

2001

## **ST. BRIGID'S LEPERS**

Maria C. Mahoney

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/honors\\_etd](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/honors_etd)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

## ST. BRIGID'S LEPERS

Maria C. Mahoney, Louisiana State University

In sixth century Ireland, various plagues devastated the land, as recorded by the Annals of Inisfallen which were begun after the late seventh century. Concomitant with these deadly diseases, leprosy claimed more than its usual number of victims (Joyce, 1913). The deaths of several lepers are noted in the chronicles: apparently even the prominent and holy were not spared from this affliction. For instance, a certain Nicthan died in 556 (Annals of Inisfallen; de Paor, 1993, 125) and St. Neasan in 551 (Annals of the Four Masters; de Paor, 1993, 132). Although Ireland was plagued by leprosy both before and after this century, as shown in various saints' lives, there is a dramatic increase in the crowd of victims about this time. Leprosy was identified by outward symptoms rather than identification of Hansen's bacillus; consequently many 'peeling, scabby or scaling diseases' came to be called by its name (Lee, 1996, 12), further magnifying the number of people identified with the malady.

Of the three major saints of Ireland, Patrick, Brigid and Columcille, the two latter lived in this troubled period. St. Patrick's death is traditionally recorded as having occurred in the late fifth century. Therefore, it is no surprise that there are few mentions of lepers in his *vitae*. Nevertheless, he does meet one *clam*, 'leper', in the *Vita Tertia* (Bieler, 1971, 133-4; cf. *Betha Patraic*, ll.242 ff.). The fleeting encounter takes place on the continent as Patrick prepares to set sail to Ireland. A leper asks to be taken aboard the ship (thinking, I suppose, that the island did not quite have a sufficient number of lepers yet). The sailors claim the ship is too heavy already. Patrick then dumps his altar into the

sea so the unfortunate man can sit either in the altar's place or on the altar itself (the two major recensions differ on this point). St. Patrick finds his altar after the journey is over, but we never hear what happens to the man for whom it was sacrificed. One instance of a cure is recorded in the *Tripartita S. Patricii*. Another Life, the *Vita Prima*, mentions that St. Patrick *curabat caecos et leprosos*, 'was curing the blind and the lepers' but the text does not elaborate (Colgan's *Trias Thaumaturgas*; cf. *Betha Patraic*, l.598) . Clearly, St. Patrick did not have a special mission to lepers. St. Columcille, who, because he lived in the sixth century, would have had more opportunity to care for or heal the victims of this malady, never comes into contact with them in any of the early *vitae* (see Ryan, 1972, 323). However, the Middle Irish Life, *Betha Colum Chille*, provides an account of one cure and one meeting. A less famous saint, St. Mochuda, also known as Carthach, whom Plummer claims to have a special devotion to lepers, only twice in the Irish Life is described as taking care of them. On one occasion the Life simply relates that 'all the lepers that were there, Mochuda with his own hands ministered to their pains and diseases' (Plummer, 1922, 289). The second instance records his only cure: 'A leprous man set out and came to Mochuda; and he entreated God for help in his behalf; and he was healed forthwith' (ibid., 285). Both mentions are brief, as is that in the *Vita Tertia* of St. Patrick mentioned above (Bieler, 1971, 133). Similarly, in the Latin Life of St. Mochuda, there is one passing reference to a cure (Plummer, 1910, 179) and one story--which is singularly lacking in any interaction between the saint and his clients--of St. Mochuda founding a leper-city (ibid., 193).

*Audientes iam leprosi sanctum Mochudu curam leprosorum  
gerentem, de diversis Hybernie provinciiis veniebant ad eum; et  
recipiebat eos vir Dei. Quos duxit secum de civitate Rathen ad  
aliam suam civitatem Lyoss Mor, et constituit eis ibi locum, in quo*

*adhuc leprosi manent cum honore, secundum dignitatem suam a  
sancto patre Mochuda.*

Now the lepers, hearing of St. Mochuda conducting the care of lepers, were coming to him from the various provinces of Ireland; and the man of God was receiving them. And he led them with him from the city of Rathen to another city, Lismore, and he built a place for them there, in which lepers still remain with honor, according to their own merit from the holy father Mochuda.

