinds of instruments and punishments that Benedeit imagined being inflicted on Judas.¹¹⁴

Through the types of punishment that Benedeit describes in the A.N. *Voyage* he creates a truly horrific vision of hell. This is particularly relevant considering that Brendan has recently witnessed one of the supernumeraries being dragged into hell. The tortures are gruesome in the extreme and it requires little imagination to realise that the tortures

¹⁰⁸ Jeremiah 32:35.

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 5:29, 30; James 3:6.

¹¹⁰ Revelation 20:14.

¹¹¹ 'Puis sui osté e mis en rost,/ Entre dous fus lied al post,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1379–80.

¹¹² 'E puis sui mis en gaiole,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1419.

¹¹³ This is the subject of my article 'The Torturer's "Art" in the Judas Episode of Benedeit's *Voyage of St Brendan*', *Notes & Queries* 54 (March 2007), pp. 24–27.

¹¹⁴ 4 Maccabees 8:13. For other tortures that correspond with those suffered by Judas see 2 Maccabees 7:1–5.

are both physically and psychologically vicious. Yet, as Judas observes, there are two hells and he is the only person to have experienced the sufferings of both.¹¹⁵

Christ's mercy

The focus of this encounter is not on Judas's damnation, but on Christ's mercy. The items that Judas has with him represent an apocryphal period of Judas's life, when he performed good deeds in his lifetime. By giving away the cloth, he saved a leper from dying in the sun. Consequently, the cloth now offers Judas a meagre protection, as his intentions had been good. However, the cloth also whips his face because it was not his to give away.¹¹⁶ The iron forks upon which the cloth hangs are those Judas gave to priests to support their cauldrons.¹¹⁷ This imagery of Judas suspended by the cloth on the iron prongs also evokes an image of Christ's Crucifixion. The iron forks represent the Cross and the nails, with the cloth representing not only the garments for which the soldiers drew lots, but also the crown of thorns. Finally, the rock upon which Judas sits represents a stone that he placed in a trench on a road to act as a stepping-stone, preventing travellers from deviating some distance from their journey.¹¹⁸ Thus, both versions

¹¹⁵ Antonio Gallonio, *Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs*, trans. A.R. Allinson (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2004), pp. 24, 104, 129 and 166. See also Karen Farringdon, *A History of Punishment and Torture* (Toronto: Reed Consumer Books Ltd., 1996), p. 34.

¹¹⁶ Selmer, *Navigatio*, caput 25 ll. 41–4; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1455–60; the A.N. *Voyage* specifies only a 'naked man' ('un nud fed'), Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1456.

¹¹⁷ Selmer, *Navigatio*, caput 25 ll. 44–45; omitted from the A.N. *Voyage*.

¹¹⁸ Selmer, *Navigatio*, caput 25 ll. 46–47; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1463–65. The A.N. *Voyage* describes this means of passage as a strong, small bridge ('un fort puncel'), Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1464. The penance on the rock appears in the fourth century *Vitae Adae et Eve*, which chronicles events following the expulsion from Eden. Adam suggests he and Eve make restitution for their sins by standing on a rock with water up to their necks. Again, Eve listens to Satan's deception that they may be discharged from their penance, see Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, pp. 249–95. The tenth-century *Life of St Gregory* also describes a penance on the rock. Gregory is born, Oedipus-like, of an incestuous relationship and marries his mother. To repent, he is chained to a rock for seventeen years until God inspires the Roman Church to make him Pope. Ohly has observed comparisons between the *Vitae of Judas* and *Gregory*, suggesting it is difficult to blame these characters when Fate has controlled their actions. However, it is in the subsequent reaction to their crimes that their guilt lies; he concludes that *Judas* is a warning against despair of God's mercy, while *Gregory* encourages repentance through acts of contrition; see Friedrich Ohly, *The Damned and the Elect: Guilt in Western Culture*, trans. Linda Archibald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1–34, particularly, pp. 16–17.

emphasise that no matter how heinous the sin, Christ rewards each good deed, in the same way that he punishes each sin.

Judas on the ‘threshold’

Judas's respite allows him to take a day from torture, although he is never truly away from hell. By returning from hell, Judas creates an uncanny anxiety within each audience: he crosses the line separating life from death.¹¹⁹ Each audience understands that Judas betrayed Christ and then committed suicide. In that regard, his inclusion within the Brendan narratives is an example of repetition. The inclusion of Judas's Sunday respite was an episode developed by the original author of the *Navigatio* as an example of Christ's mercy for the most wretched sinner in the history of the world.¹²⁰ The place in which Judas dwells is a 'liminal' state.¹²¹ On the day of respite Judas crosses the threshold towards salvation, but can never travel any further.

The previous part discussed examples of the descriptions of the glacial front and the volcano, and how using only supernatural terms served to obscure the concept of natural features, so that an audience would not immediately recognise them as natural exotica. A similar effect is evident here in both versions of the narrative. Judas is naked, save for the cloth that beats him around the face. The description of Judas in this encounter is similar to Turner's description of 'liminal *personae*':

Liminal entities...may be presented as possessing nothing. They may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked to

¹¹⁹ This *revenance* embodies Derrida's idea of *hauntology*, the impossibility that the dead character 'begins by coming back'; in the Brendan narratives hauntology represents the impossibility of the first time that Judas has been encountered and the fact that it is a repetition, as Brendan would already be familiar with Judas from the Bible, see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 10–11.

¹²⁰ Similarly the Paradise of Birds represents a place where the creatures have been displaced from their locus of origin to a middle point between where they *could* and where they *should* be.

¹²¹ Arnold van Gennep has pointed out that a 'limen' is a 'threshold'. At the point of liminality, the character is at the 'betwixt and between'. They are neither in one place, nor another, and yet simultaneously in both. For example, at the point of collecting a degree, one is neither a *graduand*, nor a *graduate*, and yet, paradoxically, one can be regarded as both. See Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), and Turner, *Anthropology of Performance*, p. 25.

demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status... Their behaviour is normally passive or humble. They must... accept arbitrary punishment without complaint.¹²²

By evoking the monstrous Judas, the author of the *Navigatio* emphasises Christ's mercy and allows a point of comparison for each audience, as the gravest sinner in history reflects on his actions. At the same time Brendan illustrates the power of the faithful over the forces of evil. He is an intermediary who stands between Brendan and the devils; however, Judas also stands between the devils and Satan—in the *Navigatio* the devils are tortured in his place. Furthermore, by portraying Judas as a liminal entity, the author presents to each audience a challenge to their preconceptions concerning the persona of Judas and invites them to consider him as a character worthy of sympathy and mercy. This is achieved by describing in liminal terms both the position in which Judas stands and also his social and hierarchical status.

The strength of the liminal descriptions becomes apparent when Brendan first faces Judas. Brendan is ignorant of what manner of man he faces, but he has the power of Christ to shield him: the waves are motionless; the two are able to speak freely. Yet, at the same time, the waves and winds still batter Judas. Thus, this action displaces Judas from the torment of hell and the natural elements. However, he moves no closer towards God nor to any sight of release from his eternal torment. Similarly, although Brendan has physically moved his crew away from the shores of hell, he is tied emotionally to Judas. He is aware that Judas's suffering is severe and that he suffers the additional mental anguish of his weekly torment, as well as the anticipation of his eternal damnation.

If this were a description of an actual voyage undertaken, then, of all the encounters, this moment would be the one that is *least* plausible. It is the marvellous in the 'pure state' where 'supernatural events are reported without being presented as such'.¹²³ It is feasible that Brendan saw an island with birds he perceived as angels or believed the erupting volcano was the gateway to hell. Here, however, the encounter is definitely *beyond* belief. Spirits and demons, Freud argues, are 'only projections of man's own emotional impulses'.¹²⁴ Judas belongs in the

¹²² Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 95.

¹²³ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 53 and 55.

¹²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 92.

Bible, in the pages of legend, or in the depths of hell, but he appears in the narrative as a supernatural entity. Judas's presence moves the narratives away from any plausible encounter: there are neither plausible events, nor recognisable motifs to which an audience can subscribe. Thus the encounter undermines any safe recourse to reality and the respective audiences of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* are left only with disbelief at this moment.

Brendan is, apparently, away from his crew during his dialogue with Judas. There is, after all, no reaction from the brethren concerning the arrival of the devils. Thus, Brendan's encounter with Judas becomes an introspective exploration, as does his later meeting with Paul the Hermit. By meeting the epitome of the damned, Brendan (and with him, each audience) may recognise suppressed characteristics within himself in darker features of the 'other'. Only by confronting his darker nature can Brendan purge himself psychologically, in the same way as the hardships of his voyage have purged him physically. The confrontation with the devils is a symbolic casting out of the inner darkness. The cleansing is one of the final steps that leads Brendan to Paradise.

The power of the description of Brendan's meeting with Judas is the blurring of the distinction between imagination and reality. By escaping from the pages of legend, Judas becomes an expression of the real hell in which he suffers. It is a hell that provokes the reader to sympathy with Judas, not a judgement of him, and induces a fear of damnation. A reading of this scene with reference to the uncanny shows that it is a rehearsal for death. It warns that one should confront whatever devils await in life, as well as being aware of the constant divine blessings. Judas does not reject God—the emphasis is on Divine mercy. Although hell is a place of despair, it is not for eternity: by showing mercy on Judas, God shows that He controls the destiny of those condemned to the infernal realms. This is a message of hope: everything that happens in hell is because God allows it, but Judas must wait for the Divine Pronouncement before his eternal release. Judas returns to hell with perhaps a greater understanding of Christ's power, but he continues to have his six days of torture, while Brendan continues on his journey, totally trusting in God, with his soul purified. Thus, the fantastic imagery of this encounter shows the audience the horrors of hell.

The message to each audience

The experience of self-examination through the double is not limited to Brendan, but affects each audience's own interpretation of the text.

By invoking emotions or thoughts it ‘uncovers what is hidden and, by doing so, effects a disturbing transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar’.¹²⁵ The encounter with Judas reveals the foreign entity *within* ourselves and causes each audience to hesitate and reflect on what the narrative achieves by passing from the plausible, but misinterpreted, to the implausible. As the monks do not serve as a logical focal point for the audience—aside from the supernumeraries they all have no individual identity—there remains a series of greater and lesser extremes against which the audience may judge themselves, from absolute good to absolute evil:

Divine	Pious (Saved)	Implied Audience	Damned	Demonic
God	Brendan		Judas	Devils

The diagram shows an implied audience that is confronted by the various strata of the divine and diabolical, presented in the scene where Brendan encounters Judas Iscariot, in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. As the monks do not appear to be represented in this encounter, there is no ‘human’ element in which each audience may recognise themselves. As there is a balanced number of divine and diabolical characters presented in this scene, the implied audience would recognise that they themselves stand at the central point between salvation and damnation. Given the dedication and prayer that they would have to undertake in order to become saintly, like Brendan, the scene demands that they consider their own deeds, for which they must repent and receive absolution before they can achieve salvation. This self-examination is further underscored when Brendan encounters Paul the Hermit.¹²⁶

The contrast between Brendan and Judas

Despite the liminal aspects of his situation, Judas remains *opposite* to Brendan: anti-saint versus saint, Jew versus Christian. In the *Navigatio*,

¹²⁵ Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 65.

¹²⁶ See below, pp. 218–19.

even Judas's calendar of days of respite matches the dates of the repeated encounters that Brendan faces.¹²⁷ Although the crew believe their first sight of Judas is a boat and believe his cloth is a sail, Judas's 'vessel' is fixed, whereas Brendan is free to travel the seas. Judas stands naked, Brendan does not. Yet, Brendan berates himself for wearing the monks' habit when he meets Paul the Hermit. Brendan gave up the worldly life and lived on charity, yet, even as a disciple, Judas is associated with worldly possessions as treasurer to Christ. Judas is dead but animate and cognisant in the land of the living, able to speak about the afterlife to those still alive. The brutal imagery of this scene achieves its intention of shaking the audience from indifference concerning contrition.¹²⁸ Turner suggests 'monsters are manufactured precisely to teach neophytes to distinguish clearly between the different factors of reality' and, further, that monsters such as Judas 'startle neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted'.¹²⁹ However, the emphasis of this encounter is not upon Judas's sin, but the rewards received for good acts performed in one's lifetime, as well as upon Christ's mercy and the poet's invocation of sympathy. Judas is neither demonic nor human, but a ghost existing in an ethereal plane between the spiritual, the diabolical and the material. Furthermore, Judas's lamentation forces each audience into sympathy with his torment as well as to consider the despair of hell.

Purgatory

The most important factor of this encounter is that Judas always stands at a threshold. The encounter occurs on the Sabbath, the day of rest that holds the working week together. Judas spends his respite on a rock in the ocean; he is neither on dry land nor adrift in the sea, nor is he out of the sea, as the waves strike him to the top of his head. On his day of respite he is not *in* hell, but nor is he *out* of it. Whipped by the cloth and the elements, Judas receives punishment in both, although the torture on the rock is comparatively better than the pains of hell. This moment, where past meets present, through Brendan meeting the ancient foe of history, is what Turner describes as a 'time and place

¹²⁷ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 25*, ll. 30–32.

¹²⁸ Ohly, *Damned and Elect*, p. 32.

¹²⁹ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 105.

of withdrawal from normal modes of social action...a period of scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs'.¹³⁰ It is a time of reflection for Judas, who may spend his respite considering his actions and the mercy of Christ, as well as his torment and comparative release. It allows the audiences of both versions to see the extent of Christ's compassion and that this purgatorial position redeems the worst of sinners. Positioned for souls between death and the Last Judgement and purging them of a lifetime of sins, Purgatory is a common motif in the later Middle Ages, although the concept had not been developed by the time of composition of the *Navigatio*.¹³¹ It stands between mortality and resurrection, between hell and Paradise. However, Judas does not pass into Purgatory for his respite—he passes into Brendan's world, although the Crystal Pillar marked Brendan as passing from the physical ocean to an otherworldly realm. This places our world in the same liminal space as Purgatory within the cosmic hierarchy. However, as Le Goff observes, Purgatory was 'an intermediary world in which some of the dead were subjected to a trial that could be shortened by the prayers, by the spiritual aid, of the living'.¹³² If Judas had spent time in Purgatory, his damnation would not be eternal: even the prayers on All Souls' Day would have included him.

Brendan's limitations

Each of the preceding encounters in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* have shown Brendan to be a faithful servant of God, either through his piety or through his foreknowledge of what each encounter represents. However, by questioning Judas, Brendan shows that, as with the previous scene at the mouth of hell, he no longer has all the answers that he can share with the brethren. He is himself experiencing the mysteries of the ocean for the first time. Yet God has not put Brendan into a situation that he cannot manage, just as Daniel finds supernatural strength when speaking to Archangel Michael.¹³³ Thus, through his

¹³⁰ Turner, *Ritual Process*, p. 167.

¹³¹ Le Goff argues that the concept of Purgatory developed through the twelfth century and concludes 'I am convinced by my research and textual analyses that Purgatory did not exist before 1170 at the earliest,' Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, p. 135. For an analysis of Purgatory in Medieval English literature see Takami Matsuda, 'Death and the Afterlife in the Middle English Lyric: A Study in the Reception and Influence of the Idea of Purgatory,' DPhil, University of York, 1994.

¹³² Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, p. 4.

¹³³ Daniel 10:10–19.

faith in Christ, Brendan has the power to keep the devils at bay and, furthermore, Brendan's prayers protect Judas from any additional torture once he is back in hell. Although this is also the case in the A.N. *Voyage*, one of the devils springs forward and seizes Judas with a crook; Brendan has to command them twice to leave Judas until Monday. On the second occasion, Brendan invokes Christ's name and the devils have no choice but to comply. Thus the A.N. *Voyage* underscores that although Brendan has a solid faith, the *power* that he wields is Christ's authority to 'overcome all the power of the enemy'.¹³⁴

Defamiliarisation

The coincidence of Brendan passing this way at the *precise* time of Judas's comparative freedom underscores the fact that the crew do not control their destinies and that this moment was fated to happen. In the same way, a sense of the uncanny is generated within the audiences of both versions, as the encounter with Judas represents that which is familiar (Biblical legend) and yet something has been added (stories of Judas's good deeds) to defamiliarise a well-known legend. This meeting exemplifies Freud's observation that the uncanny is the 'class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' and 'which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression'.¹³⁵ Brendan no doubt believed that Judas betrayed Christ, but would not expect Judas to appear on a rock. Therefore Judas, already a familiar figure from the Bible, also becomes an alien identity. Brendan is apparently unaware that Judas performed good deeds in his lifetime, otherwise he would not have questioned Judas at such length.¹³⁶ Similarly, Brendan would be aware of the Biblical imagery of the afterlife and later commentaries by the Fathers of the Church, but would not expect to receive a first-hand account of hell. At the time of Judas's respite, the descriptions are filled with contradictions, creating feelings of uncertainty for each audience. In the A.N. *Voyage*, for example, Judas describes hell as 'but a short distance away', but adds that he is so far off from it that he does not hear it.¹³⁷ The description of the waves in the *Navigatio* is contradictory: they batter and torment

¹³⁴ Luke 10:19.

¹³⁵ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 340 and 363–64.

¹³⁶ The good deeds are described above p. 205.

¹³⁷ 'Pres est li lius/ As diables u est li fius;/ N'i ad guaires fors sul un poi:/ Tant en sui luign que ci nes oi,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1329–32.

Judas, but are also described as if congealed.¹³⁸ Thus, Judas's anguish ceases to be the physical torment of the elements and becomes solely mental as he reflects on his torture.

'Hesitation'

Unlike the earlier scenes in both versions of the narrative, each audience's 'hesitation'—a moment where each audience pauses to consider whether the events with which they have been presented are plausible or supernatural—is explicitly described within the text. Particularly in the A.N. *Voyage*, the cruelty of the descriptions of torture magnifies the extent to which one fears damnation. Even the most complacent of souls cannot fail to be moved by the brutal descriptions of Judas being forced to drink molten lead.¹³⁹ However, as described in the previous part of this chapter, the environment in which each version of the narrative is performed is intrinsic to how the text is received, through the audience's ability both to suspend their disbelief and to consider that the world to which they are being exposed is populated by 'real' characters and situations.¹⁴⁰ Todorov observes that in much fantastic literature, the violence is performed *through* language and in both versions Judas narrates his suffering, describing what happened in the past and what will happen in the future: Brendan does not witness it at first hand. Thus, for the audience, the descriptions of the tortures

derive from an unreal, or what might be termed as a virtual mode...it is not the acts which are violent, since, in fact there are no acts, but the words. The violence is performed not only *through* language (it can never be otherwise in literature), but also strictly *in* language. The act of cruelty consists in the articulation of certain sentences, not in a succession of effective acts.¹⁴¹

Therefore, the scene with Judas allows the courtly audience of the A.N. *Voyage* to view the violence of hell and damnation from a safe distance. It allows an important discursive space through which more sensitive issues can be discussed within courtly society.

¹³⁸ 'Quasi coagulate,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 25*, l. 10. The A.N. *Voyage* clarifies this: Brendan makes a sign of the cross to calm the seas and the wind in a manner of Christ calming the storms, ('Levet sa main, tuz les seignet... Cum apresmout, la mer ne mot,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1257 and 1259); cf. Matthew 8:23–27; Mark 4:37–41; Luke 8:22–25.

¹³⁹ 'E puis me funt tut cald beivre/ le plum remis od le queivre,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1415–16.

¹⁴⁰ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

The moral

Iconographically, Judas represents the worst of humanity. Not only did he betray Christ, but he also despaired of God's mercy, unlike Peter who denied Christ, but accepted him again after the Resurrection. Yet the two versions of the Brendan narrative present Judas as a sympathetic character, one who understands the nature of God's mercy. The moral is that it is the good deeds that one performs in one's lifetime that are important and, based upon these, one finds blessing, rather than condemnation based upon the sin.

The neutral angels and Judas Iscariot serve to demonstrate God's mercy: the war in heaven and the betrayal of Christ are two moments where divine authority is challenged. The separation of the angels and Judas from their point of origin is only temporary. Despite the fact that these characters potentially disturbed the divine plan, the fate of both is merciful: the neutral angels, although no longer allowed to remain in heaven, dwell in their Paradise until Judgement Day. Similarly, Judas Iscariot is allowed his weekly day of respite. In both versions, but more so in the A.N. *Voyage*, the nature of the sin is explained and then the divine judgement and mercy are spelled out. These two extremes of divine exile underscore the message that, as long as the sinner does not despair of God's capacity for forgiveness, then He will be merciful, no matter how great the crime committed. Both of them are away from their point of origin, yet both are pleased to be where they are, when considering the alternative. They are characters in transition: their exile is temporary and they will ultimately be reinstated to the place where they are supposed to be. Like Judas, who is assured of returning to hell, and the neutral angels, who are uncertain of their destiny, Paul the Hermit, whom Brendan encounters next after Judas, is also a character in transition, but one who is certain of his place in heaven.

Paul the Hermit

Brendan's encounter with Judas presents a reflection of the saint with relation to the darkest aspect of humanity and offers the audience of both versions a moment to consider *themselves* in relation to the characters presented to them. However, the final encounter before reaching

Paradise presents the opposite of Judas: Paul, a virtuous hermit.¹⁴² Whereas, in the Bible, Judas was the treasurer of the apostles and appears still, in both versions, to be obsessed with possessions, Paul the Hermit has given up all material things, ultimately including clothing and food, to come closer to God. Consequently, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* consider Paul angelic in relation to Brendan. Thus, Paul also acts as a ‘double’ against which Brendan compares himself. What would prove worrying for an audience is that Brendan berates himself in comparison to Paul’s piety and, as will be demonstrated at the end of this section, since there is no recognisable demonic ‘other’, the audience find themselves very low on a hierarchical scale of goodness.

Source

Brendan’s encounter with Paul the Hermit derives from the fourth-century *Vita Pauli*. What few details we know concerning the life of Paul, an ascetic generally regarded as the first Christian hermit, come from the writing of Jerome.¹⁴³ According to legend, Paul was born around 230 near Thebes in Egypt. He grew up in a wealthy Christian family, although his parents died when he was fifteen. Paul fled into the Theban desert to escape the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Decius (249–51). His brother also conspired against him in order to gain possession of his property. Paul lived as a desert hermit for the remainder of his 113-year life, living a life of prayer and penitence, and wearing only leaves or nothing at all. It is said that he survived by consuming only fruit and water, although legend also describes how a raven provided bread for his nourishment. This echoes the provision of food in the community of Ailbe, but also emphasises that there is a physical presence to bring the food on that occasion. Jerome describes how, when St Anthony was tempted to take pride in believing that he was the first to dwell in the desert, he was sent to fetch the cloak given to Paul by Bishop Athanasius. On the occasion of Paul’s visit, the raven brings a double portion of food. When Paul

¹⁴² This encounter has corresponding scenes in the *Immram curaig Máele Dúin* and the *Immram curaig Ua Corra*, see Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin (suite),’ pp 80–91; Stokes, ‘Húi Corra,’ pp. 60–63.

¹⁴³ The honour of being the first Christian hermit is, in modern times, often ascribed to St Anthony of Egypt.

dies, around 342, Anthony has no means to bury him, but two lions arrive in order to dig the grave.¹⁴⁴ Anthony buries him in Athanasius's cloak.¹⁴⁵ Thus, this scene represents the contrast between the active and the contemplative life and the virtues and values of each. Unlike the encounter with Judas, where Brendan has to question the ultimate sinner at length, Brendan tells the brethren about Paul and his way of life as they approach the island, showing that Brendan is ignorant only about the nature of evil, rather than the nature of salvation.

The author of the *Navigatio* chose a Desert Father to act as an incontestable authority which Brendan would have recognised. Paul's status as the first hermit, one who had humbled himself before God, would have made Brendan feel that his own vow of abstinence was insufficient in comparison. In fact, the life of hardship that Paul endures equates to the difficulties that Brendan experiences on his journey. Even though Paul lives a life of abstinence, God, in his mercy, provides food and water as required, as well as hair that acts as clothing. In the same way, God supplies provisions for Brendan on his voyage. Paul, in his piety, is an appropriate figure to mirror Judas Iscariot and presents Brendan with the most holy of saints and the most heinous of sinners.

Preparation for Paradise

In the *Navigatio*, the details of Paul's life vary from those given in the *Vita*. According to Paul, he lived in the service of the monastery of St Patrick for forty years. The *Navigatio*, placing significant emphasis on death in this encounter, describes that, when Paul is digging a grave for one of the brethren, the ghost of St Patrick appears and explains that he, Patrick, is to be buried in the place where Paul had planned to inter the brother. This is presumably so that no one would venerate the saint's grave. Patrick then commands Paul to live a solitary life and Paul drifts in a boat for seven days, until he arrives at the island that is to be his dwelling for the next eighty years, awaiting the day of his death.¹⁴⁶ This is displayed on many levels in the *Navigatio*. First, the cemetery where Paul works is the last place that the physical body goes,

¹⁴⁴ de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, p. 95.

¹⁴⁵ See *Lives of the Desert Fathers—The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, trans. Norman Russell (London and Oxford: Mowbray, 1981) and *The Desert Fathers*, trans. Helen Waddell (London: Constable, 1936), pp. 33–53.

¹⁴⁶ Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 26*.

while the soul travels to eternity.¹⁴⁷ Secondly, the seven days of Paul's travelling equate to the seven years of Brendan's pilgrimage. Thirdly, Paul's spiritual pilgrimage ends with his adopting the contemplative life so that he waits there for Judgement Day. Finally, this encounter takes place just before Easter—a celebration of Christ's Resurrection. This is also the last encounter for Brendan on his physical pilgrimage, before he reaches Paradise. In the same way that in the previous encounter Brendan had seen Judas on the threshold to hell, so in this encounter Paul is on the threshold to heaven. Indeed, Paul has achieved perfection: the A.N. *Voyage* describes his angelic countenance.¹⁴⁸

For each audience of the *Navigatio*, Paul represents monastic perfection: he follows the instructions of his abbot without question and trusts that God will direct his boat in the manner of the *deorad Dé*. The island, described as 'steep and bare', is a metaphor for the arduous monastic discipline and the vow of poverty. Furthermore, the difficulty the monks have in finding a place to land symbolises that the contemplative life should not be entered lightly, but after careful thought of what it entails. The monks circle the island for four days before finding a creek that barely admits the prow of their vessel, another symbolic representation of the difficulties of entering the contemplative life, of the fact that one must hear the calling but that not everyone can answer.

A second example of monastic perfection is that Paul has given up *all* his worldly goods: both versions describe him as naked and describes how hair covers his body.¹⁴⁹ In the *Navigatio*, Brendan berates *himself* for wearing a monk's habit, showing that he is still dependent on essential worldly effects, for example clothing and food, thus emphasising the vast distance in piety between the saintly Brendan and the angelic

¹⁴⁷ Conversely, although Paul awaits the Last Judgement, the A.N. *Voyage* omits the details of Paul tending the graveyard and the appearance of the ghost of St Patrick.

¹⁴⁸ 'Regard ayeit angeliel,/ E tut le cors celestiel,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1537–38.

¹⁴⁹ 'Nihil aliud indumenti erat sibi iunctum exceptis pilis qui egrediebantur de suo corpore,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 26, ll. 36–38; 'N'ad vestement fors de sun peil/ Dum est cuvert si cum de veil;' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1535–36. Hair covering the body is a common hagiographic feature; when St Agnes is stripped and led nude to a brothel God made her hair grow so long that it covered her better than any clothing, ('Tunc praefectus jussit cam expoliari et nudam ad lupanar duci. Tantam autem densitatem capillis ejus dominus contulit, ut mecius capillis quam vestibus tegeretur,') de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, p. 115. This idea might also have developed from the Paulicians, which was a source for the Bogomil heresy that the physical form was evil, see Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 15.

Paul.¹⁵⁰ Although Brendan sees this as a negative aspect, he has never *sought* food or clothing. Instead it has been provided through the various encounters which he has had during the course of his pilgrimage. Indeed, throughout the journey, the emphasis has been that God will provide.¹⁵¹

Finally, in order to sustain himself, Paul drinks from a small ‘cup-like’ spring of water. Initially, Paul trusted in God to provide his nourishment. Both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* describes how an otter walks on its hind legs carrying a fish.¹⁵² The *Navigatio* further comments that the otter arrives at the hour of nones, suggesting that, even on a deserted island, Paul follows monastic discipline.¹⁵³ However, by the time that Brendan encounters Paul, the Hermit no longer needs the sustenance of fish and, as observed above in relation to the communities of Ailbe, the Three Choirs and the Crystal Pillar, in the *Navigatio* the intake of food is a measure of piety.

As with the encounter with Judas Iscariot, in both versions Brendan’s meeting with Paul forces on him an introspective analysis of himself in comparison to the angelic Paul. Through this meeting, with its emphasis on death, Brendan himself becomes the liminal entity. He has been presented with two extremes of humanity, Judas and Paul, and sees himself reflected in these two mirrors. Indeed, he becomes like the neophyte (as described by Turner) who is given time to contemplate the future before undertaking the rite of passage. In the case of the *Navigatio*, this rite of passage is an opportunity for Brendan himself to see the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* and to see as many of God’s marvels as his human mind may comprehend. Having seen the final mysteries, Brendan, like the neophyte, will ‘return to society with more alert faculties perhaps and enhanced knowledge of how things work, but they have to become

¹⁵⁰ Like Paul, Judas is also naked when Brendan encounters him, see above pp. 206 and 210.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, pp. 139–42.

¹⁵² For a discussion of the otter see Burgess, ‘The Use of Animals’, pp. 23–24, 29.

¹⁵³ ‘Uns lutres,’ Waters *Voyage*, I. 1571; ‘Circa horam nonam luter portauit mihi prandium de mare,’ Selmer, *caput* 26, *Navigatio*, II. 70–71. Like the two Brendan narratives, Máel Dúin’s meeting with the hermit is the penultimate episode of the tale. The hermit explains that an otter brought him an uncooked salmon; as the hermit could not eat raw flesh, the hermit threw it back into the sea. Later, the otter brings the salmon and a second brings smouldering firewood so that the hermit could cook the fish, Stokes, *Máel Dúin*, pp. 88–89. Orlandi notes that there is an image of the otter bringing fish in the *Book of Kells*, see Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, p. 137.

once more subject to custom and law'.¹⁵⁴ Where Judas was the positive reflection showing Brendan his own sanctity, most particularly in Christ's power over the devils, Paul shows the negative reflection of Brendan. As Brendan contrasts himself to the angelic Paul, he realises that, however hard he strives to serve God, there will always be someone more humble than him. This second reflection shows Brendan with an unfulfilled wish and a desire for further progression.

When Brendan encountered Judas, the hierarchy of the characters that were mentioned within the scene showed that, as the brethren did not participate in the scene, there was no recognisable human element with which an implied audience could identify. In the encounter with Paul, the brethren once again play no part in the discussion, save when the hermit gives them the kiss of peace. However, the demonic elements are also not present in this encounter: only the representations of the divine, the angelic and the saintly remain.

Divine	Angelic	Saintly	Implied Audience
God	Paul the Hermit	Brendan	

Here, then, the implied audience is at the far end of the scale and no matter how pious one might be, there is room for progress. The audience must aspire to be like Brendan even to feature on this scale and this can be achieved only through self-sacrifice and faith and only with divine assistance. Therefore, Brendan's meeting with Judas teaches him all he needs to know about hell and proves that he has the power to protect himself from the devils, and Paul supplies the final point of information Brendan needs to reach Paradise. Judas has been an example of Christ's mercy for the ultimate sinner; conversely, Paul represents human perfection, particularly in the A.N. *Voyage* when he is suspended in time with an unchanging summer.¹⁵⁵ Paul represents the opposite monastic discipline to Brendan. Paul serves God in his own contemplative way, but he is alone rather than part of a community. Brendan's monks survive by hard work, whereas Paul's continued existence depends first on an otter bringing him food and then on the spring of life-sustaining water.

¹⁵⁴ Turner, *Ritual Process*, p. 106.

¹⁵⁵ 'Tuzdis estét,' Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1560; cf. Burgess, 'Savoir and faire,' pp. 270–71.

Although Brendan can be confident of achieving salvation, he still berates himself for not being as pious as Paul and for needing such things as food and clothing. However, Paul observes Brendan's blessings, telling him not to belittle his work for God as He has shown Brendan more than other saints.¹⁵⁶ Brendan and the brethren have achieved perfection through their purgatorial voyage: just as the supernumeraries in the *Navigatio* demonstrate the different kinds of fates that befall those who transgress, so the contrast between the devotions of Brendan and Paul shows the differences between the active and the contemplative lives. Both Brendan and Paul have had their piety rewarded by receiving what they need, however small those needs are. God has protected the brethren from adverse weather, monsters and starvation, even though the monks were occasionally pushed to the limits of their endurance. In the *Navigatio* the encounter with Paul represents the crown in a discussion concerning the obedience of following God's calling, in whatever way that He commands. It also underscores the ideal that 'the monk is fed and clothed by the labours of his own hands'.¹⁵⁷

Fantastic imagery

Each example of fantastic imagery in this scene has an explanation within the conventions of the Bible and hagiography. The creature that brings fish to Paul equates to the ravens that brought Elijah food in the desert, and one may consider Paul's unfeasibly long lifespan to be short in comparison to the ages of some of the Old Testament patriarchs. Furthermore, the audiences of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would recognise Paul's ability to greet the brethren by name, when offering the kiss of peace, as an intrinsic ability that saints have to recognise each other.¹⁵⁸ The absence of any marvellous references allows the audience of the *Navigatio* to reflect on the message of this scene with the same level of reverence as the night of contemplative vigil before some major undertaking. Paul is the messenger who explains that Brendan's journey is finally over. The meeting with Paul

¹⁵⁶ 'Quanta et qualia mirabilia ostendit Deus tibi que nulli sanctorum patrum mani-festauit,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 26, ll. 42–44.

¹⁵⁷ 'Monachus uero labore manuum suarum uititur et uestitur,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 26, ll. 45–46. The A.N. *Voyage* omits the discussion of the active and contemplative life, another example of Benedeit avoiding saturating his tale with religious details.

¹⁵⁸ Teresa Carp, 'Three Late-Coming Monks,' Carney, 'Navigatio (Review),' p. 128.

represents a moment whereby each audience should reflect upon their worthiness in relation to the mysteries of the ocean, although there is also an element of reverent fear, when one compares this scene with a corresponding encounter in the *Vita Brendani*. There, God had extended Paul's life just so that he could meet Brendan.¹⁵⁹ Brendan's encounter with Paul the Hermit is a peaceful scene, particularly in relation to the two horrific scenes of the demonic and damnation that preceded it. Thus, this scene is a reflection back to the tranquillity of the Crystal Pillar, which represented a moment of transition from the material world to that of the spiritual. This encounter represents a further transition away from the spiritual realm, which is subject to explanation from human sources, to one of which the descriptions and marvels transcend human understanding. This has been the focus of Brendan's pilgrimage. Having learned all the lessons of the marvels of the ocean, he is finally able to see the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*.

The A.N. *Voyage* omits any discussion of Paul's life in the monastery and the apparition that commanded him to become a hermit. In this version, Paul describes how, before he came to the life of isolation, he had lived in the world for fifty years and that, wishing to serve God, he had found a boat ready to travel.¹⁶⁰ Since he arrived on the island, he has been freed from pains and enjoyed eternal summer. He is confident that he will rise with the righteous because of the holy life that he has spent on the island.¹⁶¹

The significance of the two meetings

For Brendan, and each audience of the *Navigatio* or the A.N. *Voyage*, Judas and Paul represent the extremes of humanity: as has been demonstrated with the models in this chapter, Judas and Paul act as gauges against which each audience can measure themselves. To each audience these act as a device to shake them from their complacency concerning salvation and to show that they dwell on the wrong side

¹⁵⁹ The hermit plays a similar role in the *Innram curaig Máel Dúin*; he is the messenger who commands Máel Dúin to forgive his father's murderers and, as a result, Máel Dúin may return to Ireland, see Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite)', pp. 90–91.

¹⁶⁰ 'En nef entrai/ Tute preste cum la truvai;' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1555–56.

¹⁶¹ 'Le spirit del cors frat seivrement;/ Od les justes resuscitrai/ Pour la vie que segut ai,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1566–68.

of pious. As shall be demonstrated in the next part, even Brendan can achieve Paradise only with the help of God's representative on Earth. Thus, these two sections convey the message to the audiences that they too must seek divine assistance in order to prepare themselves for the final journey.

As with previous scenes in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* when the brethren arrive at the Crystal Column and the Smithy of Hell, Brendan's encounters with Judas Iscariot and Paul the Hermit are charged with opposites. The horror of Judas's torment and damnation (which echoes the violence of the Smithy of Hell) is contrasted with the tranquillity of Paul's anticipation of salvation. Similarly, Judas's need for God's mercy and a day of respite counterbalances Paul's wanting for nothing. Even though the two scenes are perfectly balanced to depict the extremes of humanity, they are also able to present Brendan in a central position to them both: Brendan wants for nothing, but only because of God's mercy.

Previous scenes in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* have gradually introduced elements of the fantastic in order for the narrative to remain plausible and believable. In these two scenes, elements that are beyond the comprehension of each audience are performed through dialogue: Brendan does not experience them first hand (in the same way, in the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan does not witness the flaming arrow himself). Although the otter and the provision of water are marvellous elements in the encounter with Paul, they are substantiated by Biblical *exempla* and are mild in comparison with previous encounters including the neutral angels, the conflict of monsters, the crystal canopy and the entrance to hell. Thus, both narratives allow the respective audiences to reflect upon the nature of sin and contrition. The lesson presented in both versions is clear: trust in God's mercy. By doing so, one may look forward to all the rewards that await the saints after their deaths. Some of these rewards are described when Brendan finally reaches the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*, which is the ultimate destination of his seven-year journey.

Part Three

Achieving Paradise

After Brendan and his monks have heard the account of Paradise and learnt the lesson of absolute faith from the example of Paul the Hermit, the authors of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* announce that the brethren are ready to see the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*. Paradoxically, unlike the scenes that have been discussed before, the image of Paradise in both versions is not meant to be depicted as fantastic imagery. Indeed, the descriptions of Paradise lack any reference to the marvellous, such as the imagery of the griffin seen in the first part of this chapter, or the demonic presences at the Smithy of Hell and Brendan's encounter with Judas discussed above. The descriptions of Paradise in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* draw their imagery from recognised authorities of a tranquil Otherworld that would have been popular in the Middle Ages.

Sources

The quest for Paradise is the most ancient motif of Christian and Jewish legend. Its ultimate origin is that, following the expulsion from the Garden of Eden—the word Paradise being derived from the Avestan *pairidaeza*, meaning ‘park’—Adam and Eve attempted to atone for their deceit in Eden and to return to the simplicity of Paradise, rather than the toil of life after the Fall.¹⁶² In later Christian texts, such as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Christ harrows hell to redeem the souls of those who died before the Crucifixion, whereas in classical legend heroes such as Odysseus travel to the Otherworld for information.¹⁶³ The search for Paradise represents the search for an impossible perfection. It is represented by Plato’s discussion of Atlantis in the *Critias*. In the Middle Ages it is embodied by the Holy Grail and also represented in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* by the areas of the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* that Brendan cannot reach.¹⁶⁴ For those who actually reach

¹⁶² Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, pp. 249–95.

¹⁶³ Later apocryphal writings, such as the *Apocalypse of Paul*, from which the author of the *Navigatio* draws some of his material, provide a forum in which to present a didactic message concerning the nature of sin and repentance.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Plato, ‘Critias,’ in *Complete Works*, pp. 1294–1306 and Brown, *Origins of the Grail Legend*, p. 286.

Paradise it represents many things. In the Arthurian cycle of mythology, where the Grail represents spiritual perfection, the earthly Paradise is a place of healing where Arthur (who, like Brendan, is guided by Barrindus) may rest before returning when the country needs him.¹⁶⁵ Thus, if Avalon represents healing in abundance, then it is likely that this corresponds with the image of the Otherworld as a place of lush vegetation and rebirth. This is another common motif, seen in classical literature through the Elysian Fields. Similarly, the Old English bestiaries and the poem of 'The Phoenix' describe heaven's portals opening. The 'delightful plateau' is an area, like the *Terra repromotionis sanctorum* in the versions of the Brendan narrative, where there are no adverse weather conditions, there is a lingering scent of sweet perfume, and the land is 'abloom with delights'.¹⁶⁶

Each mythological cycle has its representation of Paradise. In some examples of popular mythology there could be any number of earthly Paradises, although, as Carp observes, 'Christian theology recognised only one Heaven and one Eden'.¹⁶⁷ Authors who promulgated the descriptions of Paradise were consistent in the descriptions of the bounteous land, although there was some debate as to where the land existed. Celtic mythology suggested that there was a land to the west, or a mist barrier, both of which are seen in the two versions of the Brendan narrative.¹⁶⁸ The author of *De Ordine Creaturarum* declared that Paradise is at 'the top and the beginning of the world', which is consistent with the surviving early Christian maps.¹⁶⁹ Cartographers included Brendan's island as the eighth of the Canary Islands and there

¹⁶⁵ "For I muste into the vale of Avlyon to hele me of my grevous wounde" ... Many men say that there ys wrytten upon the tumbe thys: Hic iacet Arthurus, Rex quondam Rexque futurus,' Thomas Malory, *Complete Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 716–17; for the role of Barrindus, see Brown, 'Barintus,' pp. 339–44; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini*, pp. 84–85.

¹⁶⁶ 'The Phoenix,' *The Exeter Anthology*, vol. 1, pp. 166–90. For further discussion see, for example, J.B. Allen and Daniel G. Calder, *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer Ltd., 1970), pp. 113–20. Dicuil describes the legend of the Phoenix as being Arabian in origin, see Tierney, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁷ Carp, 'Three Late-Coming Monks,' p. 141, n. 34. Carp observes that 'some of these [earthly Paradises] were confused with Eden in spite of the objections of Augustine (*de Gen.* 8.1), Athanasius (*Quæst. Ad Antioch* q. 47) and other Church Fathers,' p. 142.

¹⁶⁸ The mist barrier is also found in Norse and classical literature, see Patch, *The Other World*, pp. 20–21 and 44–46. Other means of reaching the Otherworld in Celtic mythology include the idea of the land beneath the waves, or passing into the other realms by means of a megalithic tumulus, see Patch, *The Other World*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁹ 'In capitale et in principio orbis,' Smyth, 'The Physical World,' p. 229.

were reports from sailors who had seen the island, covered by mist.¹⁷⁰ However, not all commentators agreed with this inclusion of Brendan among cartographic and encyclopaedic history. Vincent of Beauvais declared that Brendan's view of Paradise should be excluded from his work as it contained 'apocryphal ravings'.¹⁷¹

Christian allegory and Celtic mythology

For Brendan, the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* represents the ultimate reward of faith and the understanding of God's marvels of the ocean. However, in both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, despite all the knowledge that the monks have gained during their seven-year purgatorial voyage, it is still not enough. In both versions the procurator has to guide them for the remainder of their journey.¹⁷² Thus, it is ironic that the brethren, having dispensed with the supernumeraries, can complete the final stage of the voyage only with the assistance of another 'late-comer'. The procurator finally leads the monks through the dense cloud that conceals Paradise. This, therefore, is one of the clearest examples of Christian allegory: Brendan and the monks have learned the lessons of obedience, abstinence, hard work and spiritual dedication. However, Paradise cannot be achieved by human qualities alone, but only with the guidance of the procurator, representing God's mercies in a terrestrial form, showing how God provides for the faithful.¹⁷³

As mentioned above, the barrier of mist is a common motif in Celtic mythology and passing through it is a means of reaching the Otherworld. This could suggest that the Otherworld borders the natural world and that the boundaries are fluid. Of course, the *Navigatio* also describes how Barrindus and Mernóc travel through the 'Gates of Paradise' and that they reach the Delightful Island (*insulam deliciosam*)

¹⁷⁰ Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, pp. 48–49.

¹⁷¹ 'Apocrypha quaedam deliramenta,' Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale* (Graz: Akademischer Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1965), book xxi, chapter 81, p. 843.

¹⁷² 'Sine me non poteritis inuenire terram reprobationis sanctorum,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 27*, l. 24; 'Le bon conduit/ Del bon hoste,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1632–33. There is a corresponding scene in *Máel Dúin* where Máel Dúin, approaching the island of the blessed, sees a rotating wall of fire which renders the island impervious without divine assistance, see Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite)', pp. 80–81.