St. Brigid, on the other hand, finds a *clam* ('leper') wherever she goes<sup>1</sup>. These often-itinerant beggars have such prominence in both her Irish and Latin early lives that we are able to gain a comprehensive view of the relationship between them and St. Brigid. They were her special clients because she was a nun rather than a priest; this fact explains the absence of monster fights in her *vitae*. St. Brigid's patronage of lepers may explain the remarkably swift spread of devotion to her throughout the European world. Though her miracles with cows and fire are given great prominence in the secondary literature, the *Hymnus de Virtutibus et Miraculis S. Brigidae* (Colgan's *Vita Prima* in *Trias Thaumaturgas*, 1647) records her patronage of lepers long before going on to discuss her other miracles.

*Non erat cum hospitibus aspera:  
Benigne tractabat leprosos miseros*

She was not harsh with her guests;  
She was kindly managing the miserable lepers (stanza 5).

The *Bethu Brigitte* (early ninth century) written in Old Irish recounts eight separate meetings between the 'Mary of the Gaels' and the lepers (Ó hAodha, 1978). In each instance, the term *clam* rather than the related *lobhar* is used. This underlines the literal

---

<sup>1</sup> There is remarkable consistency throughout the early and late *vitae*, as well as over language boundaries. The seventh century Latin Life by Cogitosus, the Old Irish *Bethu Brigitte* (ca.800), and the *Vita Tertia*

nature of the disease that St. Brigid heals, since the word *lobhar* is sometimes used in a metaphorical sense ('a spiritually diseased person') and/or with a generic meaning ('poor person'). *Clam*, however, refers to someone with actual leprosy (Sayers, 1988, 295, n.10). The *Dictionary of the Irish Language* lists *lobar* (Middle Irish: *lobhar*) with the primary listing of 'weak, infirm, sick or afflicted' while the first entry for *clam* is 'leprous...leper'.

One Easter Sunday Brigid sends a cow to Mel, the bishop who gave her the veil. Immediately afterwards, on the same Easter Sunday, she heals a leper *dia tuititis a baidl*, 'with his falling off limbs' (*Bethu Brigte*, 23). By doing these two acts of charity almost simultaneously, St. Brigid demonstrates that she is equally concerned about her lepers as about her bishop. The curing of the disease is given more prominence in the story by being recorded next to a miracle for a saintly bishop. Furthermore, Easter is the highest feast of the Church as well as a very significant memorial for St. Brigid (it is the only solemnity celebrated in the *Bethu Brigte* and the progression of the story is ordered around the recurring feastday). That one of the two miracles performed on this day is for a *clam* shows the priority Brigid gives to her disfigured clients. Similarly, St. Brigid's terms for these unfortunates indicate a special bond between them. When St. Brigid argues with a particularly stubborn clam, she says *a macan*, 'o little son', almost as if she were his fosterer (*Bethu Brigte*, 23). She does not use this term with anyone else. Another time, St. Brigid respectfully addresses them as *a cheliu De*, 'O companions of God' (ibid., 35). The same phrase is used earlier in the dative rather than the vocative case—her father is going to sell her because *no-gatad-si cach ni isin t(h)ig do cheilib Dé*, 'she

---

(ca.850) are the oldest. The leper stories continue in the later Lives such as the Middle Irish Life in the Book of Lismore (ca.1100) and Lawrence's Latin Life (ca.1130).

was stealing all of everything in that house for the companions of God'. This is probably another reference to *clamha*, given the later salutation. This epithet was typically used for religious, particularly a 'member of a class of religious distinguished by special observances and practices, appar. of a stricter nature than those of others' (Dictionary of the Irish Language, 1990). This exalted term is a calque on the Latin term *servi Dei*, which is also used by Brigid to describe her *leprosi* (ibid.; Ó hAodha, 1978, 57, n. 414). A nun becomes irritated with a group who had taken off her present to St. Brigid and fumes, "*Leprosis hoc bedi donum*" (she is so furious she cannot even say "*non dedi*" properly!), "I did not give this gift to lepers!" (*Bethu Brigte*, 32). The saint tells her that she should be glad that she has given a gift to the *servi Dei* (ibid., 32). This association with the religious explains one of the reasons that the Irish word *clam*, rather than its synonym *lobhar*, is used throughout the *Bethu Brigte*. 'As a generic term [*lobhar*] situates its bearer at the far end of the socio-religious spectrum from a king or a cleric' (Sayers, 1988, 295). As we have seen, St. Brigid is trying to do just the opposite.

Not once in the Irish Life does she use their affliction as a way of distinguishing them, as Duke Svibne does to St. Munnu the leper. When the saint is late to a synod, Svibne rudely asks, "*Quare tam longo tempore illum expectatis leprosum?*" "Why do you await that leper for so long a time?" (Plummer, 1910, 236). After St. Brigid gives her father's sword to a leper, she is forced to explain its disappearance to her irate parent. She calmly says that she gave it to Christ. Her father, however, knows from experience who 'Christ' is and promptly replaces the noble term: "*Quid, filia, detisdi [sic] pretium .x. vacarum leproso?*" "Why, daughter, have you given the price of ten cows to a leper?" he asks (*Bethu Brigte*, 13). In another variation of this story in a separate Old Irish Life, St.