¹⁷³ Symbolically, then, the story of the coracle being driven towards the volcanic island, despite Brendan's best intentions to avoid that realm, suggests how easy it is to fall into a life of sin and to face the punishments of hell for eternity.

where Mernóc dwells in a comparatively short time.¹⁷⁴ Once again, this underscores the suggestion that physical blindness is linked to a spiritual disorientation, as described particularly in relation to the Deserted Citadel where Brendan can see without a candle.¹⁷⁵ In relation to the mist barrier, however, the A.N. *Voyage* is more explicit, declaring that the ‘great fog blinds one so much, that whoever enters it loses his sight completely and he has no sight of God’.¹⁷⁶ However, given that the emphasis of the A.N. *Voyage* is on the fact that Brendan and his monks have achieved spiritual enlightenment and find no fear in any of their encounters, the cloud barrier symbolically divides ‘to the width of a street’ and they no longer need to navigate their way in blindness.¹⁷⁷

Liminality

The mist barrier in the *Navigatio* represents a liminal condition: it is neither air nor water, yet composed of both. It is not solid, but it prevents the monks from passing and conceals the Otherworld from a chance encounter: the means of passing through the barrier is only to be understood through a special grace granted to saints.¹⁷⁸ The mist could be a convenient method of concealing the *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* from Brendan on his journey until this moment, rather than a pagan motif. However, there are a number of elements, particularly in the *Navigatio*, that suggest that the *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* is made up from a mosaic of further Celtic elements. Foremost is the detail that time is suspended in the Otherworld: the mist barrier represents the moment of passing into that realm. The *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* is a place where time cannot be measured by human senses. The *Navigatio* describes how the journey through the mist barrier is *like* that of an hour, although one cannot accurately gauge the time.¹⁷⁹ Barrindus believed that he was there for only forty days, only to be told that he had

¹⁷⁴ ‘Portam paradisi,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 1, l. 72.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Cum cil freres par nuit errout;/ Pur tenebres ne remaneit:/ Sanz candele tut le veteheit,/ Quar quant ço Deus li volt muster,/ Sur ço ne stout cirge alumer,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 322–26.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Li granz calins tant aorbet,/ Qui i entret, tuz asorbet,/ Si de Deu n’at la veüe,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1655–57.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Cum aprisment, part la nue/ Al espace d’une rue,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1661–62.

¹⁷⁸ O’Loughlin, ‘Distant Islands,’ p. 13.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Uero unius hore,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput* 28, l. 10.

existed a year without food or sustenance.¹⁸⁰ In addition, when Brendan is there, there is no alternation between day and night against which to measure time.¹⁸¹ As the trees are described as bearing ripe fruit ‘as in Autumn’ then presumably there is also no distinction between the seasons.¹⁸² Both versions of the Brendan narrative describe how there are no adverse weather conditions in Paradise, for example wind, rain and snow. On a practical level, this runs contrary to the climate needed to produce such laden trees, but it is also the opposite of the climate of Ireland.¹⁸³ The abundance of fruit acts as a counterbalance to the discipline of monastic abstinence as well as the famines of the Middle Ages.¹⁸⁴ The descriptions are only curtailed when the monks reach an impassable river. This representation of passing to the Otherworld, is also seen in later medieval works, for example *Pearl*, where the dreamer is prevented from reaching his daughter.¹⁸⁵ However, Brendan is unperturbed that he cannot go any further, simply stating that ‘we must remain ignorant of the size of this country’.¹⁸⁶ The discovery of Paradise in the two versions of the Brendan narrative represents the quest for the boundaries of human knowledge. Even having achieved the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum*, Brendan must still shed his ‘sinful’

¹⁸⁰ ‘Unum annum enim es in hac insula et non gustasti de cibo aut de potu,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput 1*, ll. 57–58. In the *Immram Brain maic Febuil*, time is also abstract: the narrator explains that, when they reach the Island of Women, ‘It seemed a year to them that they were there, but it chanced to be many years’. Similarly when Bran arrives at Scrub Brain, he is told ‘the Voyage of Bran is in our ancient stories,’ §§62 and 64.

¹⁸¹ Scholars who discuss Brendan’s voyage as an actual rather than allegorical voyage suggest that he landed in Newfoundland; however, this would not account for it never being night: even in the Arctic Circle in midsummer, the ‘midnight sun’, while always visible will ‘set’ in the sky, but does not dip lower than the horizon. Even so, the land darkens to twilight accordingly, see, for example, Severin, *The Brendan Voyage*, Little, *Brendan the Navigator*, and Ashe, *Land to the West*.

¹⁸² ‘Sicut in tempore autumnali,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput 28*, l. 13; omitted from the A.N. *Voyage*.

¹⁸³ Geraldus Cambrensis describes Ireland as a ‘country more than any other [that] suffers from storms of wind and rain’ and the winds ‘more frequent and violent than any other,’ Gerald of Wales, *History and Topography of Ireland*, pp. 34–35.

¹⁸⁴ Pleij, however, notes that although ‘many had to make do with little more than bread, there were nevertheless only three periods of famine’ between 1000 and 1300, Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, p. 103.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Bot þe water wat₃ depe, I dorst not wade,’ E.V. Gordon, ed., *Pearl* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), l. 143. Similarly, Dante drinks from the waters of the Eunoë as the final ritual of his spiritual cleansing in *Purgatorio*, see Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia: Purgatorio*, eds U. Bosco and G. Reggio (Florence: Le Monnier, 1979), canto XXXIII, ll. 142–45.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Ignoramus magnitudinem terre illius,’ Selmer, *Navigatio*, *caput 28*, ll. 19–20.

physical body before being allowed to witness the many more marvels that lie beyond the river. Thus, in the *Navigatio*, just as Brendan did not witness hell for himself, but simply stopped at the shore, so he cannot see the full extent of Paradise.¹⁸⁷ His understanding is limited by his physical mind.¹⁸⁸ However, despite the restrictions of Brendan's human understanding, the river also represents an assurance that Paradise awaits Brendan after death. The accounts of his experiences will lead others to the saintly life.¹⁸⁹

The treatment of the fantastic

From a stylistic point of view, the description of Paradise in the *Navigatio* is weak and brings the narrative to an anticlimactic end. No doubt the descriptions of the laden trees and precious stones would have captured the imagination of a secular audience. At the same time, the sense of proximity to God would enrich the faith of the monastic community. However, the audiences of the *Navigatio* have already seen this imagery in the narrative of Barrindus. Similarly, the abbot told Brendan that he and Mernóc were unable to cross the river that divides Paradise. Thus, as Waters observes, the author of the *Navigatio* had 'foolishly exhausted his ideas on this subject at the beginning of his work'.¹⁹⁰ The preceding chapters have shown how the narrative of the *Navigatio* follows Todorov's model of the fantastic, with a gradual introduction of uncanny and marvellous elements, until it culminates in scenes of the pure marvellous. The description of Paradise has a paradoxical effect on each audience. On the one hand, it supposedly represents the limits of human understanding: Brendan cannot progress any further, for the mysteries of the other side of the river may only be revealed to, and understood by, him once he has shed his physical form. On the other hand, the author of the *Navigatio* no doubt realised that a narrative that tried to engage with imagery that was beyond the spectrum of his audience's understanding would destabilise this credibility and

¹⁸⁷ The man of God being unable to cross the river is a common theme: in Deuteronomy, Moses is unable to cross the river Jordan, whereas in the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Paul*, the river runs before the gates of heaven, see Deuteronomy 34:4; James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, p. 536.

¹⁸⁸ 'Ne vus leist pas aler avant,/ Quar poi estes a ço savant,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1793–94; Burgess, 'Savoir and faire,' p. 272.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁹⁰ Waters, *Voyage*, pp. xcvi–xcviii.

undermine the didactic lessons that had been conveyed to the audience during the course of the narrative. Instead, by having Barrindus, a saintly figure, present the imagery of Paradise at the start of the narrative, what should have been the final push across the boundary into the realm of the implausible is simply a return to that which is already familiar.

Unlike the author of the *Navigatio*, Benedeit avoids revealing too much about the *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* early in the narrative. The procurator acts as an escort towards the Promised Land. The narrative makes clear that it is only ‘with the permission of the Divine King’ that they are able to approach Paradise.¹⁹¹ The A.N. *Voyage* also describes that this was the land where Adam was master, but to which he cannot return. Yet the descriptions are like the ‘land of milk and honey’ described in Exodus.¹⁹² O’Loughlin observes that Paradise is ‘the promised land of the scriptures, not the earthly land of the Old Testament but the eschatological destiny of which, for Christians, it was an antetype’.¹⁹³ Most particularly, for the A.N. *Voyage*, this is a reworking of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. The first feature of Paradise that the monks see is a wall, built up to the clouds, a reflection of Revelation 21:12–20. The architectural perfection suggests that the citadel has been divinely made, as the narrator describes many precious stones and describes that ‘everything was in one piece, without incisions, there was no labour making it’.¹⁹⁴ In the opening scenes of the A.N. *Voyage*, Barrindus gave only the vaguest of details. Thus the descriptions of Paradise come as a surprise to the audience. For example, the vivid colours of the flowers suggest that such beauty is accessible only to the pious. Furthermore, the author of the A.N. *Voyage* is unafraid to engage the fantastic imagery and describes the *Terra reprobmissionis sanctorum* with the beauty of his fertile imagination. The kiss of peace from the youth that greets the brethren calms the burning dragons that guard the gates of Paradise and makes them lie on the ground. It also causes the flaming swords to stop whirling, like Christ calming the seas.¹⁹⁵ Burgess observes that,

¹⁹¹ ‘Par l’otred del rei divin,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1649.

¹⁹² ‘Li flum i sunt qui curent lait./ Cele plentét par tut en vait./ La ruseie suet le mel,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1755–57; cf. Exodus 3:8.

¹⁹³ O’Loughlin, ‘Distant Islands,’ pp. 9–10.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Tuz ert entrins, sanz antaile-/ Unc al faire n’out travaile,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1683–84.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Puis dulcement les ad baisez,/ E les draguns tuz apaisez,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1727–28.

throughout the A.N. *Voyage*, each of the four elements is used in ways that are both helpful and detrimental to the travellers. The positive imagery of fire is present in other episodes as the ‘harmless and positive capacity to generate light’, as well as the refining fire, such as the fires that light the lamps in the community at Ailbe.¹⁹⁶ However, the lack of fire in Paradise in the A.N. *Voyage* soon becomes clear: here there is nothing to obscure the sky and so the monks are receiving the permanent warmth of God. In this regard, then, the sun and light are representatives of the forms of fire, and thus fire in this episode is entirely positive. In other encounters, there are clouds to block out the light. On some occasions these are more distinct, for example the branches that obscure the skies in the Paradise of Birds, or the thick billowing smoke clouds at the volcano.¹⁹⁷ In the same way that the darkness of the Deserted Citadel and the fog surrounding the *Terra repromotionis sanctorum* represent spiritual disorientation, the absence of any visual impairment shows that the monks are finally able to focus solely on God.

After an indiscernible passing of time, during which the monks see many things, but the duration ‘seemed very short’, they finally see Paradise itself in the distance. Benedeit situates his Paradise atop a mountain, which Jones suggests is ‘predictable’, as it shows that in the A.N. *Voyage* ‘assistance for the travellers always comes from above’.¹⁹⁸ In addition to the detailed descriptions of the bounteous land, there are also ‘wonderful sights for which there is no explanation’, as well as the fact that the visions of Paradise and the angels’ divine singing is beyond the monks’ human comprehension.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, it is not a physical barrier, which prevents Brendan from reaching Paradise, but the youth who guides them explains that Brendan possesses ‘too little knowledge for this’.²⁰⁰ Brendan cannot reach Paradise, in the same way that God shows Moses the Promised Land, but does not let him go

¹⁹⁶ Burgess, ‘Repetition and Ambivalence,’ p. 67. Burgess observes that fire is not mentioned in the scene with Paul the Hermit, ‘but we are presented here with an image of Paul cooking the fish brought to him by the otter on a fire made from the sea-weed carried around the animal’s neck,’ p. 67.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

¹⁹⁸ Robin F. Jones, ‘The Mechanics of Meaning in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of Saint Brendan*,’ *Romantic Review* 71 (1980), 105–13, p. 111.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Lur nature ne poet prendre/ Si grant glorie, ne entendre,’ Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1789–90.

²⁰⁰ ‘Quar poi estes a ço savant,’ Waters, *Voyage*, l. 1794.

there: 'I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it'.²⁰¹ Thus, with the prediction that Brendan will soon return here in spirit, the youth tells them to return home, taking precious stones 'as tokens of their comfort'. The tokens that they take away from the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* are proof of the Otherworld: those that have not seen Paradise must still rely on faith.

Given that the nature of the *Navigatio* is more ecclesiastical than that of the A.N. *Voyage*, it is curious that the imagery of the former appears to be based on the Celtic Otherworld, whereas in the A.N. *Voyage* it is based on the New Jerusalem of Revelation. This could be because Barrindus, who originally describes Paradise in the *Navigatio*, could be an echo of a Celtic deity.²⁰² Conversely, Benedeit may have used the imagery from Revelation and the whirling sword from Genesis (3:24) to provide authority to his narrative, although the descriptions of the woods full of deer, gold and treasure houses would no doubt further appeal to the Anglo-Norman courtly audience.²⁰³

Although the portrayals of Paradise in both versions describe the ideal for each audience and appeal to their base desires (favourable weather conditions and an abundance of food) the depictions are dependent upon details in the Bible or classical works. The descriptions are clearly marvellous to the modern reader, but they are based upon sources with which the respective audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would have been familiar. However, the author, in order to keep some of the divine mysteries intact, hides the final *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* from Brendan and, consequently, each audience. As Paradise is described in terms with which each audience is already familiar (and the author of the *Navigatio* has further ensured this by using the imagery in Barrindus's narrative) there is no danger of an 'overload' of fantastic imagery, which would serve to break the moment of hesitation that sustains the belief in the fantastic. The beautiful descriptions of Paradise would stir the imagination of each audience. Yet it is the lack of description and the promise of what lies beyond the river, or in the Paradise on the mountain, which suggests that the rewards for the righteous, when

²⁰¹ 'Haec est terra pro qua iuravi Abraham Isaac et Iacob dicens semini tuo dabo eam vidisti eam oculis tuis et non transibis ad illam,' Deuteronomy 34:4.

²⁰² Brown, 'Barintus,' p. 341; cf. Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 1*, ll. 15–60.

²⁰³ 'Bois repleniz de veneisun... cil est tut d'or;/ si grant pere, i at tensor,' Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1753 and 1759–60.

they finally achieve Paradise, will be much greater.²⁰⁴ Once again, the power of the fantastic remains not within the narrative, but within the willingness of the respective audiences to play their parts.²⁰⁵

The return home

After Brendan has witnessed the mysteries of the ocean and seen as much of Paradise as the human mind can understand, both versions describe how Brendan and his brethren return home to Ireland. This return to Ireland brings a closure to the narrative. The inclusion of the return journey ensures that the voyage is not considered as a quest—simply seeking Paradise—but a pilgrimage, whereby Brendan can return home and bear witness to the marvels that he has seen on his journey.²⁰⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the presentation of extremes in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*. These extremes of nature and humanity show a progression from the physical world to the realms of the diabolical and then, later, the divine. Furthermore, the two human encounters act as a gauge against which each individual can measure themselves. Thus, although the maxims that the monks must have unwavering faith in God and be obedient to their abbot are spelled out in each of the encounters, the final message is that all individuals must measure their own piety in relation to the characters with which they are presented. They will ultimately find themselves wanting and will need to aspire to be like Brendan if they wish to achieve Paradise themselves. However, even if they do not achieve this impossible task in their lifetimes, the encounter with Judas shows that there is still a possibility of a respite from hell. God's love is infinite and has the capacity to find mercy for even the most heinous of sinners. During a time where war, plague

²⁰⁴ 'Ita omni tempore permanent sine ulla umbra noctis,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput* 28, ll. 33–34; Waters, *Voyage*, ll. 1759–72 and 1797–78.

²⁰⁵ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 33–34.

²⁰⁶ See also the discussion on whether the final chapter was an interpolation on p. 62.

and the threat of damnation affected all levels of medieval society, the two versions of the *Voyage of St Brendan* carried forth a verbal beacon of hope for all that heard it. By engaging the fantastic and capturing the imagination, the homiletic message might remain with the audience for longer. Indeed, by using the fantastic in this way, the narrator gains the audience's trust before gradually, almost unnoticeably, introducing elements of the fantastic and dissolving the boundaries of what is considered normal. If the audience observed that the narrative wavered from the literal in a single detail, they would become suspicious of every moment in the tale and the didactic message would lose its effect. Yet, as we have observed, the fantastic is essentially a literary genre that allows us to approach a text in a new way. It is a testament to both their longevity and popularity that, at the same time, the narratives utilise elements of this genre, embrace the fantastic and allow the medieval audiences to reach out to an Otherworld they had never previously considered. It is even more remarkable that these audiences actually retain the didactic message and that the narratives make sense to both the Christian audiences for which they were intended and to the student of the fantastic.

CONCLUSION

Principal differences between the Navigatio and the Anglo-Norman Voyage

This study is a comparative structuralist analysis of two versions of the Brendan narrative, the Latin *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan*. The principal difference between these two versions is that of genre: the *Navigatio* is closer to hagiography and therefore is concerned with more spiritual events. The audience of this version was likely to be in three distinctive groups: the first would have been the brethren in a monastery dedicated to Brendan; the second would have been the groups of pilgrims in whom the monastery was attempting to foster an interest in the cult of Brendan; finally, the narrative would have been for the spiritual edification of the wider monastic community. Ultimately, the *Navigatio*, with its ecclesiastical passages (for example, the lists of psalms on the Paradise of Birds), is composed more as a devotional text with the intention of enhancing the faith of the audience. Conversely, the A.N. *Voyage* is written as a secular hagiography, containing romance elements aimed mainly at a secular, courtly audience. This version of the narrative has excised much of the excessive ecclesiastical elements that would have otherwise slowed the pace of the narrative. In addition, it would appeal to an English secular audience because it is written in Anglo-Norman in octosyllabic couplets, using local vocabulary. Similarly, although the *Navigatio* begins by describing Brendan's Irish heritage and the Irish topography, these details would have been of little interest to the Anglo-Norman courtly audience, who instead are told simply that Brendan is Irish and of royal descent.

Many of the encounters are similar in the two versions of the narrative, although Benedeit, the author of the A.N. *Voyage*, omitted elements that contained Irish sources that he did not understand. For example, he was not familiar with the inter-borrowing between the *Navigatio* and the *imrama*. This is particularly shown by the omission of the Island of the Three Choirs in the A.N. *Voyage*. Its presence in the *Navigatio* shows the highest blessing being bestowed on one of the supernumerary monks before the brethren learn the final mysteries of God. This scene also acts as an interruption of the fantastic imagery presented

in the *Navigatio*. Its omission means that in the A.N. *Voyage* the fantastic encounters are unbroken until Brendan's return to Ireland.

The treatment of the supernumeraries is different both in relation to where they leave and in the different perceptions of the states of the soul they represent.¹ In the *Navigatio* the three supernumerary monks represent the three possible states of the soul after death: salvation through repentance; salvation through piety; and damnation. Conversely, in the A.N. *Voyage*, the states of the soul are: salvation through repentance; damnation; and the uncertainty of the fate of the soul.

The encounter with Judas is one of the principal differences between the two versions. The *Navigatio* only glosses over the details of Judas's torture. In the A.N. *Voyage* the passage is much expanded and describes Judas's tortures in graphic details as he is dragged between two hells. The nature of sin is explained and divine judgement is spelled out. The scene is not canonical; indeed it is one of the major heresies that appears in both versions.² Both versions of the narrative describe how Judas performed good deeds in his lifetime and as a consequence, he received a day of respite from hell and the items associated with these deeds provide a measure of comfort and discomfort to him during this time. Judas is genuinely repentant during this encounter and the emphasis is on Christ's mercy.

Brendan's final destination, in both versions of the narrative, is Paradise. The portrayals of Paradise present ideals that would be recognisable by each audience of the two versions. In the *Navigatio* the descriptions are similar to those of the Celtic Otherworld, whereas, in the A.N. *Voyage*, they are more akin to the Biblical descriptions of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. Aside from the details present in this scene, another major difference is that Benedeit shows his considerable skill as an editor by saving the vivid descriptions of Paradise until

¹ In the *Navigatio* the Island of the Three Choirs is also one of the places where a supernumerary monk leaves the crew. Previously, one supernumerary died but achieved Paradise as he had repented for stealing a goblet; in a later scene, demons drag a supernumerary into hell. The A.N. *Voyage* excludes this scene, therefore, Benedeit had to compose an alternative encounter to deal with the fate of one of the monks. The scene that Benedeit includes follows immediately after Brendan's meeting with Judas. On this occasion, the supernumerary monk vanishes and no one knows where he has gone. See my discussion on pp. 86–94, 101–02, 166–71, 192–93.

² The other major heresy is on the Paradise of Birds, where Brendan is told that the birds represent the 'neutral angels', those angels that sided neither with God nor Lucifer in the war in heaven and were sent down to Earth in the form of birds to await Judgement Day. See my discussion on pp. 116–24.

the end, whereas the author of the *Navigatio* had already spoiled the description by introducing the details at the beginning. Despite the different motifs that each author uses to describe Paradise, ultimately in neither version can Brendan progress beyond a certain point: he is unable to cross the river in the *Navigatio*, whereas a guide prevents him from approaching the mountain that contains the divine mysteries in the A.N. *Voyage*. Thus, despite the differences in the descriptions of the two versions, the message is the same: Brendan cannot progress further than the limits of his human understanding.

The role of Brendan is essentially different in the two versions of the narrative compared here. The *Navigatio* records the fact that he follows the monastic life on his journey, for example saying grace and celebrating the Eucharist. He continues his vegetarian diet and encourages abstinence. Furthermore, he is humble, particularly when he meets Paul the Hermit. These are character traits that one would expect in a more traditional *vita*. However, Brendan has some saintly characteristics: he has foreknowledge of some events that will occur, for example, identification of where and when they will find a landing place and the fact that a theft will occur in the Deserted Citadel. He is also present so that the miracle of the flaming arrow is revealed to him. In the *Navigatio*, Brendan is an abbot and a teacher who is fearless in the face of danger because of his absolute faith. It is this attitude that enables him to lead the monks to Paradise.

By contrast, although Brendan is a teacher to his brethren in the A.N. *Voyage*, he also learns with the monks. His voyage is to seek to understand the rewards and punishments after death and he undertakes his journey only after prayer and an angel has sanctioned it. In this version, Brendan is an expert sailor who teaches the monks the physical hardships of the ocean as well as dealing with the practicalities of repairing the vessel. Yet, despite pushing the brethren to their physical limits, Brendan is concerned with their physical as well as spiritual welfare. Unlike the *Navigatio*, Brendan does not predict the theft in the Deserted Citadel, but he is miraculously able to see in the dark. Nor does he witness the flaming arrow for himself, but relies on faith to understand the mysteries of the Island of Ailbe. However, Brendan learns the mysteries of the Otherworld along with the brethren and can only navigate through the curtain of fog that surrounds Paradise with the assistance of the procurator.

In summary, then, the *Navigatio* presents Brendan as a pious monk who guides the brethren to Paradise with his absolute faith and strict

adherence to the monastic hours and Christian festivals. In the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan is a mentor to the monks. Yet, although he is their teacher for the majority of the journey, he must also learn the final lessons of the marvels of the ocean with divine assistance.

The purpose of the voyage itself is presented in slightly different ways in these two versions. In the *Navigatio*, Brendan, inspired by Barrindus, undertakes to see the kind of piety that Barrindus has achieved on his journey to the *Insula deliciosa* and the *Terra repromissionis sanctorum*. The journey therefore is inspired to glorify God. By contrast, in the A.N. *Voyage*, Brendan wishes to see God's mysteries on the ocean: he particularly wishes to see hell and Paradise. The A.N. *Voyage* is a journey to search for both the diabolical and the divine. However, Brendan is not allowed to witness the full marvels of the ocean in either version. This demonstrates an awareness on the part of the authors of both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* of the concept of learning and the limitations of the human mind. However, the main difference of the two versions is that of genre. This is most clearly understood with reference to the fantastic, as advanced by Todorov, with some modifications to his model.

Todorov and the fantastic

This study has, where appropriate, used Todorov's analysis of the fantastic as the principal framework for my study of elements of the fantastic in two versions of the Brendan narrative. Despite the fact that Todorov's study focuses on the nineteenth century Gothic novel, the application of his model works on the two versions of the Brendan narrative, subject to two modifications.

Both narratives begin with details that the audience would have found familiar. Thus, each audience can ground themselves within each text on the basis of elements that are known to them, so that they perceive the opening of the narratives as plausible. I have put this part of the narrative in a category which I have called '**the mundane**'. (This category represents the first modification that made to Todorov's model.) Some personal anxieties may introduce discomfort to some audiences when, for example, they consider how they would feel if they were travelling for months in an overcrowded coracle with an absence of familiar stimuli. This discomfort is part of what Todorov describes as '**the uncanny**'. Both narratives then pass through scenes where

the events initially appear supernatural, but which receive a plausible explanation, such as the reason why the sheep are so large or the reason why the ‘island’ is able to move. These events are what Todorov refers to as the **‘fantastic-uncanny’**.

Both versions can be discussed in relation to Todorov’s model (as revised) up to this point; however, in the section that discusses the monastic community on the Isle of Ailbe, there is only one moment of what Todorov describes as the **‘pure fantastic’** in the *Navigatio*—the discussion concerning the flaming arrow that ignites the lamps in the church—while there are two in the A.N. *Voyage*. This is the moment when the audience is left uncertain as to whether the events with which they have been presented are supernatural or plausible.³ The A.N. *Voyage* differs from the *Navigatio* at this moment as, in the latter, Brendan sees the flaming arrow for himself and the abbot discusses the marvel as commonplace. Todorov categorises such events where the supernatural is presented as normal as the **‘fantastic-marvellous’**. Other events in both versions that fall into this category include the incident at the Intoxicating Spring—where an apparently natural phenomenon appears to have supernatural powers to render incapacitated any that imbibe it—and the Coagulated Sea that is impossible to navigate.

The monks’ next encounters—the conflicts of monsters—correspond to Todorov’s category of the **‘pure marvellous’**. Here, as Todorov suggests, the fantastic imagery does not provoke any surprise in each audience, nor does it have any distinctive frontiers. A modern secular audience that does not recognise the existence of heaven or hell might also consider that the last sections of the narrative—concerning the descriptions of natural exotica as supernatural forms, the meetings with Judas Iscariot and Paul the Hermit and the descriptions of Paradise—fall into the pure marvellous category. However, audiences of the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* would have had a fervent belief in Christian doctrine. Thus it is inappropriate to categorise these scenes as pure marvellous. Therefore, I modified Todorov’s model to include a further category of **‘beyond comprehension’**. These scenes are those that

³ In both versions, the abbot’s refusal to provide an acceptable explanation for the mysterious provision of food provides the ‘hesitation’ that Todorov suggests is necessary for the moment of the ‘pure fantastic’. The A.N. *Voyage* sustains this moment of hesitation further by having the abbot of Ailbe describe to Brendan the flaming arrow that ignites the lanterns. Thus the narrative remains within the category of the pure fantastic as each individual within the audiences must decide for themselves whether or not the event is true. See my discussion on pp. 142–45.

lie beyond the experience of human understanding: the mysteries of the divine and the diabolical that Brendan must learn about in order to reach Paradise. There are elements within both versions that cannot be described, as the human mind possesses too little knowledge to understand what lies beyond a certain point. In the *Navigatio*, this point is when the monks cannot see what lies beyond the river; in the A.N. *Voyage*, Benedeit's Paradise is situated on top of a mountain and the guide through Paradise advises Brendan that he cannot travel there.

The modifications made to Todorov's model have allowed a more effective comparison of these two versions of the Brendan narrative as examples of the fantastic. Using Todorov as an interpretive tool for this kind of text has assisted in understanding the structure of the two versions. The category of 'the mundane' means that the author of each version does not immediately launch into a series of unsettling or unbelievable events that would have alienated his audience from the beginning. Thus, there is a gradual progression through each of the categories of Todorov's model so that each audience does not become overwhelmed by supernatural imagery. This steady introduction of fantastic and marvellous elements means that the narrative remains plausible until the moment of 'hesitation'. The marvellous elements are more credible when they are tempered by earlier plausible scenes. The category of 'beyond comprehension' means that the authors do not have to create spiritual descriptions for elements that should be beyond the understanding of their audiences and thus it allows the divine mysteries to remain unknown. I suggest that Todorov could profitably have made these additions to his model when discussing the nineteenth century Gothic novel, to show the full gradation from the beginning of the novel, which may well be laden with historical or topographical facts or descriptions, towards the narration of uncanny events. The additional category of 'beyond comprehension' would have provided an adequate tool for categorising supernatural events where the *dénouement* is not spelled out, but left to the reader's imagination.

This study has demonstrated that Todorov's model with some modifications can be applied successfully to these two versions of the Brendan narrative. The model might also have been applied to other vernacular versions of the legend of Brendan, in particular, the Middle English Metrical Version, though less successfully. For example, one principal difference concerns the pivotal moment of the pure fantastic in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* (the mysterious provision of food on the Isle of Ailbe): this incident is dismissed in the Middle English

version when it is explained that 'a strong man hit bringep', thus providing a plausible answer for the provision of food. Furthermore, the abridgement of the encounter in the deserted citadel and the omission of the Island of the Three Choirs means that the fate of one of the supernumeraries is left unrecorded.

In contrast to the other versions to which Todorov's model might be applied, the Middle Dutch version of the legend, *De Reis van Sint Brandaan*, provides an unbroken stream of marvellous imagery and the author makes no attempt to ground the narrative within a plausible environment at the start of the narrative.⁴ A study of the fantastic in this version would therefore have to be limited to a comparison of particular scenes that are common to both the *Navigatio* and the *Reis*, for example: Jasconius, Judas and the neutral angels. There are other scenes that appear to be derived from the *Navigatio*, for example the conflicts of monsters, the coagulated sea, the community of Ailbe and the motif of the supernumeraries, but these encounters receive a radically different treatment in the *Reis*. There are also many other scenes in the *Reis* that have no counterpart in the *Navigatio*, for example finding the skull of a heathen giant, the magnetic mountain and the fact that Brendan must record these encounters in order to replace a book that he burned. The theme of the *Reis* is different as well. Brendan is not the pious saint who is depicted in the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*; instead he disbelieves the descriptions of the marvels of the ocean about which he reads in a book and, as a punishment for burning this book, he must witness these marvels for himself.

The successful application of Todorov's model (with modifications) has led me to consider other texts that may or may not be consistent with to this kind of structural analysis. Questions that arise when considering such an analysis include: for what medium is the text being composed; to what extent does the author attempt to maintain credibility throughout the text; whether the fantastic imagery is introduced gradually; for what kind of audience is the narrative aimed and what is the author attempting to achieve through this text (hagiography, a moralistic and didactic message, or purely entertainment)? If fantastic imagery has been included, how does this relate to other texts bound within the same manuscripts as the Brendan narratives? Texts in relation

⁴ The Middle German version also would not conform to Todorov's model. These two versions are an independent re-working from the *Navigatio*.

to which these questions could usefully be examined include some of the *vita* that are contemporary with the A.N. *Voyage*, for example the respective lives of Saints Catherine, Alexis and Leger.

More space could have been devoted to comparing the details of Brendan's life in the *Navigatio* with the hagiographical details described in the *Vita Brendani*.⁵ However, anything more than a brief introduction to this subject was beyond the remit of this study. Certainly, further study could usefully be undertaken concerning the differences between what can be derived from the unflated sections of the lives of Brendan in the *Vita Sanctorum Hiberniae*, and the other saints' lives in that and similar collections.

There are other aspects of the narrative that could well be explored further, but again, these were outside of the subject of this study. In particular there is scope for the study for the concept of 'vision' within the A.N. *Voyage*. This could have included: how Brendan is able to see the temptation of a supernumerary in the darkness of the Deserted Citadel; the elements that obscure vision, such as the cloud that surrounds Paradise; the fact that Brendan cannot see to the top of holy places, such as the Crystal Column; and, even though the brethren can see the visions on the mountain in Paradise, they cannot explain them. Clearly, in the A.N. *Voyage*, piety, understanding and vision are linked.⁶ Such a study would be particularly helpful in its application to other medieval otherworldly narratives and how they represent the reception of the visions. Such narratives would include the *Vision of Wetti*, the *Vision of Tungdale* and the *Vision of Drythelm*.⁷

⁵ This was the subject of a paper I presented at the International Medieval Congress: 'Any Need for Miracles? The Portrayal of Brendan in the *Vita Brendani* and the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*', unpublished paper presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, 12 July 2004. Unlike the in *Vita Brendani*, Brendan in the *Navigatio* does not perform miracles, although miraculous events occur around him.

⁶ A preliminary study of this topic was the subject of my unpublished paper, 'Vision in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of Saint Brendan*', presented at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 9 July 2007.

⁷ For an edition of the vision of Tungdale, see Harrad Spilling, *Die Visio Tnugdali: Eigenart und Stellung in der mittelalterlichen Visionsliteratur bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1975); for an edition of the Vision of Wetti, see David A. Thrall, ed. and trans., *Walahfrid Strabo's Visio Wettini—Text, Translation and Commentary* (Bern: H. Lang, 1974); for a edition of the Vision of Drythelm see *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, eds Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 488–99. Translations of these visions are published in Eileen Gardiner, *Visions of Heaven and Hell before Dante* (New York: Italica Press, 1989), pp. 57–63, 65–79 and 149–195. Tungdale's vision is of particular interest: there are occasions when Tungdale is unable to see (in the Valley of the Proud) and his only means of illumination

Finally, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage*, in their different ways are essentially descriptions of a voyage in search of the divine.⁸ The search represents an impossible desire to transcend human limitation. When a text attempts to portray a supernatural realm, conventional narrative techniques are woefully inadequate. Although they were obviously never intended to be applied to Todorov's model of the fantastic, both the *Navigatio* and the A.N. *Voyage* follow the principle of a gradual introduction of supernatural material, in order to remain plausible for as long as possible, building up through the uncanny, the fantastic and the marvellous, to that which is beyond comprehension. The implication of both versions is that even though the respective audiences cannot achieve the *Terra reprobationis sanctorum* in their lifetimes, God's love is infinite and rewards the faithful. He has the capacity to find mercy for even the most heinous of sinners. This implication is present in each of the passages describing Brendan's encounters in the course of his voyage. The use of fantastic techniques is essential for conveying and reinforcing this implicit message.

is the 'brightness of the spirit'. Tungdale describes himself as blind until he moves closer to heaven. His sight ultimately links to omniscient knowledge.

⁸ The *Navigatio* is presented as a hagiography containing Celtic elements but focusing on the monastic day and Christian festivals, whereas the A.N. *Voyage* is an exciting adventure story containing numerous Christian maxims.

APPENDIX ONE

THE GENEALOGY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE *NAVIGATIO* AND THE ANGLO-NORMAN *VOYAGE*

This appendix reviews the genealogies of the manuscripts of the *Navigatio* and the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*. Although the broad outlines of the manuscript tradition were addressed in chapter 1, it would have been inappropriate to include so much detail in what is essentially a critical study. This information is important for the study as it suggests one possible means through which the *Navigatio* was transmitted through Europe and thus how it was received by audiences, who could then commission vernacular translations. It also sets the two narratives that have been compared in the broader context of the wider translations of the vernacular versions of the *Voyage*. The manuscript tradition of the A.N. *Voyage* highlights, amongst other things, how confusion can arise concerning the royal patronage of the manuscript. I have also included a brief discussion of a fragment that was unknown to Waters and its relation to the other five manuscripts of the A.N. *Voyage*.

The Genealogy of the Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis Manuscripts

One hundred and twenty-three manuscripts written between the tenth and the seventeenth centuries survive of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani abbatis*, which suggests that the overall number originally copied would have been significantly more than that. This is a testament to the popularity of the legend.¹

The discussion below is based upon the *stemma codicum* used by Selmer in his edition of the *Navigatio*. Selmer bases his study upon eighteen manuscripts and traces the spread and development of the narrative

¹ Three of the surviving manuscripts were written at the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century; fourteen were written in the eleventh century, twenty-three in the twelfth century, twenty-nine in the thirteenth century, nineteen in the fourteenth century and twenty-eight in the fifteenth century, see Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan*, pp. 13–26. Burgess and Strijbosch list 128 manuscripts, but five of these are now missing or lost.

from the central point of Lotharingia, through the Low Countries, Southern Germany, France and the Rhineland.² A manuscript in the university library of Ghent, **Codex 401** (ms **G** in Selmer's edition) which Selmer suggests dates from the eleventh century, represents the first stem and indicates that the legend had then spread to the Low Countries.³ The provenance of this manuscript is unknown.

The second stem relates to Southern Germany. This branch is divided into two subgroups. Fragments of the *Navigatio* are found in the city library in Munich. **Clm. 29890, formerly 29061** (ms **U** in Selmer) dates from the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century. The provenance was Tegernsee, Bavaria, and the scribe was Froumund of Tegernsee.⁴ This manuscript is the source of **Clm. 17139** (ms **Q** in Selmer) in the city library of Munich, dating from the twelfth century. Its provenance was Schäftlarn, Bavaria. It is written in one hand by *Marchwardus sub Abbatे Eberhardo* (1153–1160).⁵

Another witness of around the same time is also in the city library in Munich, **Clm. 17740** (ms **M** in Selmer). This manuscript of the *Navigatio* is written in two hands and dates from the tenth century.⁶ The provenance of the manuscript is St Mang, Stadtamhof (Ratisbon), Bavaria. This manuscript was the source of **Codex 51** (Gaibach 2907) (ms **P** in Selmer) held in the library of Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden, Germany. Its provenance is St Peter, Erfurt, and it dates from the twelfth century.⁷ Where the source manuscript was deficient, ms **P** follows an earlier manuscript, which Selmer suggests must have been very close to ms **λ**, the (now lost) source manuscript for **ms L**, detailed below.

² See the illustration of the *stemma codicum* on p. 249.

³ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxvi. Mentioned in Jules de Saint Genois, *Manuscrits de la bibliothèque de la Ville et de l'Université de Gand* (Gand: Annoot-Braeckman, 1849–1852), p. 152 and *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum bibliothecae publicae civitatis et academie Gandavensis*, Subsidia hagiographica 25 (Brussels, 1948), p. 77.

⁴ Selmer says that he obtained this information from Prof. B. Bischoff, from Munich, who had made this period the subject of special study. Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xlivi.

⁵ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xli. Contents mentioned in *Catalogus codicum latinorum Bibliothecae Regiae Monacensis* (Munich, 1878), vol. 2, p. 82.

⁶ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxviii. Mentioned in *Cat. Codd. Lat. Bibl. Reg. Mon.*, vol. 2, p. 119.

⁷ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xl. Mentioned in G.H. Pertz, 'Handschriftenverzeichnisse,' *Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 9 (1847), p. 530.

ms M is also the ancestor of **Clm. 22248 (ms N in Selmer)** from the city library of Munich. Its provenance is from Windberg, Bavaria and it dates from the twelfth century.⁸

ms N is the source of **Codex 5 Ry 6** (Accession C 19163) (**ms C in Selmer**) in Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois, which dates from the twelfth century and is from Lambach, Austria.⁹ **ms C** is also the source of the parchment **Codex Pal. Lat. 217 (ms H in Selmer)** held in the Vatican Library, Rome, which also dates from the twelfth century, and its provenance is St Stephan, Würzburg, Germany.¹⁰ **ms H** follows the readings of **ms N**, although, as Selmer observes, around Chapter 17 the scribe became critical of the deficiencies and instead followed a better, earlier manuscript, **ms R**, detailed below.

In the second subgroup of Southern Germany, there are two distinct lines. The first is in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris **Codex lat. 3784 (ms F in Selmer)**. It dates from the eleventh century and is from Limoges, France.¹¹ The second line in this subgroup is in the town library of Stuttgart; **Codex 152 (ms T in Selmer)** dates from the twelfth century. Its provenance is Comburg, Würtemberg, Germany.¹²

The third group of the *stemma codicum* shows the spread of the manuscripts through France. Again, there are two subgroups. In the first, **Codex 9920–31 (ms B in Selmer)** held in the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels, dates from the eleventh century (1029). Its provenance is St Laurent, Liège, Belgium.¹³ On the same stem, although later, is a

⁸ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxix. Mentioned in *Cat. Codd. Lat. Bibl. Reg. Mon.* vol. 2, p. 33.

⁹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxiv. Mentioned in Seymour de Ricci, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1935), p. 540.

¹⁰ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxvi. Mentioned in Albertus Poncelet, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum Latinorum bibliothecae Vaticanae*, Subsidia hagiographica 11 (Brussels, 1910), p. 253 and Henry Stevenson Jr., *Codices Palatini Latini bibliothecae Vaticanae descripti, recogn. I.B. de Rossi. Praeit commentatio I.B. de Rossi de origine, historia, indicibus scrinii et bibliothecae sedis apostolicae* (Rome: Ex Typographeo Vaticano, 1886), vol. 1, p. 45.

¹¹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxv. Mentioned in *Catalogus manuscriptorum bibliothecae reginae* (Paris, 1844), vol. 3, p. 465 and *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum antiquiorum saeculo XVI, qui asservantur in bibliotheca nationali Parisiensi*, Subsidia hagiographica 2, 3 vols (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, 1889–1893), vol. 1, p. 277.

¹² Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xlivi. Mentioned in W. Gräber, *Merkwürdigkeiten der Comberger Bibliothek* (Stuttgart, 1860), p. 21 and Wilhelm von Heyd, *Katalog der historischen Handschriften der Königlichen öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Stuttgart*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1891), p. 71.

¹³ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxiv. Mentioned in *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum*

compiled parchment written by several hands, though the *Navigatio* is in a single hand. This is **Codex 111 (ms S in Selmer)** in the Stadtbibliothek of Berne, Switzerland, dating from the twelfth century and is probably from Metz.¹⁴

In the second subgroup of the French stem is **Codex 14**, Bibliothèque Municipale, Alençon, France (**ms A in Selmer**) which dates from the eleventh century and is from St Evroult, France.¹⁵ **Codex lat. 15076**, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, shares this source. Dating from the twelfth century, it is from St Victor, Paris. (**ms K in Selmer**).¹⁶

The final branch of the genealogy of the *Navigatio* manuscripts shows the text's dissemination through the Rhineland. The British Library holds **Codex Add. 36736**, (**ms L in Selmer**) which dates from the tenth century.¹⁷ It belonged to the Abbey of St Maximin in Trier, Germany, and was once part of the Goerres collection.

Two manuscripts have the same root as ms *L*, but they also show influence from manuscripts from the German stem. Selmer suggests that a comparison between manuscripts of these two groups would only 'account for the occasional agreements'.¹⁸ These manuscripts are **Codex Reg. Lat. 481 (ms R in Selmer)** held in the Vatican Library Rome, dating from either the eleventh or twelfth century.¹⁹ The folios containing the *Navigatio* are written by one hand, and that section contains dates from the eleventh century. Its provenance is Saints Peter and Paul, Paderborn, Germany. The second manuscript to show

Bibliothecae Regiae Bruxellensis, Subsidia hagiographica 1 (Brussels, 1886–1889), vol. 2, p. 391.

¹⁴ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xlvi. Selmer notes that 'According to a special study made by the director of the library, Dr Chr. V. Steiger, the almost illegible entry on 1v possibly reads *Domu sce**** Metensis*'. This manuscript is mentioned in Herman Hagen, *Catalogus codicum Bernensium* (Berne: BF Haller Druck, 1875), p. 156.

¹⁵ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxiii. Mentioned in *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France. Départements*, (Paris, 1888), vol. 2, p. 488.

¹⁶ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxvii. Mentioned in *Cat. Codd. Hag. Lat. . . qui asservantur in Bibl. Nat. Par.*, vol. 3, p. 301.

¹⁷ Selmer, *Navigatio*, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii. *Catalogue of additions to the manuscripts of the British Museum in the years MDCCCC–MDCCCCV* (London: William Clowes and Sons Ltd, 1907), pp. 196–7. Cf. A. Schulte, 'Bericht über den Verkauf von Handschriften aus dem Görreschen Nachlass,' *Hist. Verein für den Niederrhein* 77 (1904), p. 248. Note that this ms has no relation to the manuscripts described by Waters and Strijbosch, also with the siglum L.

¹⁸ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xlvi.