Brigid avoids the potentially degrading word *clam* by saying “*Doratus...do bhocht tainic dom ghuidhí*” “I gave it to a poor man who came to me praying” (Stokes, 1890, 40).

During another cure, Brigid has a discussion with her nuns regarding how a *clam* shall be healed. St. Brigid refers to the petitioner as ‘*fer-sa*’, ‘that man’ while her nuns say, ‘*in clam*’, ‘the leper’ (*Bethu Brigitte*, 23). Even when her clients are being proud and ungrateful, St. Brigid does not usually identify them by their disease; instead she refers to them according to their sin: “*superbus ille*” (*Vita Tertia*, ch.79). Though her father, a petulant nun and an arrogant nobleman show by their language that they can only see the physical body, St. Brigid proves by the way she speaks that she looks at the soul of her lepers and puts them on the same level as those officially consecrated to the Lord. In doing this, she is building on the same Old Irish tradition which gave these unfortunates the name ‘*martar*’ (‘martyr’; Lee, 1996, 19). The individual *céile Dé* may not live up to the ideal but St. Brigid holds up the goal towards which he should strive.

Some of the most severe punishments which Brigid inflicts on sinners are meted out to those who are uncharitable to her *leprosi*. The nun mentioned above has her entire orchard become barren of fruit (*Bethu Brigitte*, 32). Condla, St. Brigid’s craftsman, asks for a hooded garment which he had left with her. Since it has been given to a leper, his request implies a reluctance to give charity to the beggar. Soon after, *ad-uatar coin alta oc Sciaigh Comgaill*, ‘he is eaten by wild dogs at Sce Comgaill’ (ibid., app. 5). On the other hand, Brigid is quick to reward those who deal kindly with her favored outcasts. A nun who brings apples and sweet sloes which can be given to the leprous beggars surrounding Brigid is given a special blessing and her garden multiplies two-fold (ibid., 33). St. Brigid’s asks her charioteer to help a *leprosus* bring a cow back to his native land

and *exiit autem auriga cum leproso iter dierum duorum in uno puncto temporis: & in eodem puncto confestim reversus est*, 'the charioteer went out, moreover, with the leper a journey of two days at one point of time: and at the same point, immediately returned' (*Vita Tertia S. Brigidae*, Ch.53). He is able to accomplish the inconvenient two-day trip in a second due to his charity towards St. Brigid's petitioner.

Brigid's special patronage of lepers is recognized by hagiographers of other Irish saints. In the Life of St. Maedoc, Finan Lobar (i.e. the Leper; Finan is referred to as being very holy which would preclude the metaphorical meaning of the word), while celebrating the saint's feast, has a vision in which St. Maedoc brings St. Brigid to him in a chariot and tells Finan that he will die on the feast of "the beauteous and blessed virgin yonder" (Plummer, 1922, 266-7). Leprosy is St. Brigid's specialty; therefore she, rather than St. Maedoc, will escort the healed man to heaven. When Brigid travels outside her native Leinster, the lepers come to her—even if other saints are nearby. For instance, on a journey to Femyn *invenerunt ibi magnam synodum sanctorum* 'they found there a great synod of holy ones'. When the local inhabitants discover that St. Brigid is there, the *leprosi* immediately flock to her that they might be healed (*Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 2.54). Out of all this great synod of saints, St. Brigid alone prompts the gathering of the lepers.

On another trip

*ad fines Lageniensium, intravit regionem Labathi,  
ibique quedam femina ad eam cum filia sua leprosa venit*  
(*ibid.*, 2.54)

to the ends of Leinster, she entered the region of Labrath,  
and there a certain woman came to her with her leper daughter

It seems the local holy people have not cured the girl; Brigid, of course, heals her at once.



St. Brigid does not merely cure or help the lepers and then move on. She has conversations with them, arbitrates disputes among them, and even convinces one to be healed against his wish. Two men afflicted with the disease begin a fight out of jealousy. St. Brigid makes their arms grow stiff until she can resolve their contention (*Bethu Brigte*, ll.398-402; *Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 1.35) Significantly, St. Patrick performs the same miracle in Tirechan's *Vita*; however the quarreling men are healthy coppersmiths with no trace of the awful malady. The two variations of the story show the unique relation St. Brigid bears to these particular sufferers.