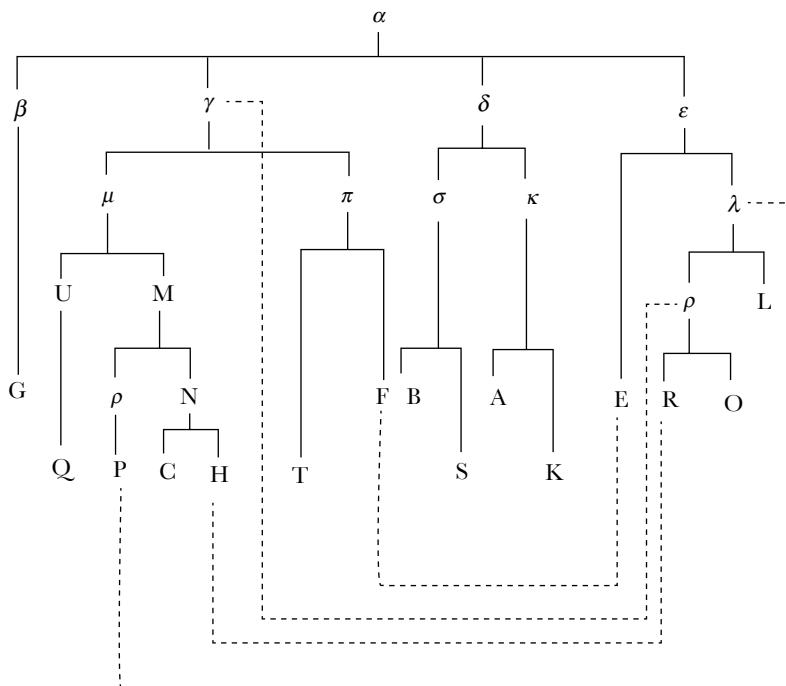
¹⁹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xli. Mentioned in Andreas Wilmart, *Codices Reginenses Latini* (Rome: Bibliotheca Vaticana, 1945), p. 657 and A. Poncelet, *Cat. Codd. Hag. Lat. Bibl. Vat.*, p. 320.

Southern German influence is held in the Bodleian Library. **Codex Laud. Misc. 410** (ms **O** in Selmer) dates from between the eleventh and thirteenth century: the section from the *Navigatio* was written in the eleventh century in one scribal hand.²⁰ Its provenance is the Carthusian monastery, Mainz, Germany. Archbishop Laud gave it to the Bodleian Library in 1638.

The final manuscript that Selmer suggests makes up the *stemma codicum* is held in the municipal library of Epinal. **Codex 147** (67) (ms **E** in Selmer) dates from the eleventh century and its provenance is St Peter, Senones, France.²¹

On the basis of Selmer's study, the *stemma codicum* of the *Navigatio* is as follows:

STEMMA CODICUM



²⁰ Selmer, *Navigatio*, pp. xxxix–xl. Mentioned in *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Bodleianae* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1885), p. 301.

²¹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xxxv. Mentioned in *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements*, (Paris, 1861), vol. 3, p. 425.

Giovanni Orlandi has a large unpublished edition of the *stemma codicum* which includes a complete reassessment of the *stemma* into three principal families.²² Michaela Zelzer is currently working on a new critical edition of the *Navigatio*, and her work on the *stemma* will be based on a larger number of manuscripts than Selmer's version.²³

From the *ur*-text, ms χ , four stems developed which show 'beyond any doubt...a rather homogenous background and structure, and are indicative of the spread of the manuscripts'.²⁴ From these stems, four families of manuscripts derived their material as the *Navigatio* was communicated through Europe.

The fact that the *Navigatio* was being copied into the seventeenth century is a testimony of its popularity. Sadly, the catalogues that were consulted do not detail the manuscripts' afterlife and who owned them after they were copied. Indeed, Latin may seem a curious medium to use to transmit a popular adventure story of a saint that had already been translated into the vernacular in such texts as the *South English Legendary* and Caxton's *Golden Legend*. However, Latin was still the 'linguistic standard most widely accepted and its excellence...universally recognised'.²⁵ Thus, the English language, which was considered rude and ineloquent, was thought to be still unstable at this time whereas Latin, the language of literary excellence and of well-educated people, was believed to be constant and unchanging.²⁶ One of the surviving seventeenth century manuscripts (ms 4241 in the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels) is a collection of Irish saints' lives that has a colophon stating that it was transcribed on the eve of the feast of St Andrew the Apostle: 29 November 1608. Thus, it appears that this manuscript was transcribed in a monastery, and, as a collection of saints' lives, was used for ecclesiastical purposes.

The Genealogy of the Anglo-Norman Voyage Manuscripts

The Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St Brendan* is arguably the first text in Anglo-Norman to be composed in octosyllabic couplets and is the first

²² Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*; discussed in Dumville, 'Two Approaches'.

²³ Zelzer, 'Philological Remarks,' pp. 337–50.

²⁴ Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. xlvi.

²⁵ Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 24.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 10 and 24.

example of Celtic material introduced into French literature.²⁷ Before the composition of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*, one of the best known hagiographic texts in the vernacular was the *Vie de Saint Alexis*. It is not surprising therefore to find that the narratives of Alexis and Brendan are bound together in two of the surviving manuscripts. Five of the six surviving manuscripts and fragments of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage* have been studied and compared by E.G.R. Waters.²⁸ A sixth, fragments of a late twelfth century manuscript, has since been uncovered (designated *F* by Short and Merrilees).²⁹ Waters observes that four of the five manuscripts that he analysed contain the complete text of the A.N. *Voyage*, while the fifth, Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms **Rawlinson D 913** (formerly Rawlinson Misc. 1370) is a single folio (designated **C** in Waters' edition) containing only the first 310 lines.³⁰ The spellings show the Anglo-Norman origin of the two copyists and date from the first half of the thirteenth century.³¹

Waters notes that each of the four remaining manuscripts that he has analysed presents many errors that are not found in the other, and the errors seldom overlap. He does, however, notice that there is evidence of a relationship between the manuscripts, as shown on the genealogy of the manuscripts below. In the first branch, where the manuscript refers to the Anglo-Norman *Voyage* as the *Vita Brendani*, is **Cotton Vespasian B. x (i)**, now held in the British Library (designated **A** in Waters).³² As well as the Anglo-Norman *Voyage*, the manuscript also contains a copy of the *Navigatio (Legenda justi in prosa latini)*, a treatise of the world through the eyes of Merlin (*miscillanta de consummationi*

²⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, p. 22.

²⁸ Waters, *Voyage*, pp. ix–lxxx.

²⁹ Described below on p. 253.

³⁰ Waters follows Karl Barsch in his designations of the mss. He also lists the variants used by others. Waters, *Voyage*, p. ix.

³¹ Mentioned in William D. Macray, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum bibliothecae Bodleianae partis quintae fasciculus quartus, viri munificentissimi Ricardi Rawlinson, I.C.D., codicum classis quartae partem alteram (libros sc. miscellaneos sexcentos et quinquaginta sex) complectens* (Oxford, 1898), cols. 136 and 141.

³² The unusual words of this version are discussed in E.G.R. Waters, 'Rare or Unexplained Words in the Anglo-Norman *Voyage of St. Brendan*', *Modern Language Review* 21 (1926), 390–403, p. 391. This manuscript is mentioned in T.D. Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials Relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland, to the End of the Reign of Henry VII* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), vol. 1, p. 160; Harry Leigh Douglas Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1893), vol. 2, p. 541. Waters observes that 'the grounds on which Ward assigned this ms to the fourteenth century...are unknown to me', Waters, *Voyage*, pp. ix–x.

*mundi di perigrinatione ab Romani de Merlini prophetys) and a treatise on cosmography (*ethici philosophi cosmographie*). However, the manuscript of the Anglo-Norman *Voyage* has been bound with others of a later date. Waters suggests that this manuscript dates from the middle to the end of the thirteenth century on account of the handwriting and the vignettes, although he argues that the forms of the ms represent twelfth-century Anglo-Norman. Given that the evidence is purely palaeographical, Ker has challenged this, suggesting that the manuscript dates from the first half of the fourteenth century.³³ All commentators agree that this is the most complete of the manuscripts, omitting only six lines.³⁴ Legge observes that this manuscript comes from Worcester.³⁵*

On the same stem is **nouv. acq. fr. 4503** (designated **B** in Waters) held in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.³⁶ The handwriting of this manuscript dates from around 1200; however, it is incomplete as 169 lines of the poem have been omitted by an impatient scribe—mostly from the last 300 lines. Waters notes that the scribe ‘betrays his insular origin by his use of Anglo-Norman spellings and by the little heed that he pays to grammar or metre’.³⁷ This manuscript includes an illuminated letter for each of Judas’s daily tortures. There is also an unusual embellishment as a female face peers out from an illuminated letter on fol. 29v. This manuscript is collated with other hagiographic and religious writings, which include the lives of St Alexis and St Catherine.

From a different source manuscript is **ms 16 K. 12, part 1**, held in the Dean and Chapter Library in York (designated **D** in Waters).³⁸ Unlike the other manuscripts, which have A.N. *Voyage* as part of a collection of hagiographic texts, this text is bound with a group of fables by Marie de France and another, unknown, author.³⁹ According to Waters, this manuscript, dating from the first half of the thirteenth century, is the least satisfactory of them, with scribal, metrical and grammatical mistakes, showing ‘how defective was his own metrical sense’. However,

³³ N.R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A list of Surviving Books*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, 2nd ed. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1924), p. 73.

³⁴ See, for example, Waters, *Voyage*, p. x; Waters, *Voyage*, p. 8.

³⁵ Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*, p. 114.

³⁶ Mentioned in Léopold Delisle, *Catalogue des manuscrits des fonds Libri et Barrois* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1888), Introduction.

³⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xii.

³⁸ Mentioned in Hardy, *Descriptive Catalogue*, vol. 1, p. 160.

³⁹ Karl Warnke, *Die Fabeln der Marie de France* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1898), p. iv.

he admits that this manuscript 'is the basis of the critical text when A and B both fail'.⁴⁰

From the same source manuscript is **ms 3516** (designated **E** in Waters) in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris (formerly B L F 283).⁴¹ This manuscript is a collection of 63 different items. It includes, amongst other things, a French calendar and health rules for each month. There is also a table for the century, dating from 1268–1367, so one may conjecture that the manuscript dates from around then; this is confirmed by the thirteenth-century handwriting. The A.N. *Voyage* occupies fols. 96r to 100v, out of a total of 356 folios. This is a modernised revision of the original text. The Anglo-Norman rhymes and forms have been replaced by the continental French of the thirteenth century; Waters concludes that the reviser and the scribe were Picard in origin.⁴² Much of the manuscript was once illustrated with miniatures; however, a vandalistic hand has removed many of these.⁴³ What this suggests is that **ms D** was more of a decorative manuscript for the enjoyment of the aristocracy, rather than a functional text to be read in Church.

Waters' study of the manuscripts shows that there is sufficient evidence that **ms A** and **B** come from one root source (which Waters labels α) and that **D** and **E** come from another (labelled β) although he suggests that there are intermediary **mss** between **D** and **E** and β (labelled δ and ϵ , respectively). **mss** α and β have a common source, labelled χ . Through the four surviving complete manuscripts, Waters suggests that one can make a fairly accurate reconstruction of a common original. However, although he observes that when manuscripts disagree, **C** supports **A**, he argues that one can tentatively regard **C** as independently derived from an original source which is not χ , although there would have been several intermediate manuscripts. He labels the original **O**; it would be the original translation from the Latin *Navigatio*.

Unknown to Waters is a fragment currently preserved in the *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana* in Cologny-Genève. The manuscript, **Fondation Martin Bodmer, 17** (designated **F** by Short and Merrilees) is a fragment of 131 lines, and appears to date from the last half of the twelfth

⁴⁰ Waters, *Voyage*, p. xvii.

⁴¹ Mentioned in *Catalogue général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France départements. Paris. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal* (Paris, 1887), vol. 3, p. 395.

⁴² Waters, *Voyage*, p. xviii.

⁴³ Some of the earlier miniatures remain, for example the angel forcing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden on fol. 4v.

century—therefore being the oldest surviving section of the A.N. *Voyage*.⁴⁴ Short and Merrilees observe that this manuscript, found almost half a century after Waters' death, shows little evidence to classify it exclusively with the *AB* or *DE* stems; it does not overlap with fragment *C* and contains a number of 'independent variants'.

Fragment *F* dates from the first half of the thirteenth century. The four fragments of the parchment correspond to ll. 794–893, 1169–85 and 1188–1206 of Waters' edition. Lines 1202–05 are contracted into one line.⁴⁵ From the textual evidence, I would suggest that ms *F* is closer to ms *B* for the similarities in, for example, ll. 807, 814 and 816. However, ms *F* also contains words that are omitted in ms *B*, for example 'sens' in line 817, which shows that, although there may have been a parent manuscript in common, ms *F* is not derived from ms *B*.

The A.N. *Voyage* was translated twice into Latin. The first, a prose version, exists in a manuscript dating from c.1200, **Bodleian Library ms 3496** (designated **L** in Waters) but nothing to do with Selmer's siglum *L* for ms Codex Add. 36736).⁴⁶ This manuscript is therefore contemporary with ms *B* of the A.N. *Voyage*. Waters suggests that the Latin is translated from the Anglo Norman and, furthermore, that the mistakes were not made by the author translating his own work.⁴⁷

The second Latin translation, **Cotton Vespasian D. ix** (designated **R** by Waters) in the British Library, is a metrical Latin version, dating from the fourteenth century.⁴⁸ Legge argues that there has been a 'substantial interval' linguistically from the A.N. *Voyage*. Furthermore, the translator knew and used both the A.N. *Voyage* and the *Navigatio*,

⁴⁴ The text is discussed in Françoise Vielliard, *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana: Manuscrits français du Moyen Age*, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana Catalogues, 2 vols (Cologny-Genève: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 167–70, and mentioned in Waters, *Voyage*, p. 7. The Bodmer manuscripts were originally Phillips.

⁴⁵ The Catalogue for the Bodmer Library describes two fragments of 139 × 117mm and two fragments of 139 × 97mm; justification around 120 × 70mm. The text is a single column, of 16–17 lines to a column, with no decoration. Vielliard, *Bibliotheca Bodmeriana*, vol. 2, p. 804.

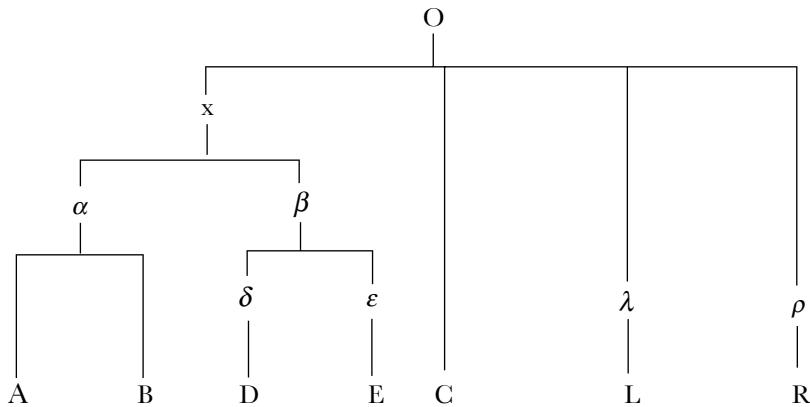
⁴⁶ The Latin prose version is also preserved in the thirteenth-century ms Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, Alc. 380, ff. 81v–91r, and has been edited by Aires A. Nascimento in *Navegação de S. Brandão nas fontes portuguesas medievais: Edição crítica de textos latinos, tradução, estudo introdutório e notas de comentário*, Obras clássicas da literatura portuguesa, 1 (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 1998), pp. 197–209.

⁴⁷ Waters, *Voyage*, pp. cxvii–cxii.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. cxvi. The metrical version is also preserved in a fragment in the fifteenth-century ms Cambridge, Trinity College, O.1.17 (nr. 1041). It has been edited by Moran, *Acti Sancti Brendani*, pp. 45–84.

and although the Latin betrays the fact that the translator was accustomed to speaking French, the evidence cannot show whether he lived in France or England.⁴⁹

To conclude, on the basis of Waters' study, his *stemma codicum* is as shown below. It should be noted, however, that this does not include Fragment *F* which is from the same family root as ms *α* and, which shares some similarities with ms *B*, although it includes words that have been omitted from this manuscript and, therefore, has only a parent manuscript in common.



⁴⁹ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 13.

APPENDIX TWO

THE ANGLO-NORMAN *VOYAGE OF ST BRENDAN*

(Translation based on Waters' edition)

Prologue

Lady Adeliza the queen,¹
Through whom divine law will be put into effect
Through whom terrestrial law will grow stronger²
For the military power
5 On account of Henry the king
Through the prudence that will be in you
Greets you a thousand thousand times
From the apostolic Lord Benedeit³
As you commanded, this at the beginning,
10 He has put into words in accordance with the best of his
ability
Into writing and the Romance tongue⁴
As was your command
The story of St Brendan, the good abbot.
But you should preserve him [*the author*] from being derided
15 When he says what he knows and does what he can:
This servant must not be blamed
But he who is capable and does not wish to
It is right that he should suffer much.⁵

¹ Adeliza, wife to Henry I, and daughter of Duke Godfrey VII of Louvain. In ms C the name of the patroness is 'Mahalt'.

² 'Lei de terre,' for a discussion of the use of 'terre' in the Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan see Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 5.

³ Discussed in Waters, *Voyage*, p. xxvi; also Wahlberg, 'Le nom de l'auteur,' p. 55; Jones, 'Precocity,' p. 157, n. 3.

⁴ Benedeit claims that he is a translator; cf. M. Dominica Legge, 'L^etre in Old French,' *Modern Language Review* 56 (1961): 333–34.

⁵ The dedication is summarised in ms E as 'Seignor oies que io dirai Dun saint home vos conterai Dyrlande estoit brandans ot non Molt ert de grant religion,' Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 3516, fo. 96 r°. For a discussion of the dedication see Sneddon, 'Brendan the Navigator,' pp. 224–25.

St Brendan

This saint of God was born of kings
 20 Born of Ireland
 Because he was of royal line
 Because of this he devoted himself to a noble purpose.
 He knew well what the scriptures say:
 'He who shuns the delights of this world,
 25 Will have so many with God in heaven
 That he could not ask for more.'⁶
 On this account, this royal Irishman abandoned
 False honours for the true ones—
 Monks habits—to be contemptible
 30 In this worldly life as in exile.
 He took both the orders and the habit
 And then he was perforce chosen to be an abbot.
 Because of his skill many came there
 Who observed the orders well:
 35 Brendan the holy had three thousand
 Monks under him from different places,
 All taking their example from him
 Because of his virtue which was great.

His Desire To See The Other World

The abbot Brendan bethought himself,
 40 Like a man who had much good sense,
 Of good and sound counsel,
 Like one who is very righteous in the sight of God
 That he would make relentless prayers⁷
 For himself and all his lineage
 45 Both for the living and the dead—
 For he was a friend of everyone;
 But there was one thing which he particularly desired

⁶ Waters observes that, while the quotation does not correspond with any Biblical passage, the idea frequently occurs in the Gospels, for example, Matthew 6:19–21.

⁷ Short and Merrilees have *ferait* for Waters' *faisoit*, which seems more appropriate.

For which he began to pray to God more frequently
 That He should show him that Paradise
 50 Where Adam first occupied
 That which is our heritage
 And from which we were disinherited.
 He truly believes that there is great glory
 And as the true history tells us⁸
 55 But nevertheless he wanted to see
 Where he ought by right to sit
 But Adam transgressed by his sins
 And in this way he put himself and us outside.
 He prayed to God about it persistently
 60 That He would show him Paradise for his own eyes;⁹
 Before he died he wanted to know
 What abode the good people were due to have
 What place the wicked were due to have
 What reward they will receive,
 65 He wanted to see hell as well
 And what torments will suffer there
 Those traitors who because of their pride
 Have the audacity here on their own accord
 To wage war on God and the law
 70 And who among themselves have neither love nor faith.

The Narrative Of Barintus

This thing which he has come to desire
 Brendan wishes to hear from God.
 But first before taking a decision
 He goes to a servant of God to make confession:
 75 The name of this hermit is Barrind,
 He has good habits and a saintly life.¹⁰
 The faithful servant of God lives in a wood
 He has three hundred monks there with him;

⁸ 'Holy Scripture'.

⁹ Literally, 'visibly'.

¹⁰ Discussed in Brown, 'Barintus,' pp. 339–40; cf. Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 1360–1422.

From him he [*Brendan*] will take counsel and advice
 80 From him he wants to have support
 This man shows him in many words
 Fine parables and good maxims
 Which he saw at sea and on land¹¹
 When he went to look for his god-son:
 85 This was Mernoc, who was a brother
 In the place where Barrind was abbot,
 But he was very desirous of that
 Which was elsewhere and more solitary.
 With the help of his abbot and his godfather
 90 He put to sea, and not in vain,¹²
 For then he came to such a place
 Where none can enter other than the pious:
 It was at sea on an island
 Where evil winds never howl,
 95 Where it was fed with this perfume
 Which the flowers emit in Paradise;
 For this island was so near,
 Where Saint Mernoc had sailed,
 That from there Paradise could be seen
 100 And the angels could be heard¹³
 And then Barrind sought him out there
 Where he saw that which he told Brendan.

Brendan Chooses Fourteen Companions

When Brendan had heard of the sight
 That the latter had received there

¹¹ For a discussion of the use of ‘eau’, ‘occean’ and ‘mer’ see Burgess, ‘Les fonctions des quatre éléments,’ p. 9; see also Jean Larmat, ‘L’Eau dans la *Navigation de Saint Brandan de Benedicit*,’ *L’Eau au Moyen Age*, Senefiance 15 (Aix-en-Provence: CUER MA, 1985).

¹² Waters observes that no manuscript offers an entirely satisfactory reading to this problematic line. Burgess translates it as ‘he had set sail on a mission, which turned out well’. All comparisons with Burgess’s translation are taken from Burgess, ‘The Anglo-Norman Version,’ pp. 74–102. The translation has been revised in the 2005 paperback version.

¹³ ll. 99–100, literally translated as ‘Of Paradise there was sight/ And of angels there was hearing’.

105 The more he believed his advice,
 And the more he began his preparations.
 He selected fourteen of his monks,
 The very best that he saw there¹⁴
 And told them of his idea;

110 He wants to know from them if this is a wise course of
 action.
 When they heard this from him
 Then they talked about it in pairs;
 They reply to him one and all¹⁵
 That what he was undertaking was very courageous

115 They beseeched him to take them with him
 As his own sons, secure in faith.
 Brendan said the following: 'I tell you this
 That I would sooner be certain of you
 Than take you away from here

120 And then be obliged to repent of having done so.'
 They gave an assurance
 That there would be no delay on their part.¹⁶
 Then the abbot takes these chosen ones
 And when he had heard what they all had to say

125 He has led them all into the chapter house,
 There he tells them as a prudent man:
 'Gentlemen, what we have in mind,
 How difficult it is we do not know¹⁷
 But let us pray to God to instruct us,

130 At his pleasure he will lead us there;
 And in the name of the Holy Spirit
 We shall fast that he should guide us there
 And we shall fast for forty days
 On three days each week.'

135 Thus there is not one who delays
 From doing that which he charges them
 Nor does the abbot by night or day

¹⁴ Burgess: 'Those he saw to be the best'.

¹⁵ Burgess: 'They all responded as one'.

¹⁶ Burgess: 'That they would not hinder him'.

¹⁷ Short and Merrilees, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, ll. 127–28; 'We have no idea how difficult what we have envisaged is'.

Cease his prayers
 Until God send to him

140 The angel of heaven that would guide him
 Throughout the journey as he goes;¹⁸
 Deep in his heart he was so inspired
 That he knew for certain
 That God wanted him to go.

145 Then he takes leave of his brethren
 To whom he was a very kind father
 And telling them about his journey
 How he wishes to entrust it to God.
 He entrusts them all to his prior

150 Telling him how he must look after them;
 He commands them to obey him,
 And serve him as if he were their abbot.
 Then Brendan kisses them and departed.
 They all weep with great displeasure

155 That their father does not wish to take
 More than fourteen of their brothers.

Preparations for the Voyage

Brendan went off towards the great sea
 Where he knows from God that he must embark
 Never did he turn towards his relative

160 He is intent upon going to a dearer place.
 He went to the furthest point of land
 He did not desire to take rest;
 He came to the rock which the peasants
 Now call Brendan's Leap.¹⁹

165 This extends exceedingly far

¹⁸ Short and Merrilees suggest that this angel is the host who provides provisions for the brethren on their journey.

¹⁹ 'Le Salt Brandan'. This is a misunderstanding of the description in the *Navigatio* 'Saltus uirtutis Brendani', which refers to Brendan's meadow, see Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 1*, 1, l. 5. (This, in turn, is a translation of the Irish 'Cluin-ferta Brenainn'). Waters observes that the Old French *salt*, *saut*, means 'leap' or 'projecting rock', and Benedeit seems to have used the example that one also sees in Béroul's *Tristan*, 'Encor claimant Coreulan/Cele Pierre le Saut Tristan' (ll. 953–4); cf. Waters, *Voyage*, p. 102.

Out into the ocean just like a snout²⁰
 And on this promontory there was a haven
 Through which the sea receives a stream,
 But it was small and very narrow—
 170 It came straight down from the cliff.
 No others, this I believe, before this man
 Had gone down this hill.
 To this spot he had dragged
 Timber from which he had his ship built,
 175 Everything inside was made of pine wood,
 The outside was covered in oxhide;
 He had it besmeared so that it was smooth-running
 In the waves, and swift;²¹
 He put implements there as were necessary
 180 And as much as the ship could carry;
 He put provisions there as well
 Which he had carried there,
 No more than for forty days supply
 Of food he had put therein.

The Three Intruding Monks

185 He said to the brothers: ‘Come on board.
 Give thanks to God, the wind is favourable.’²²
 They all climbed on board and he boards afterwards.
 Behold now three running forthwith
 Shouting to Brendan with a loud voice
 190 And holding out the palms of their hands towards him:
 ‘From your monastery we have departed
 And we have followed you as far as here.
 Let us, abbot, board with you
 And voyage with you, lord, on the sea.’²³

²⁰ ‘Gruign’: Waters translates this (in this instance) as snout. Burgess uses the term ‘promontory’ for its appearance here and in l. 167.

²¹ For a description of the construction of the coracle in the *immrama* see Stokes, ‘Húi Corra,’ pp. 38–41.

²² For a discussion concerning the term ‘vent’ see Burgess, ‘Les fonctions des quatre éléments,’ p. 14.

²³ Cf. Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ pp. 460–1; Stokes, ‘Húi Corra,’ pp. 38–39; Béroul, *The Romance of Tristran*, ll. 1708–10, 4040–42 and 4472–73.

195 He knows them and receives them on board;
 He foresees clearly what will befall as a result.
 What, through God, the abbot foresaw
 He did not hide from them, thus he spoke to them:
 ‘Two of you Satan will have
 200 With Abiram and Dathan.²⁴
 The third one of you will be greatly tempted
 But will be well supported by God.’

The First Voyage

When the abbot Brendan had said this
 Then he raised up both his hands
 205 And prayed to God with all his heart
 To preserve his faithful servants from storms;²⁵
 And then he raised up his right hand
 And blessed them all, the holy priest.
 They raised the mast, spread the sail,
 210 And go off smoothly, God’s faithful servants.
 The breeze comes to them from the east
 Which takes them towards the west.
 They lose sight of everything
 Apart from the sea and the clouds.²⁶
 215 They are not idle waiting for a favourable wind
 But they toil very much with their rowing
 And wish to tax the strength of their bodies
 In order to see that for which they are leaving home.
 Thus they sailed for fifteen days,
 220 Until all the winds became sluggish for them;
 Then all the brothers were dismayed
 On account of the wind which had ceased.
 Then the abbot admonished them,

²⁴ Cf. Numbers 16.

²⁵ Burgess: ‘torment’ rather than ‘storms’. See his discussion in Glyn S. Burgess, ‘La Souffrance et le repos dans *Le Voyage de saint Brendan par Benedeit*’, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard*, vol. 1 (Paris: Champion, 1998), 267–77.

²⁶ For a discussion concerning the term ‘nuage’ see Burgess, ‘Les fonctions des quatre éléments,’ p. 14.

He whose courage never stumbles.²⁷

225 'Place yourselves under God's protection
 And let there be no one who is dismayed.
 When there is wind, sail in the same direction as it;
 When there is no wind row accordingly.'
 They therefore settle down to their oars,
 230 They cry out loudly for God's favour,
 For they do not know in which direction to go,
 Nor which ropes they should haul,
 In which direction to steer, nor which direction to direct their
 course,
 Nor where they should aim for.

235 For a month they row entirely without wind
 All the brothers without complaint;
 For as long as their victuals lasted
 They could exert themselves without respite.
 They lose their strength and food;
 240 On this account they had great fear.

When a great need befalls them,
 God is not far from his faithful servants;
 Of this no man should doubt.

245 He who undertakes a journey for God
 While he does all he is able;
 God will find him what he needs.
 They see a land big and high;
 The wind blows for them without stopping.
 250 Those for whom rowing had become a toil
 Are taken there without any hardship,
 But they find no entrance
 Where their ship could be moored,
 For it was surrounded completely by rocks
 Where not one of them dared ascend.
 255 The hills are high stretching into the sky

²⁷ Burgess: 'Telling them [*the brethren*] not to lose heart.' Burgess uses Short and Merrilees who print *cesset*. Waters corrects this to *cestet*, 'stumbles.' Short and Merrilees point out that *que* could be interpreted as *cui* 'whose', as I have used it here, or as a conjunction, as does Burgess. I am grateful to Glyn Burgess for his guidance on this matter.

And suspended far above the sea.
 From the hollows beneath, the sea eddies back
 Because of which there is very great danger.
 Upwards and downwards they looked for a harbour
 260 And they spent three days in their search.
 They find a harbour, they have landed there,
 Which was cut in the grey limestone
 But there was room only for one ship;
 This harbour was well made in the pale rock.

The Uninhabited City

265 They make fast the ship, they all disembark,
 They follow the road that leads them clearly;
 It led them straight to a castle
 Which was rich and big and beautiful,
 And seemed like a very royal place,
 270 The estate of a very rich emperor.
 They went in inside the walls
 Which were all made of hard crystal;
 They see a palace all in marble,
 There were no houses made of wood;
 275 Gems with gold make great brightness
 With which the walls are decorated;²⁸
 But one thing displeased them greatly,
 That there was no human within the city.
 Thus they gaze at the lofty palace,
 280 And enter therein in the name of peace.
 Brendan has gone into the palace,
 And then has sat down on a bench.
 He did not see anyone else other than his men;
 He begins to speak and has said to them:
 285 'Go and look in these kitchens and stores
 If there is anything of which we have need.'
 They went there and found
 That which they then most desired,

²⁸ Compare this with the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21.

290 This was a supply of food,
 And a great abundance of drink²⁹
 The crockery was of gold and silver
 Which was very good and fine.
 Whatsoever they had wished for, all in abundance
 They found there in that place where they have entered.
 295 The abbot said to them: 'Bring us some.
 Do not take too much, this I forbid you
 And pray to God each one of you for himself
 That you do not break your promise to God.'
 Because the abbot wished to warn them
 300 For he well foresaw what was to come.
 They brought sufficient provisions,
 And they did not take any excess of it;
 They ate as much as pleased them,
 And as much as they then needed.
 305 They did not forget to pray to God,
 But they call out greatly for his mercy there.

The Stolen Goblet

They venture to stay for the night;
 When it was time they go to rest.
 When they had all gone to sleep,
 310 Behold Satan who seduces one of them:³⁰
 He made him desirous to take by stealth
 Gold which he saw collected there.
 The abbot was awake and saw well
 How the devil had a hold on him,
 315 And how he held out to him a golden goblet—
 There is nothing richer in any treasury.
 The monk got up, went to take it,
 And quickly stowed it away secretly;
 And then when he had committed the theft,

²⁹ The uses of 'drinking water' are discussed in Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' p. 11.

³⁰ 'infantem scilicet ethiopem,' Selmer, *Navigatio, caput 6*, l. 56.

320 Came back to sleep in his resting-place.
 The abbot saw all from where he was resting,
 As this brother wandered around by night;
 It did not fail to happen on account of the darkness
 Without a candle he saw it all,

325 For when God wanted to show him this
 He did not need to light a taper.
 They stayed for three full days
 And then on the fourth they went away.
 Brendan said to them: ‘ Gentlemen, I pray you,

330 Do not take anything away with you from here;
 Even the smallest amount of these provisions,
 Not even water for any thirst.³¹
 Weeping greatly he said to the brethren:
 ‘Behold, gentlemen, this man is a thief.’

335 The latter understood that the abbot knew
 About the theft; and how he had
 Found out about it; he makes his confession to all,
 At the abbot’s feet he waits for mercy.
 The abbot said to them: ‘Pray for him

340 You will see him die today.’
 Before everyone of them, visible to all,
 The devil comes out, shouting:
 ‘I beg you, Brendan, for what reason
 Are you throwing me out of my house?’

345 He said what he wanted to the brother,
 He pardons him, and then absolves him.
 As soon as he received communion,
 In the sight of all death takes him;
 The spirit goes to Paradise,

350 In complete rest where God has placed him.
 They buried the body,
 And pray to God that he take care of it.
 This was one of the three brothers
 Which the father received on to the ship.

³¹ Cf. Stokes, ‘Máel Dúin,’ pp. 476–79.

God Provides All Necessaries

355 They came to the haven and the shore
 Behold very soon a messenger:
 He brings them bread and drink,
 And he asks them to accept it.³²
 Then he has said to them: 'Be sure,

360 Whatever danger you see,
 Whatever you see, do not be afraid:
 God will give you very good fortune,
 And you will see that which you are going looking for
 By the grace of Almighty God.

365 And do not be concerned about the provisions
 And the fact that you do not have enough here:
 They will not be lacking until you come
 Back to this place where you will take more.'
 Bowing deeply, he handed them [*i.e. bread and drink*] over to
 them;

370 He did not say any more, but went away.
 Now God's servants have seen
 That they are travelling by God's command,
 And this has been proved to each one beyond doubt
 By virtue of the miracles that they have seen;

375 And they have seen that God is feeding them.
 In praising God no one is silent.

The Isle Of Sheep

They sail in the wind, and go away forthwith,
 The protection of God is very close to them.
 They sail on the sea for the best part of the year,
 And endure hardship very well.
 They see land in accordance with their hope
 As far off as it could be visible to them.³³

³² Cf. Jesus feeding the five thousand in Matthew 14:15–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:11; John 6:1–14.

³³ Burgess: 'on the distant horizon.'

They turn their ship in this direction,
And none of them are slow to row there.

385 They slacken the ropes, take the sail down,
They came to land and jump ashore.
They see sheep in great abundance,
Each with a white fleece;
Every one was as large

390 As stags are in these woodlands.
The abbot said to them: 'Gentlemen, from here
We shall not move before the third day.
Today is Maundy Thursday,³⁴
When the Son of God suffered torment.

395 He is a kind and present friend to us,
Who has readily sent us
That with which we can celebrate his feast.
Think to drag the boat ashore.
Take one of these sheep,

400 Prepare it for Easter Day;
We shall ask God's permission for this
Seeing that we cannot find anyone else.'
They have done what he commanded
And for three days they remain there.

405 On the Saturday a messenger comes to them,³⁵
He greets them on God's behalf.
He had hoary hair, youthful eyes;
He had lived long without any danger.
He brought them bread from his country:³⁶

410 Big and very white unleavened loaves of fine wheaten flour;
And if they are short of anything,
He will find everything for them, this he promises well.
The abbot inquired about the nature of that place;
He doesn't know if he dare, but he said a little about it.³⁷

³⁴ Cf. ll. 831 and 881. Here 'la ceine' (The Last Supper) is referred to as 'lur mandét'.

³⁵ Burgess: 'Sunday'. Waters and Short and Merrilees have this as 'Saturday'.

³⁶ Cf. l. 141. If Short and Merrilees are correct in their assertion that the messenger is also the angel who guides the brethren on their journey (ll. 140–41), then the bread would represent manna from heaven (Exodus 16:15).

³⁷ The translation of this line is problematic and here I follow Burgess's translation, (see his note on p. 345, n. 7); this translation differs from that proposed by Short and Merrilees, for example, p. 84.

415 The other replied: 'We have in abundance
 Whatever our hearts are able to think.'
 The abbot exclaimed, 'There are sheep here,
 Bigger than I ever saw anywhere.'³⁸
 The other replies to him: 'It is no marvel:
 420 The sheep here are never milked;
 The winter is not inclement,
 Nor did any one of them die of sickness here.
 To that island which you see there,
 Board your ship, Brendan, and go.
 425 Tonight you will stay on that island
 And you will celebrate your feast tomorrow there.
 Tomorrow before nightfall you will leave it;
 You will see clearly why so soon.
 Then you will come back, and without danger,
 430 Sailing quite close to this coast;
 And then you will go to another place,
 Where I am departing for and following you there,
 Very close to here: I will find you there,
 I will bring you enough provisions.'

The Great Fish

435 Brendan sails, nothing opposes him,³⁹
 He goes to the island which he saw clearly.
 He had a favourable wind and he was soon there,
 But he had sailed across a very rough sea;
 And so he goes where God leads him.⁴⁰
 440 They land ashore, and without difficulty;
 All the brothers disembark
 Except for the abbot alone who stayed on board.
 They had fine divine and very sincere services
 At night and in the morning.
 445 After they have all completed their service
 In the ship as if in church,

³⁸ Cf. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 184.

³⁹ Literally, 'without hindrance'.

⁴⁰ Burgess: 'This is how things turn for those whom God guides'.

Flesh from the ship that they put there,
 They took out there preparing to cook;
 They go off to look for firewood,⁴¹
 450 With which to make their meals on land.
 When the meal was prepared,
 The steward said: 'Now sit down.'
 Then they cry out very loudly:
 'Ah! Lord abbot, wait for us!'
 455 For the whole earth was moving,
 And moving away from the ship.
 The abbot said: 'Do not be afraid,
 But pray fervently to the Lord God;
 And take all our provisions,
 460 And come to me on board the ship.'
 He threw them pieces of wood and very long ropes⁴²
 During all this they wet their clothes.
 They all boarded the ship;
 But their island rapidly moves off
 465 From ten leagues away they saw clearly
 The fire on it that they made there.
 Brendan said to them: 'Brothers, do you know
 Why you have been afraid?
 It is not land, but an animal
 470 Where we performed our feast,
 A sea fish greater than the greatest.⁴³
 Do not be astonished by that, gentlemen.
 God wanted to lead you here for this
 Because He wanted to instruct you.
 475 The more you will see His wonders,
 The better by far you will then believe in Him;
 The better you will trust Him and the more you will fear
 him,

⁴¹ For a discussion of 'feu' see Burgess, 'Les fonctions des quatre éléments,' pp. 16–20.

⁴² 'Raps'—(ropes), an English loanword used by Benedeit which Short, amongst others, suggest demonstrates that the A.N. *Voyage* was composed in England, see Short, 'Tam Angli Quam Franci, p. 155. Other loanwords used by Benedeit include *hasps* (l. 688) and *baz/bat* (boat, ll. 602, 890); see also Pope, 'Variant Readings,' p. 173.

⁴³ Plummer, *L.I.S.*, vol. 1, pp. 97–98, also Lane, *The Thousand and One Nights*, vol. 3, p. 7.

480 The more you will obey his command.
 First in rank the divine king made
 This sea fish above all others.⁴⁴

*The Paradise Of Birds*⁴⁵

After the abbot Brendan had said this,
 He sailed a wide distance of sea.
 They see land high and clear,
 Just as that brother had told them.

485 They soon arrive there and come to land,
 Nor do they shun the landing,
 Nor do they fear anything else,
 But push the ship ashore;
 They go off gently up a stream,
 490 And drag their ship with ropes.
 At the upper end of the stream was a tree
 As white as marble
 And the leaves are very broad,
 Spotted with red and white.

495 Judging the height by the eye
 The tree rose up above the cloud;
 From the summit to the ground
 The branches surround it very closely
 And extend widely through the air,

500 It casts shade a long way and takes away the light,
 It is all occupied by white birds—
 Never did one see any so beautiful.

 The abbot begins to marvel,
 And prays to God his counsellor

505 That He explains to him the cause
 And meaning of such an abundance of birds,
 What place this is where he has come,
 And that with his powers He instructs him about this.

⁴⁴ Cf. Genesis 1:21.

⁴⁵ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 492-93; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 42-43 and 48-49; Stokes, 'Snedgus,' pp. 20-21.

When he ended his prayer,
 510 One of the birds flew down;
 The flight sounded so sweetly
 Like the stroke of a bell does;
 And after it sat down on the ship,
 Brendan spoke finely and gently:
 515 'If you are God's creature,
 Then pay heed to my words.
 First tell me who you are,
 And why you are in this place and for what purpose,
 Both for you and all these other birds,
 520 Because you seem very fine to me.'
 The bird replies: 'We are angels,
 And formerly we were in heaven;
 And we fell from on high so low
 With the proud and the wretched one
 525 Who through pride rebelled,
 Rose treacherously against his lord.⁴⁶
 He was placed as master over us,
 He was duty-bound to feed us with God's virtues;
 Because he had great knowledge,
 530 It was necessary for us to accept a master.
 That one was most disloyal through pride,
 He scorned the word of God.
 After he had done this we served him,
 And as before we obeyed him;
 535 Because of this we have been disinherited
 From that kingdom of truth.
 But since this was not caused by us,
 We have all this by God's power:
 We do not share the same punishment as those
 540 Who showed pride like him.
 We have no suffering except only this:
 We are deprived from majesty,
 The presence of glory,
 And the joy before God.
 545 The name of the place that you asked about,

⁴⁶ Revelation 12:7–9; cf. Dante, *Inferno*, canto III.

It is the Paradise of Birds.'

And he [*the bird*] said to them: 'Now it has been a year
That you have suffered the fatigue of the sea;
There are another six

550 Years before you come to Paradise.
You will suffer much hardship and trouble
On the ocean, upward and downward,
And every year you will celebrate the feast
Of Easter upon the beast.'

555 After he had said this, he went away
To the top of the tree whence he descended.
When the day was drawing to an end,
Towards evening accordingly they sing a hymn;
They cry out very loudly with sweet voices,

560 And in the hymn they thank God
For they have seen in their exile
Consolation such as they have.

563/4 The supreme king never before
563/4 Sent members of the human race there.

565 Accordingly the abbot said: 'Have you heard
How well these angels have welcomed us?
Praise God for this and give thanks:
He loves you more than you think.'

570 They leave the ship in the water-way,
And eat on the shore;
And then they sang compline
Loudly with very great psalmody.
Then they all stretch out in their beds
And commend themselves to Jesus.

575 They sleep like ones who are weared
And who have passed through so many dangers;
But nevertheless at the cock-crow
They say matins as on every day,
And to the series of notes together with them

580 The chorus of birds sing the responses.

Preparations For The Second Year

At sunrise in the bright sunlight
 Behold God's faithful servants coming
 By whose teaching they have this guidance,
 And by whose gift they have their food and drink.

585 The former has said to them: 'Of food
 I will find for you great abundance;
 You will have enough, and without trouble,
 Until the Octave of Pentecost.⁴⁷

590 Then rest is necessary from your hardships:
 You will be here for about two months.'

Then he takes his leave and went away,
 And on the third day he reappeared there;
 Twice each week
 The former visited the company.

595 They did as he has told them;
 They all placed themselves under his guidance.
 When the time came for their departure
 They begin accordingly to make their ship watertight;
 They sew oxhides all over it,

600 For those which are on it are becoming completely worn out;
 They have enough of them and to spare,
 So that their boat may be sound.
 And they provide themselves well with everything,
 So that they do not perish through want of anything.

605 The former delivered bread and drink
 As much as they needed;
 He has calculated everything for fully eight months:
 The ship could not bear any more weight.
 When the former and they have kissed,

610 They take their leave and then depart.
 The former showed them with great weeping
 In which direction they must set their course.
 Behold the bird upon the mast;
 He told Brendan that he had to leave.

615 He told him that he had a long voyage to do,

⁴⁷ The Sunday after Whitsun.

And many troubles to endure;
 For eight full months they would be waiting expectantly
 Before they could enter land,
 Before they could come to the Isle of Ailbe,
 620 Where they would be at Christmas.
 When he had said this, he tarries no more;
 The boat goes away quickly in the wind.

The Isle Of Ailbe

They go sailing quickly away to sea,
 Thanking God for such good wind.
 625 The winds increased for them, and very often
 They fear danger and great storm.
 After four months they see land,
 But it is very difficult for them to reach;
 And nevertheless in the end
 630 In the sixth month they saw the end.
 They put in to land, but nevertheless
 They do not find an entrance there;
 Around they go for forty days,
 Before they can enter any harbour,
 635 Because of the rocks and high mountains
 Standing before them on the land.
 Then very tardily they find a hollow
 Which a stream makes, which is of service to them.
 They steer their ship upwards;
 640 They take a rest, for they are tired.
 Then the abbot said: 'Let's disembark,
 Let's seek what is necessary for our bodies.'
 They all disembark one by one,
 The abbot with his companions,
 645 And they find a double fountain
 One clear, the other turbid.⁴⁸
 They go running there as they are thirsty.

⁴⁸ The motif of two springs may derive from Plato's *Critias*, p. 1302; cf. Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 58–59.