St. Brigid does not seek out the unfortunate victims; rather, everywhere she goes the disfigured supplicants throng. Usually they request alms or some other material possessions and St. Brigid complies. Occasionally, she cures them by bathing them with blessed water or through some other means. Nevertheless, Brigid is not merely interested in their physical well-being. Spiritual deformity can accompany physical deformity in a leper. They are particularly prone to pride: "superbus et ingratus" is a standard theme (*Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 2.25, 2.51, 2.52) and St. Brigid is quick to correct this attitude. One man, after being healed by the saint, refuses to assist her in healing another. He is immediately struck with the disease a second time. Another leper cannot lead away a cow given him by St. Brigid because of his arrogant attitude; he commences to scold the saint and *hoc displicuit S. Brigidae*, 'this displeased St. Brigid' (*Vita Tertia*, ch.79; this same phrase is used when St. Brigid is about to punish the nun who did not want to give her apples to lepers, cf. *Bethu Brigte*, 32) After the *clam* departs, he is drowned trying to cross a river. As was noted above, two *leprosi* who are inclined to fighting are taught a lesson when St. Brigid makes them go stiff. Other saints seem rather helpless in the face

of this unruly behavior. A poem in the Irish *Life of St. Mochuda* says “his lepers screeched at him”; they, however, are not punished. Hagiographers in other saints’ Lives have a rather resigned tone when speaking of disagreeable encounters between saints and the unruly sufferers. In the *Life of St. Fechin*, the scribe describes a man who approaches St. Fechin, “he was wanton (*oc macnus*, literally ‘at wantonness’) as is the manner of lepers” (Joyce, 1903, 612). St. Brigid does not hesitate to correct this sort of behavior. *Filius perditionis iam es*, “You are now the son of perdition” she tells an obnoxious client (*Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 2.52).

St. Brigid does not shrink from inflicting leprosy as a punishment for pride and arrogance. This follows closely the Biblical paradigm in which although some lepers are suffering as a result of their sin, others are innocent. For example, Miriam is struck with leprosy after slandering her brother Moses (Num. 12). King Naman, however, did nothing to deserve his affliction (4 Kings 5). Both are healed, though Miriam has to repent first. King Ozias/Azarias was afflicted with the disease for the remainder of his life after he attempted to offer incense in the place of the priests (2 Par. 26, 16; 4 Kings 15, 3). Continuing into the New Testament, Christ heals ten lepers of which one returns to give thanks to God and the rest go their way *superbi et ingrati*. In the Old English tradition, there are separate words for the two kinds of leprosy: the first, in which the victim suffers for his misdeeds, is *synhreoſlig* or sin-leprosy and the second, in which the decay is only in the body, is *lic-prowere*, ‘body-suffering’ or *hreoſla* ‘leprosy’.

The lepers surrounding St. Brigid represent a varied group in other ways as well. The malady seems more common among men than women. However, a few are specifically mentioned as female. For example the *Vita IV S. Brigidae* mentions a *mulier*

*leprosa* (2.8) and a *filia leprosa*. Furthermore, the *Bethu Brigitte* shows Brigid curing a leprous nun (ll.422-3). Even children came to Brigid disfigured by this malady (*Bethu Brigitte*, ll.273-9; *Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 2.54). Every leper is unique. Some like to move about; others prefer living in one place. Their economic status varies as well. Many must beg for a living. On the other hand, the nun mentioned above would have distributed charity rather than received it. Nor are any two lepers alike in regards to gregariousness. One might like to peregrinate with a companion (*Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 2.51) while another might object violently to having anyone else around; the fight between the two lepers discussed earlier started from just such an antipathy (*Bethu Brigitte*, ll.398-402; *Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 1.35).

St. Brigid's special clients are able to achieve conversion through their contact with the saint. An obstinate leper, who threatens Brigid because she is unable to produce a cow for him, becomes totally transformed after St. Brigid converses with him for a while: '*Mim minister ero et lignarius vester*', 'I will be your servant and your woodsman', he tells her gratefully (*Bethu Brigitte*, ll.235-6). Another rapid transformation is described in the *Vita IV S. Brigidae*. A leper had come to the convent seeking fresh garments. St. Brigid had nothing to give him, so she asks one of the nuns to give her clothing to the beggar. The nun refuses in disgust and promptly contracts the disease herself. After a little reflection, the stricken nun repents of her sin and *penitentiam agens et orante sancta Brigida pro ea munda facta est*, 'doing penance, she is made pure even with St. Brigid praying for her' (2.28). It takes the nun only *spatium unius hore* 'the space of one hour' to recognize the error of her ways. St. Brigid's ability to produce positive

spiritual development in the unique individuals of the leper community confirms her as their special patron.