The abbot said to them: 'Restrain yourselves.
 I forbid you to take anything so soon
 650 From here until we have spoken with the people
 651/2 We do not know what is the nature of
 The watercourses that we have found.'
 They [*the companions*] fear the words of the abbot,
 And keep their great thirst well in check.

655 Rapidly, and not tardily,
 Behold a tall old man running.⁴⁹
 They would have been afraid, had it not been for the habit –
 For he was a monk—but he said nothing.
 He comes and falls at Brendan's feet;
 660 The latter raises the former up by the hand.
 He bows deeply and humbly,
 To the abbot and begins to embrace them all.
 Then he takes Brendan by the right hand
 To take him away to his place of abode;
 665 He told the others by means of a sign
 That they should come to see a most worthy place.
 While they were going, the abbot has asked
 What place this is where they have landed;
 But the other is silent, makes no reply,
 670 He welcomes them warmly with much kind joy.
 They have gone so far that now they see
 The place where they must go:
 A good and fine abbey,
 There is no holier one beneath the firmament,
 675/6 The abbot of the place has its relics
 And treasures carried outside:
 Crosses and reliquaries and the ornamental metal cover for
 gospel-books
 Richly studded with amethysts
 Adorned with gold and with stones
 680 Precious and whole,

⁴⁹ The Húi Corra also encounter a community of Ailbe's monks, see Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 56–57.

With censers of solid gold,
 And the gems set therein.
 Their vestments are all of gold—
 In Arabia there are none so reddish-golden
 685 With jacinths and sards
 Very big and perfect;
 With topazes and jaspers
 The clasps are just as bright.
 All the monks are clothed in surplices,
 690 And have come outside with their abbot.
 With great joy and great kindness
 The gentlemen make a procession;
 And when everyone has embraced each other,
 Each one leads the other by the hand.
 695 They lead into their abbey
 Brendan and his company;
 They perform a beautiful and light divine service—
 They did not wish to make it too heavy.
 Then they go and eat in the refectory,
 700 Where all are silent apart from the readers.⁵⁰
 Before them they have sweet and white bread,
 Very sweet-tasting and completely healthy;
 They have roots instead of a dish of prepared food,
 Which satiates them more than delicacies.
 705 Then they have a very sweet-tasting drink:
 Water sweeter than mead.
 When they are refreshed, they have got up,
 And go singing versicles in the monastery;
 They go singing *miserere* versicles⁵¹
 710 Until all the brothers reached the stalls,
 Except alone for those who served:
 They in their turn sat in the refectory.
 When the bell was rung,
 And after the canonical hour was sung,
 715 The abbot of the place led them outside;
 He explained to them about themselves and himself,

⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:25.

⁵¹ Psalm 51; cf. Burgess, 'The Anglo-Norman Version,' p. 346, n. 9.

Who they are, how, since when they are there,
 From whom, and by whom they get food there:
 'There are twenty-four of us here
 720 Who dwell in this holy ground.
 It is eighty years since died
 Saint Ailbe the pilgrim.⁵²
 He was a rich man, of very great estate,
 But he abandoned everything for this place.
 725 When he went into seclusion,
 A messenger of God appeared to him;
 He brought him hither, found him ready
 This monastery which is still there.
 When we heard in several places
 730 That the holy Ailbe dwelt here,
 Through God we assembled here
 For the sake of him whom we loved.
 For as long as he lived, we served him,
 And obeyed him as our abbot.
 735 After he had taught us the monastic rules,
 And had got us firmly established,
 Then God took him very close to himself;
 It is eighty years since he died.
 God has supported us so well since
 740 That nothing bad has happened to us,
 No sickness of our bodies,
 Nor affliction nor bitterness.
 From God comes to us—we do not know anything else—⁵³
 The food that we have;⁵⁴
 745 We have no labourer here,
 We do not see the one who brings it here,
 But every day we find it quite ready,
 Without us asking for it elsewhere,
 Always on working days⁵⁵
 750 A whole bread between two;
 On festive days I have one to myself
 For supper, and everyone has his;

⁵² Literally, 'since Ailbe the pilgrim took his end'.

⁵³ Burgess: 'We know of no other source'.

⁵⁴ Cf. 1 Kings 17:6.

⁵⁵ Burgess: 'each week day'.

And of the two streams that you saw
 From which you very nearly drew water
 755 The clear one is cold, which we use for drink,
 The turbid one is hot, in which we wash.
 And at the times when we need
 We receive fire in our lamps,⁵⁶
 In spite of the burning that this fire does
 760 Neither wax nor oil gets used up any more;
 It lights on its own accord and it goes out on its own accord,
 We have no brother who deals with that.
 We live here and without any worries;
 We do not have a hard life at all.
 765 Before we knew about your visit
 God wished that we had provisions for you;
 He augmented it more than he was wont:
 So I am well aware that he wants us to receive you.
 On the last day of Epiphany
 770 Then and no sooner you will depart from here;
 Until then you will stay,
 Then and no sooner you will go away.'
 Then Brendan said: 'There is no place so dear
 Where I would remain so willingly.'
 775 The abbot replies: 'Go and seek for that
 For which you set out from land;
 Then you will return to your country,
 There you will die where you were born.
 You will depart from here in a week
 780 Eight days after Epiphany.'

The Intoxicating Spring

When the day came which the abbot appointed,
 Brendan took his leave of him.
 The one abbot leads the other,
 And together with him all the monks.
 785 They set sail, and give thanks to God for a favourable wind
 Which takes them away from the Isle of Ailbe.

⁵⁶ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 476–79.

They sail in the sea for a very long time,
 But they have no indication of the direction of land.
 They are without wind and provisions,
 The bitter hunger and the burning thirst increased;
 And the sea was so calm
 That progress is difficult:
 It was as dense as a marsh.⁵⁷
 Many a one on board has no belief in deliverance.

795 God comes to their aid with a storm:
 They see land and a landing place,
 And the hungry men know for sure
 That they are greatly loved by God.

800 They find their way in
 As if it was pre-ordained.
 They have a clear stream and fish therein,
 And they catch more than a hundred of them there.

803/4 They have need of herbs which are in the boggy ground
 Around the riverbed.

805 The abbot said to them: 'Do not desire
 To drink too much immoderately.'
 The latter drank from it according to their thirst;
 They have no faith in the words of the abbot.
 They took so much and afterwards in secret
 On account of which they were called foolish.

810 For sleep fell upon them
 For they lay down sleeping;
 The ones who drank too much lay prostrate,
 One for a day, another two, another three full days.

815 Brendan prayed for his monks
 Whom he saw all flat out.⁵⁸
 As soon as the latter came back to their senses,
 They all considered themselves very foolish.

820 The abbot said to them: 'Let us get out of here,
 So that you are not forgetful again.
 It is better to suffer honourable hunger
 Than to forget God and his invocation.'

⁵⁷ Cf. Tierney, *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, p. 74, ll. 31–32.

⁵⁸ Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (suite)', p. 71.

Friends Revisited

They have departed from there by sea,
 Until Maundy Thursday came;

825 Then father Brendan returned
 To the land where he was the previous year.
 Behold their host, the hoary old man.
 At the harbour he has pitched a tent for them;
 He has bathed the exhausted men,

830 And has made ready new clothes for them.
 They perform the ceremony commemorative of the Last
 Supper and the Washing of Feet
 As it is required in the monastic rules⁵⁹
 And they are there until the third day.
 They went away again on the Saturday,
 835 And they go sailing on to the fish.
 The abbot said to them: 'Let's disembark here.'
 Their cauldron which they lost
 The year before, now they saw;
 Jasconius has kept it,⁶⁰

840 Now they have found it on him;
 They are more secure on him
 And they celebrate a most beautiful festival there.
 All the night until the morning
 They did not cease to celebrate the festival;

845 They celebrate Easter,
 They do not forget their canonical hours.
 They did not delay beyond mid-day,
 But then they reloaded their ship;
 All at leisure and all quietly

850 From there they board their ship.
 The saint soon went away and hurries
 Towards the birds where they were before;
 They have clearly picked out the white tree

⁵⁹ Burgess: 'scripture'.

⁶⁰ MS A is unique in preserving the name *Jacoines*. This is discussed by Glyn S. Burgess, 'The Use of Animals in Benedict's Version of the Brendan Legend,' *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*, eds Clara Strijbosch and Glyn S. Burgess (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

And the birds on the branches.

855 From far out to sea they heard clearly
When the birds welcome them;
They did not stop their singing
Until the sailors have arrived.⁶¹

860 They drag their ship up the stream
Where the year before they had their haven.
Behold their host who is pitching a tent;
He is bearing a ship-full of provisions
He said to them: 'You will be here a short time.
With your permission I am going back.'⁶²

865 You will remain here, and without any hardship,
Until the Octave of Pentecost.
Fear nothing, I shall not be a long time;
When it is necessary, I will come to your aid.'
They make their ship fast with chains,
870 And they are there eight weeks.⁶³

When the time came for their departure,
One of the birds begins to fly down;
Its flight has made a big circle round,
Then it has alighted in the sail-yard.
875 It will wish to speak; Brendan sees it,
He told everyone to be silent.
'Lords,' the former said, 'to this resting-place
You will make your return each of these seven years,
And every year at Christmas

880 You will stay on the Isle of Ailbe;
You will celebrate the Last Supper and the Washing of Feet
Where your host has commanded it;
And every year you will celebrate the feast
Of Easter on the beast.'

885 When it had said this, it went away
To the top of the tree from which it descended.
The ship floats deeply in the sea;
Everyone watches out for the host,

⁶¹ Short and Merrilees have 'li pelerin' where Waters has 'li marin'. Waters follows the metre.

⁶² Burgess: 'I shall return to say farewell'.

⁶³ Short and Merrilees state that this is seven weeks.

Who has not delayed his arrival.
 890 He comes, his boat laden with provisions,
 And from his vessel loads theirs
 With good provisions of great value.
 Then he calls upon the Son of Mary
 That he may take care of this company.
 895 They fix the appointed day for their return.
 At the departure they shed tears.

The Fight Of The Sea-serpents

They sail with a completely favourable wind
 Which makes them journey towards the west.
 900 They have a sluggish and lifeless sea,
 Which makes it difficult for them to sail.
 When they have been under way for three fortnights,⁶⁴
 Cold runs through their veins,
 A great fear descends upon them,
 Because their ship is in great peril,
 905 And it was very nearly the case that a sudden storm
 Overturned the ship with them in it.
 Then something else came which dismayed them
 More than any trouble that they endure:
 Towards them came a sea serpent.
 910 Which pursued them more quickly than the wind.
 Its flames are fiery
 Like the mouth of a furnace;
 The flame is great, it gives out great heat,
 That is why they fear death.
 915 Its body is great beyond measure,
 It bellows more loudly than fifteen bulls;
 Were there no peril save only from the teeth,
 One thousand and five hundred would flee before it.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ ‘Quinzeines,’ literally ‘three times fifteen days’.

⁶⁵ 917–18 are problematic lines and here I follow Waters’s translation, Waters, *Voyage*, p. 116; Burgess translates this as ‘Its teeth alone would have been a great threat to them, even if there have been fifteen hundred of them in the boat,’ Burgess, ‘The Anglo-Norman Version,’ p. 88 and 346 n. 11.

919/20 Nothing more than the waves alone which it set in motion

920 Was necessary to make a great storm.⁶⁶
 As it approached the pilgrims,
 Then Brendan, the true divine, said:
 'Gentlemen, do not become frightened:
 God will avenge you for it.

925 Take care that for foolish fear
 You do not lose God and good fortune;
 For he who takes God for his protection
 Must not fear any beast which roars.'

930 When he had said that, he prayed to God;
 That for which he had prayed did not remain unfulfilled.

935 They see another beast coming,
 Which is to stand up to it well.
 As the first one came straight for the ship,
 The second one which comes bellowed furiously;

940 The first recognised its adversary,
 Abandoned the ship, and drew back.
 The two beasts have met in combat;
 They raise their heads very high;
 The fires gush from their nostrils,

945 Up to the clouds which fly high;
 They strike each other with their fins,
 As with shields, and with their paws.
 Biting with their teeth they wounded each other,
 As if they were sharp like spears;

950 The blood gushes out from the fierce bites
 Which the teeth make in these big bodies;
 The wounds are very deep,
 As a result of which the waves are bloody.
 The battle was furious,

950 There was a great disturbance in the sea.
 And then the latter won the victory,
 And kills the first one;

⁶⁶ Here I follow Waters's interpretation of the passage, but see Burgess, 'Repetition and Ambivalence,' p. 70.

It pulled it about so much with its teeth
 That it tore it up into three portions;
 955 And when it had had its revenge,
 It went back to its abode.
 Man must not despair any more
 But must establish more his faith as true,
 When he sees that God so readily
 960 Finds him food and clothing
 And so much help in great peril,
 And rescue from so many deaths.
 The abbot said to them: 'Let's leave everything else:
 Man must serve such a lord.'
 965 They reply very willingly:
 'For we know very well that he holds us dear to him.'
 Then on the following day they see land
 And expect to come safely to land.

The Voyagers are Miraculously Fed

They go there very quickly and disembark
 970 To rest their painful bodies.⁶⁷
 They pitch their tent on the greensward.
 And drag their ship up on to the dry land.
 As they landed ashore,
 The storms got up again;
 975 Brendan recognises from the rainy atmosphere
 That the weather will be very troublesome.
 The wind has risen up against them,
 And their provisions are running out;
 But they are not dismayed on this account:
 980 No matter what peril they endure.
 The abbot has preached to them so much,
 And everywhere God has always given enough,
 That they cannot doubt at all
 About any single thing on their journey.
 985 Then after this, by no means tardily,

⁶⁷ Short and Merrilees has 'lassez'—'weary' instead of 'penez'—'painful'.

The third portion of the fish comes;
 The waves of the sea drives it onwards so much
 That it makes it land ashore;
 The sudden storm has driven it ashore,
 990 And in this way it gives comfort to them.
 Then Brendan said: 'See, brothers,
 That which was previously your enemy
 Now helps us by the grace of God;
 You will eat for a long while.
 995 Fear nothing, there will be food for us,
 Whatever appearance it might show us;
 Take as much of it, according to your estimation,
 So that it is not lacking within three months.'
 The latter acted according to his command:
 1000 For so much time they stocked up.
 Of soft water from the springs
 They fill their barrels quite full,
 And stock up with firewood.
 Then when they have the breeze, they go away.

Griffin Versus Dragon

1005 God does not cease to work miracles.
 Another danger besets them.
 1007/8 If it had been the first of the two, this peril would not
 (in their estimation) have been smaller than the other,
 But would have been greater;
 But they are not afraid on account of the regard
 1010 That they have for God, and his protection.
 A flaming griffin comes down out of the air,
 It stretches out its talons to take them,
 And it has flaming cheeks,
 And extremely sharp paws.
 1015 No plank of the ship would be strong enough
 To prevent it from carrying it away with its claw;
 On account of the mere force of its flight and the wind
 that it makes
 The ship very nearly capsizes.
 As it drove them thus over the sea,

1020 A dragon came flaming very brightly;
 It sets its wings in motion and stretches its neck,
 And directs its flight towards the griffin.
 The battle takes place up in the air;
 The fires from both of them make a great light;
 1025 Blows and flames and bites and thrusts
 They give each other with the monks all watching.
 The griffin is big, the dragon lean;
 The former is stronger, the latter more violent.
 The griffin is dead, it fell in the sea
 1030 Those who have hated it are avenged.
 The dragon goes away with the victory
 The former [*i.e. the monks*] give thanks to God.
 They go forward away from there;
 Through God's spirit they are very wise.

The Congregation Of Sea-monsters

1035 The feast of St Peter the Apostle came
 He who was killed in the gardens of Nero;
 The former [*i.e. the monks*] celebrate his feast and glory,
 To Saint Peter the first pope.
 As the abbot performed the divine service,
 1040 And as the canon law has established,
 He sang very loudly with a resonant voice.
 Then all the brothers say to him:
 'Wonderful dear father, sing more quietly,
 Or if you do not you will cause us to perish;
 1045 For each wave is so clear,
 Where the sea is deeper,
 That we can see right down to the sea-bed,
 And a great medley of fish.⁶⁸
 We can see big and cruel fish—
 1050 We never heard talk of their like.
 If the noise arouses them,
 Be sure that we must die.'

⁶⁸ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite),' pp. 54–57.

The abbot smiled, and reprimanded them,
 And judged them to be very foolish:
 1055 'Gentlemen, why are you afraid of anything?
 How you thrust aside your beliefs!
 You have suffered greater perils,
 And God was a good guardian against them all.
 This peril has not yet befallen you.
 1060 Cry *Mea culpa!*' Brendan said to them.
 He sang more loudly and more resonantly.
 Powerful beasts rise from the sea,
 They go alongside the ship and all around it,
 Enjoying the day's festival.
 1065 After the monks have sung that which was appropriate for
 the day,
 Each fish continued along its way.

*The Great Pillar And Canopy*⁶⁹

They pursue their course forward and see clearly
 A great pillar in the open sea;
 It was made of natural jacinth,
 1070 There was not an ounce of other material;
 It was made of blue jacinth;
 Rich would be the possessor of it.
 It ascended upwards as far as the clouds,
 It went down as far as the bottom of the sea.
 1075 A canopy hangs around it;
 From the top down into the sea it descends,
 Delicately worked in precious gold—
 It could not be made in exchange for all the world.
 Brendan sails in that direction;
 1080 It seemed to him to be a long while before he arrived there.
 With sail raised he enters into the canopy
 With his monks and with his ship.
 He sees an altar made of emerald
 Where the pillars descend into the sea;

⁶⁹ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite),' pp. 52–55; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 44–45.

1085 The sacrarium was made of sardonyx,
 The pavement chalcedony.
 Fixed into the pillar [*of jacinth*] there was
 A beam of fine gold which supported the altar;
 And the lamps are made of beryl.

1090 The monks fear no danger here;
 They stay here until the third day.
 They sing masses each in their turn.
 Brendan reflects on this to himself,
 He must not look for God's mysteries.

1095 He said to the monks: 'Trust my judgement:
 Let us depart from here, let's go away.'
 A very magnificent chalice
 The abbot takes, all made of crystal;
 He knows well that he is not being unfaithful to God,

1100 Since he is carrying it off in order to do him service there-
 with.

The pilgrims have covered a great distance,
 But still they do not know the end;
 And nevertheless they are not idle,
 But the further they go the more they exert themselves,
 They will not give up exerting themselves
 Until they have seen what they desire.

The Smithy Of Hell

A dark land appeared before them,
 Of black fog and cloud;
 It was smoking with putrid fumes,
 Stinking more than putrefying flesh;
 It was surrounded by a great blackness.

1110 The monks do not desire to take rest,
 And from far away have now heard
 That there they would not be very welcome.

1115 They make great efforts to direct their course elsewhere;
 But they must take their course hither,
 For the wind led them there;
 And the abbot instructed them well,
 And has said to them: 'Gentlemen, be aware

1120 That you are compelled to go to hell.
 You never had greater need
 Than you have now of God's protection.'
 Brendan has made the sign of the cross on them:
 He is well aware that the abyss of hell is very near.

1125 The nearer they get, the more evil they see,
 The more they find the valley gloomy.
 From the deep valleys and the pits
 Big burning blades of metal fly;
 The wind roars from blowing bellows,

1130 No thunder makes such a noise.
 Sparks with the burning blades,
 Burning rocks and the flames
 Fly so high on account of this violence
 That they take away the light of day.

1135 While they were going close by a mountain,
 They saw a demon of whom they are afraid;
 This demon was extremely big,
 He came out of hell well heated up;
 He carried an iron hammer in his fist—

1140 There was enough for a pillar.
 As he became aware through his sight
 In his eyes flaming like fires which burn,
 And he sees the monks, he longs
 To prepare his instruments of torture.

1145 Spewing flames from his throat,
 With great leaps he runs into the forge.⁷⁰
 He came back very quickly with his blade of metal
 All red like a flame;
 In the tongs with which he was holding it

1150 There was a load which was quite enough for ten oxen.
 He raises it up towards the cloud,
 And then he hurls it straight towards them;
 A whirlwind does not go more quickly,
 When the wind draws it up into the air,

1155 Nor does the bolt of a cross-bow,

⁷⁰ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin (Suite),' pp. 53–55; Stokes, 'Húi Corra,' pp. 40–41 and 46–47.

Nor a missile hurled from a sling.
 The higher it rises, the more it blazes,
 And it gathers strength as it proceeds;
 It first splits up, then combines again into one mass.

1160 It does not fall on them, instead it passes beyond them.
 Where it falls in the sea, there it burns
 Like heather in a clearing;
 And the blade burns for a very long time
 With a big flame in the sea.

1165 The wind has driven the ship onwards,
 On account of which they flee from there.
 They went away on the favourable wind,
 But they often looked behind them;
 They saw the island alight

1170 And covered in smoke.
 They see several thousand demons
 They hear cries of the damned and weeping.⁷¹
 The stench comes to them, exceedingly great,
 From the smoke which spreads far through the air.

1175 They put up with it as best they could,
 They escaped as much as they were able.
 Just as a holy man, when he has many hardships—
 Of hunger, thirst, cold, heat,
 Anxiety, sadness and great fears—

1180 Increases proportionately his trust in God.⁷²
 Thus it is as regards them, after they have seen
 Where the damned are received.
 They make fast their trust in God,
 And do not direct unbelief towards Him.

1185 They make their way forward, they fear nothing,
 For they know that they are getting on well.

⁷¹ Cf. Stokes, 'Máel Dúin,' pp. 484–87.

⁷² Burgess, 'La Souffrance et le repos,' pp. 267–77.

The Smoke-capped Mountain

It was early in the morning, when
 They saw a place close to them:
 A mountain covered with clouds;
 1190 The wind took them there by force.
 They soon came to the shore,
 But it was of a very high elevation;
 Not one of all of them could see
 How high the mountain was;
 1195 Towards the shore it does not descend any more
 Than there where it extends upwards
 And the earth is completely black—
 The like of which there had not been in the whole of their
 journey.
 For what reason they did not know
 1200 One of them jumps out; then they didn't recover him.
 They have all heard what he has said to them,
 But only the abbot saw it with his eyes:
 'Gentlemen, I am now snatched away from you,
 On account of my sins, believe it firmly.'
 1205 And the abbot sees him dragged
 By a hundred demons who make him howl.
 They depart from there, they go elsewhere;
 They look behind, for they are afraid.
 The mountain is no longer covered in smoke,
 1210 They see hell quite open.
 Hell discharges fire and flames,
 Burning poles and blades of metal,
 Pitch and sulphur right up to the clouds,
 And then receives them back, for they belong to it.

Judas

1215 Then Brendan led them across the sea,
 Arming them with the sign of the cross.
 Seeing a lump in the sea,
 As if it were a rock;
 And indeed, it was a rock,

1220 But they did not think it with confidence.
 Then the abbot said: 'Do not tarry;
 Let us find what it is and hurry towards it.'
 And so they went there and they found
 That which they had little expected:
 1225 On the rock to which they had come
 They found sitting a naked man.⁷³
 He was greatly plucked bare and pulled about,
 qLacerated and torn;
 His face was bound by a cloth,
 1230 He clung to a pillar.
 Firmly he clung to the stone,
 So that the waves could not tear him away;
 The waves of the sea struck him strongly,
 Enough to cause his death.
 1235 One struck him, to the point that he nearly perished;
 The other, behind him, threw him up;
 Danger in front; danger behind,
 Danger above, danger below;
 Great torment on the right
 1240 And no less on the left.
 So greatly did the waves attack,
 With great weariness he made his laments:
 'Oh! Holy Jesus, if I dare,
 Have mercy on me! I cry.
 1245 Oh! Jesus, King of majesty,
 Could my death not come about in winter nor summer?
 Jesus, who rules all of heaven,
 Your mercy is already so good;
 Jesus, you are so merciful;
 1250 Can there be no hour that I find relief?
 Jesus, born of Mary,
 I do not know whether I can cry for mercy,
 I cannot, nor dare not, for I deserve so much punishment
 That judgement is made on me.'

1255 When Brendan heard this lamenting,

⁷³ For a lexical discussion of Judas's suffering see Glyn S. Burgess, 'La Souffrance et le repos,' p. 275.

Never had he felt such sorrow;
 He raised his hand and made the sign of the cross over them
 all,
 To approach with great effort.
 With his approach the sea did not move,
 1260 No wind nor breeze disturbed them.
 Brendan said to him: 'Tell me, wretched man,
 Why you suffer this torment.
 On behalf of Jesus, to whom you cry,
 I command you to tell me;
 1265 And with certainty to tell me what it is,
 And what sin it is for.'
 Brendan could speak no further for weeping
 But then became quiet.
 The other responded in a low voice—
 1270 It was very hoarse and very weary:
 'I am Judas, who served
 Jesus, whom, I betrayed.
 I am the man who sold my Saviour,
 And for that sorrow I hanged myself;
 1275 Pretending love by giving a kiss,
 And divided when I must reconcile.
 I am he who kept his money,
 And squandered it surreptitiously;
 And the gifts that he ordered to be given—
 1280 To the poor, he exhorted them—
 I concealed in my purse:
 For this have sorrows befallen me;
 And I thought that it was concealed
 From he who made the starry heavens.
 1285 But God well defends the poor;
 Yet, they are rich and I *[am]* a beggar.
 I am the traitor whom God despises,⁷⁴
 The innocent lamb has been abandoned to the wolves.
 When I saw that he was in the hands of Pilate,
 1290 Then my spirit was downcast.
 When I saw he was in the hands of the Jews,

⁷⁴ Burgess: 'The traitor who hated God'.

The holy man handed over to the cruel men,
When I saw that they adored him with derision,
And crowned him with thorns,
1295 When I saw how badly he was treated,
Know that I was greatly saddened.
Then I saw that he was led to die,
I saw blood flow from his tender side.
When I saw him suspended on a cross,
1300 And he was sold to death by me,
I quickly offered back the thirty pieces of silver;
But they were unwilling to accept restitution.
I did not repent, rather
Instead I killed myself in my madness;
1305 And as I did not make my confession,
I am damned for all eternity.
You see nothing of the torment
That I undergo in hell;
This is a respite from my danger,
1310 That I receive from Saturday evening.
On Sunday, all day
Until the evening I have such rest,
And for the fifteen days of Christmas
Here sets aside my great pain,
1315 And on the feast of Mary
I have my torment in no way then;
And from Easter to Pentecost
I find so much relief; I have no more pain than you see;
On other feasts in the course of the year
1320 I have an intermission from my distress.
On Sunday, when evening comes
I depart from here to undergo my torment.'

Then Brendan said: 'Now tell me,
Because of the respite you have here,
1325 In what place do you dwell
In these torments and these pains?
And in what place do you have these pains?
As, when you depart from here, where do you go?'

Judas replied: 'The place is near
1330 Where there is fire from the devils;
It is not far, only a short distance;

Far enough away that I do not hear them here.
There are two hells close by here:
It is great torment to suffer in them.

1335 Very near here are two hells
Whose works never cease summer or winter.
The most bearable is horrible,
And most painful to those who are there;
Those who suffer punishment there think
The others suffer no adversity.

1340 Outside myself, not a single one of us knows
Which of the two are more painful;
No one else has to undergo more than one of the two,
But I am wretched in both.

1345 One is on the mountain, the other is in the valley,
The salty sea separates them;
The two hells, separated by the sea,
But it is a marvel that it *[the sea]* does not burn.
That of the mountain is more painful

1350 And that of the valley is more horrible;
That near the sky is hot and sweaty,
That near the sea is cold and stinking.
For one night and one day I am there,
Then for just as long I remain below;

1355 One day I rise, another I descend,
There is no end to my torment;
These changes are not to lighten my torment
But to make my suffering worse
On Monday, both night and day

1360 I am turned on the wheel,
And wretch that I am, suspended on a hook,
Turned as quickly as the wind can do;
The wind drives it through the air,
Always I go round, always return.

1365 Then on Tuesday I am hurled,
And made insensible;
Over the sea and right to the valley
To the other hell where there is so much suffering.
There I am soon chained,

1370 Much reviled by devils;
I am laid upon spits,

Upon me they place lead weights and rocks;
There I am pierced by a spit
Where my body is full of holes.
1375 On Wednesday I am hurled up,
Where my torment is changed:
For part of the day I am boiled in pitch,
When I am now stained, as you see;
Then I am removed and roasted,
1380 Bound to a post between two fires.
The post of iron is fixed there;
It is only there for my sake;
It is as red, as if for ten years
It has lain in a fire as bellows blow;
1385 And the fires catch the pitch
To increase my torment;
Then I am hurled again into pitch,
I am smeared in order to burn more.
There is no marble so hard
1390 That it would not be melted if it came there;
Yet I am made for this anger,
For my body cannot perish.
And such torment that troubles me,
I have for a day and a night.
1395 Then on Thursday I am taken to the valley,
To suffer the opposite torment
 Accordingly I am placed in a cold place,
It is very dark and gloomy;
I am so cold that I long
1400 For the fires that burns strongly;
And then it seems to me that there is no torment
That I feel more than the cold;
And it seems to me that of each one
None is as strong than that I am placed in.
1405 On Friday I return upwards,
Where so many deaths await me.
There they flay all my body,
That nothing remains of my skin;
In the soot there is also salt
1410 Then they push me down with burning stakes;
Then they grow back rapidly

New skins for this torment.
Ten times a day they flay me,
Then they force me into the salt;
1415 And then they make me drink
The molten lead with copper.
On Saturday I am hurled down,
Where the other demons change my torment;
And then I am placed in a dungeon—
1420 In all hell there is nowhere so terrible,
In all hell there is nowhere so filthy—
In going down, and without a rope.
There I lie, I have no light—
In the darkness and the stench.
1425 The stench comes there so greatly
That I am in constant fear that my heart will explode;
I cannot vomit on account of the copper
That they make me drink;
I swell, my skin stretches;
1430 I am full of anguish, all but split;
Such burning, such cold and such stench
Judas suffers, and such sorrows.
Since yesterday was Saturday,
I came here between nones and midday;
1435 I will have my rest sitting here.
Very soon I will have suffering in the evening:
One thousand devils will come forthwith;
I will have no respite when they have possession of me.
But if you have knowledge of such things,
1440 Tonight make me have rest.
If you are of such merit,
Make me be left free.
I know well that you are holy and pious,
Since you have come to this place without fear.'

1445 Brendan cried great tears
For this man who had so many sorrows;
He ordered him to tell him
Why the cloth had been bound,
And why he clung to the stone,
1450 He asked where and of what he came.
The other replied: 'In my life

I did little good and much evil.
The good and evil appear to me
Which in the heart are more dear to me.

1455 From the alms which I kept
I bought a cloth for a naked man;
For this I am granted this gift and am bound
Around the mouth so that I do not drown;
When the waves strike me in my face,

1460 To some degree I am thus protected;
But in hell it does not avail me,
For I did not buy it with my own money.
By a watercourse I made a hillock,
And then a strong little bridge above,

1465 Where many men had perished,
Then they passed unharmed;
For this I have this respite
From my great misery.'

As nightfall approached,
1470 Brendan saw that the man spoke the truth:
He saw a thousand devils coming
With torments and great danger;
And coming straight to this wretched man;
One leapt forward and seized him with a crook.

1475 Brendan said to them: 'Leave him here
Until Monday morning comes.'

They argued and disputed
They would not be prevented from taking him.
The Brendan said: 'I command you,
1480 And invoke Jesu my protector.'

So they were compelled to leave him;
They had no power to take him away.
Brendan was there all night;
The devils greatly annoyed by him.

1485 Devils were around;
Anxious for day to break;
A great grumbling in loud voices,
Saying that he [*i.e. Judas*] would have twice the suffering.

The abbot replied: 'He will not have torment
1490 More than that given him by judgement.'

And then, as it had become full daylight,

They departed with Judas.
 Brendan went away from there.
 He was certain of God's protection;
 1495 And the monks all knew
 That there were safe with God's guidance.
 They thanked God for their voyage
 And for all their equipment.⁷⁵

A Monk Mysteriously Disappears⁷⁶

When the companions count their number,
 1500 There is one missing in their count,
 And they don't know what has become of him,
 Nor in what place he has been detained;
 They know what the first two have done,
 But they are perplexed about the third.
 1505 The abbot, who knew everything, said to them:
 'God has done with him what pleased Him.
 Have no doubt about this,
 Thus keep well on your course.
 Be aware that he has his last judgement,
 1510 Either for rest or torment.'

Paul The Hermit⁷⁷

And as they travel, they see rising up
 A very high mountain all alone in the sea.
 They come quickly to it, but the shore
 Is steep and difficult of access.
 1515 The abbot said to them: 'I shall disembark.

⁷⁵ 'agreies'—'equipment', discussed in Waters, *Voyage*, p. 128; also T.D. Hemming, 'Language and Style in the *Voyage of Saint Brendan* by Benedeit,' *Littera et Sensus: Essays on Form and Meaning in Medieval French Presented to John Fox*, ed. D.A. Trotter (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 1–16, p. 6.

⁷⁶ This scene has been added to the A.N. *Voyage* as Benedeit omits the scene concerning the Island of the Three Choirs in which the second supernumerary leaves the company in the *Navigatio*.

⁷⁷ Cf. Stokes, 'Mael Dúin (Suite)', pp. 494–95.

Let no one move except for myself.'
 He ascends the mountain and goes for a long time
 Before he has found anything.
 His course took him through a rocky place,
 1520 Then a large smooth stone came into view.
 A man came quickly from this place,
 He seemed like a religious and pious man.
 This man calls Brendan forward—
 For God had made him aware of his name—
 1525 Then he kisses him; he told him to bring his companions:
 Let no one be missing.
 Brendan goes there, and gets them to come,
 They make their ship fast to the rock.
 This man has called them all by his own name:
 1530 'Come forward and kiss me.'
 This they did. Then he leads them
 To his dwelling; he shows it to them.
 They rest as he has told them to.
 They gaze with astonishment at him and his dress:
 1535 He has no clothing other than hair,
 With which he is covered as if with a veil;
 He had an angelic countenance,
 And his whole body was celestial;
 Snow is not so white or pure
 1540 As the hair of this brother.
 Brendan said to him: 'Fair dear father,
 Tell me who you are.' The former: 'Willingly.
 My name is Paul the hermit.
 I am free here from all pains.
 1545 I have been here for a very long time,
 And I came away here under God's direction.
 I shunned the worldly life to become a hermit in the wood:
 I chose this life.
 In accordance with the little intelligence that I possessed,
 1550 I served God as well as I knew how;
 He accepted it in his kindness,
 He has given me more credit for my service than I deserve.
 There where he sent me instructions to go, here I came
 Where I awaited my glory.
 1555 How did I come here? I boarded a ship

Which I found quite ready to travel;
 God guided me quickly and calmly;
 When I arrived, the ship went back.
 I have dwelt here for ninety years,

1560 There is fine weather here, always summer;
 Here I wait for the Last Judgement,
 For that I have been commanded by God;
 I am here in flesh and bone,
 Without any suffering I am at rest.

1565 At the Last Judgement, then and no sooner,
 The spirit will be separated from the body;
 I shall rise again with the righteous
 On account of the life I have known here.
 I had a servant for a full thirty years,

1570 He was mindful of serving me:
 He was an otter, who brought me
 Often fish with which he fed me,
 Three days every week;
 Never was there any blank day

1575 When he didn't bring me three fish,
 Which provided me with a copious supply of food.

1577/8 Suspended round his neck, full of seaweed,
 He wore a small bag quite dry,
 From which I could cook my fish.

1580 It was indeed the Lord, through whom these things were
 done.
 In the first years when I came here
 For each of thirty years I was fed in this way;
 I was fed so well on fish
 That I did not need to drink anything;

1585 Our Lord was not at all troubled
 To supply such provisions, nor greater.
 After the thirty years the otter did not come again;
 It was not too much trouble for him *[the otter]*, nor did he
 despise me,
 But God no longer wished that from outside
 Provisions came for my body alone.

1590 Here He made me the spring,
 Which is full of all food and drink;
 It seems to him, who drinks anything from it,

That he is sated with all food and drink.
 1595 I have lived on water for sixty years,
 Thirty on fish, that makes ninety;
 And before that I was in the world fifty years:
 My age is a hundred and forty.
 Brother Brendan, now I have told you
 1600 How I have my delight here.
 But you will go to Paradise;
 For almost seven years you have searched for it.
 Before that you will return
 To the good host, where you stayed;
 1605 He will lead you, and you follow him,
 Into Paradise where the righteous are.
 Take some of this water with you,
 With which you may be protected from hunger and thirst.
 Go back into your ship, do not be a long time;
 1610 A man must not overstay and miss a favourable wind.'
 He gives his permission to depart, and Brendan takes his
 leave;
 He gives thanks for his good deeds.

The end of the Seventh Year

Now they turn back towards their host,
 The sky is heavily overcast.
 1615 They sail for a long time before they arrive,
 Although they keep a straight course,
 And on Maundy Thursday
 They arrive there with great difficulty;
 They stay there as is their wont,
 1620 Until they must move from there.
 On Saturday they go to the fish;
 As in the other years they celebrate the feast there
 And they are well aware that now it is seven years
 That the fish is their servant;
 1625 They praise God for this, they do not fail to do so,
 Through God's unfailing virtue.
 And the following day they move from there
 With such a wind as they find;

They go away straight towards the birds,
 1630 There where they will sojourn for two months;
 There they stay in great happiness,
 And await the favourable escort
 Of their good host, who will make with them
 The voyage which is so good and beautiful.

1635 He prepared for all their needs,
 For he was well aware that the journey is long;
 And he is well aware of everything they need,
 For these he provides whatsoever he can.
 They put to sea, the host with them;
 1640 They will never return there again.

Paradise

They steer their course towards the east;
 They do not lose their way at all:
 As there is someone on board who is acting as escort
 They proceed with joy and happiness.

1645 With an unimpeded course, without interruption,
 Forty days on the high seas
 Thus they sail so that they see nothing
 Apart from the sea and the heavens which were above
 them;
 And with the permission of the divine king

1650 Now they approached the fog
 Which completely surrounded the Paradise
 Of which Adam was the master.
 Great clouds make darkness,
 Which ensures that his [*i.e. Adam's*] heirs cannot return
 there.

1655 The great fog blinds one so much,
 That whoever enters it loses his sight completely,
 And he has no sight of God
 Who manages to pass through this cloud.
 Accordingly the host said: 'Do not tarry,
 1660 But fill your sail with wind.'

As they approach, the cloud divides
 To the width of a street;

The monks enter into the fog,
And have a wide road through.

1665 They put great trust in their host
On account of the cloud that they have alongside;
It is extremely big, and dense,
And it is heaped up on both sides.
For three days they sail all at full speed

1670 Along the course that presents itself to them;
On the fourth they come out of this fog;
The pilgrims are very glad.
They have come out of the cloud,
And they have seen Paradise clearly.

1675 First of all a wall appears to them,⁷⁸
Which was built up right to the clouds;
There was neither crenellation nor gallery
Nor embattlement nor tower.
None of them knows with certainty

1680 What material it might be made of,
But it was whiter than any snow:
The maker was the Sovereign King
Everything was in one piece, without incisions—
There was never any labour in making it—

1685 But the gems shine very brightly,
With which the wall was studded.
There were many gold-spotted chrysolites
Thereon;
The wall blazes, all is on fire,

1690 With topaz, chrysoprase,
With jacinth, chalcedony,
With emerald and sardonyx;
Jasper along with amethysts
Shine brightly around the edges;

1695 The jacinth there is bright
With the crystal and beryl;
The one gives brightness to the other.
The person who set them was very skilled.
They convey great light to each other

⁷⁸ Cf. Revelation 21:12–20.

1700 From the colours which thus flash back.
 The hills are high, of hard marble,
 Where the sea beats upon the shore very far from the wall;
 And upon the marble hill
 Stands the mountain, all of fine gold;

1705 And then above the mountain stood the wall,
 Of Paradise which encloses the flowers.
 Such is the wall, set so on high,
 Which ought to have been inhabited by us.
 They head straight for the gate,

1710 But the entrance was very difficult:
 There are dragons guarding it;
 As if it was completely on fire.
 Right at the point of entry hangs a sword—
 He who does not fear this is not wise—

1715 The point of the sword downwards, the hilt upwards;
 It is no wonder if they are afraid.
 It dangles, and whirls round;⁷⁹
 Just seeing it makes one dizzy;
 Neither iron nor rock nor adamant

1720 Can be undamaged by its sharp edge.
 Then they have seen a young man⁸⁰
 Who comes towards them, very, very handsome;
 And he is God's messenger,
 He told them to come ashore

1725 They land; the youth welcomes them,
 He calls them all by their correct name;
 Then he has kissed them gently,
 And calmed all the dragons down:
 He makes them lie on the ground

1730 Quite humbly and without resistance;
 And he causes the sword to be held back
 By an angel whom he summons,
 And the entrance is open.
 They all enter in true glory.

⁷⁹ Genesis 3:24; for a discussion of 'En aines pent', see John Orr, 'Old French *en aines*', *Modern Language Review* 22 (1927): 199–201.

⁸⁰ In Burgess's translation the Host and the Youth are the same person.

1735 This young man goes ahead,
 He walks through Paradise with them.
 Of fine woods and meadow-land
 They see a very fertile land;

1739/40 The meadow,
 1740 Which is perpetually fair with flowers, is a garden
 The flowers smell very sweet there,
 As beseems the abode of the pious,
 An abode delightful with trees and flowers,
 Very precious with fruits and scents.

1745 Neither of brambles nor of thistles
 Nor of nettles is there any abundance;
 There is no tree nor herb at all
 Which does not give off sweetness.
 Flowers and trees always produce fruit,
 1750 Nor do they ever wait for any season;
 It is always pleasant summer there
 The fruit of trees and flowers is always ready,
 The wood is always filled with game,
 And all the rivers with good fish.

1755 The rivers there flow with milk.
 This abundance is everywhere.
 The reeds exude honey
 On account of the dew which descends from heaven.
 And there is a mountain it is all of gold;

1760 1760 If there is a big stone, it is treasure.⁸¹
 The bright sun shines there without end,
 Neither wind, nor breeze makes a hair move there;
 No cloud comes into the air there
 Which would take away the brightness of the sun.

1765 He who will be here will have no suffering there,
 Nor will he ever know whence evil comes,
 Neither heat, nor cold, nor affliction,
 Nor hunger, nor thirst, nor privation;
 He will have all his desires in abundance.

1770 1770 No matter how great is his desire
 He will not lose that, he is sure of it;

⁸¹ Burgess: 'No treasure house has a stone so big'.

He will have it every day and will find it ready.
Brendan sees this joy clearly.
The space of time seemed to him extremely short
1775 When he remained there to see this;
He wanted to sit there for a long time.
The youth has led him a long way forward,
And he has instructed him about many things;
He explains well in detail, and so tells him,
1780 About that which will delight each one.
The youth goes in front, and Brendan after,
On to a high mountain like a cypress;
From here they see wonderful sights
For which they know no explanations.
1785 They see angels, and hear them
As if they are rejoicing at their coming;
They hear their great melody,
But they cannot stand it at all:
Their nature cannot comprehend
1790 Such great rejoicing, nor listen to it.
The youth has said to them: 'Let's go back,
I will not take you on further from here;
You are not permitted to go further,
For you possess too little knowledge for this.
1795 Brendan, you see this Paradise
For which you have prayed to God so much.
You have seen a hundred thousand times as much glory
As you have ever seen before that.
Now you will not learn any more about it,
1800 Before you return.
Where you now came in body
Soon you will return in spirit.
Now off you go; so you will come back,
You will await the Last Judgement here.
1805 Take away these precious stones
As tokens of comfort.'
Then when he had said this, he went away,
He brought stones as tokens.

Brendan's Return And Death

1810 Brendan has taken his leave of God
And of the beloved holy men of Paradise.
The youth has led them away,
Until they have all boarded the ship,
Then he has made the sign of the cross on them.
Very soon they have hoisted their sail.

1815 There their pious host remained,
For Paradise was his rightful estate.
And the monks sail away joyfully,
They have no hindrance from the breeze;
Within three months they are in Ireland

1820 By God's great virtue.
Already the news is travelling through the land
That he has come from Paradise.
His relatives are not alone in rejoicing,
But everyone is universally joyful.

1825 In particular his dear brothers are glad
Because they have now got their kind father back.
He often tells them where they have wandered,
Where they were content, and where they were distressed;
And he also told them how he found a ready response

1830 When he asked God for anything he needed;
And one thing and the other, he told them everything,
How he found that which he sought.
Several of them became saints
On account of the virtue that they saw in him.

1835 As long as Brendan was in this earthly life,
He assisted many through God's virtue.
When it came to the time that he died
He went back where God destined him.
Into the kingdom of God, where he went,

1840 More than a thousand go because of him.

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