By contrast the lepers in other saints' Lives are one-dimensional characters. The *Life of St. Baire of Cork*, after listing numerous other types of healings, merely states laconically that '[he] healed a leper so that he was whole' (Plummer, 1922, 15). In many of the saints' *vitae*, the *clam* only appears in a standard phrase in a rapid summing-up of a particular saint's miracles: 'after raising the dead, after healing lepers and blind and lame, and every other plague...the day of St. Berach's death and of his going to heaven drew near' (ibid., 42). This listing usually appears at the end of the biography; while in the early hagiographical tradition of St. Brigid, stories of lepers fill the beginning, middle and end of her *vitae*. They are central to the story of her life. The cures which are recorded in the various saints' lives are often of large groups so that they are merely representatives of the affliction rather than distinctive individuals. St. Patrick in the Tripartite Life heals nine at once while baptizing them. St. Ruadan commands a band of twelve lepers to enter a stream and wash whereupon they are all healed (Plummer, 1910, 249). St. Brigid, however, deals with lepers individually or in pairs. This is her task rather than the priestly duties of administering the sacraments or expelling demons.

Monsters, dragons and wild beasts receive a much fuller treatment in other hagiographical traditions. St Brendan, for instance, seems as much plagued by sea monsters as St. Brigid is by her lepers. On every voyage, he is troubled by one or more of these frightening ocean dwellers. St. Ailbe contends with lions and other ferocious animals:

Then there came from the forest three mighty lions. They raided the camp: one of them killed a man and the other two

killed two of the kings horses...Ailbe saw the anguish and said to the lions: 'You have been bold enough' (de Paor, 1993, 229-30).

Adomnan describes how St. Columcille drove off the monster in Lough Ness: 'At the sound of the saint's voice, the beast turned in terror' (Forristal, 1990, 66). Similarly, St. Coemgan removes a sea monster which poisoned a lake. Welsh saints are equally adept when faced with these terrors. A praise hymn to St. Llŵchaearn declaims

*Ymwardwr mawr ydych  
Milwr sant mal Jorys wych  
Tra ffryder tri ffry ydoedd  
Tri a fy n lladd trefn well oedd...  
Gobrwy ladd gwiber o law  
Jorys oedd ai ras iddaw.*

A great savior are you  
A soldier saint like excellent George;  
A great worry three beasts were,  
Three who had been killing, it was better order...  
Payment for killing a serpent by hand  
George was with his grace for him. (Henken, 1987, 191)

Beasts abound in the Old English tradition as well. St. Guthlac's *Life* contains one of the more vivid descriptions of the frightening apparitions with which he contends:

*Erant enim aspectu truces forma terribiles, capitibus magnis,  
collis longis, macilenta facie, lurido vultu, squalida barba,  
auribus hispidis, fronte torva, trucibus oculis, ore foetido,  
dentibus equineis, guttere flammivomo, faucibus tortis, labro  
lato, vocibus horrisonis, comis obustis, buccula crassa,  
pectore arduo, femoribus scabris...cruribus  
uncis, talo tumido, plantis aversis, ore patulo, clamoribus  
raucisonis* (Colgrave, 1956, 102).

For they were rough terrible forms to see, with great heads,  
long necks, lean faces, pale yellow countenances, dirty beards,  
rough ears, a savage forehead, rough eyes, stinking mouth,  
horse teeth, with a flame vomiting throat, twisted gullets,  
swelling lips, horrible sounding voices, hardened hairs, thick little  
cheeks, burning breasts, scabby legs...crooked legs, swelling  
ankles, turned aside feet, spreading mouth, and hoarse shouts

Many of these epithets sound as though they are a description of leprosy: “twisted jaws”, “scabby thighs”, “crooked legs”, “swollen ankles” and so on. (In St. Brigid's *vitae* the *clam* is often described as having deformed limbs). Unwashed and unkept hair is another feature used to describe both the human sufferers and the monsters (Plummer, 1922, 163) who resemble each other in more than physical characteristics.

Both *leprosi* and the dragons are horrible in appearance but the exterior does not necessarily indicate the nature of the interior. Not all monsters are wicked. On one of St. Brendan's journeys, the navigator is attacked by a ferocious sea creature. Another monster rushes to the monk's rescue, invoking the aid of St. Brigid, much to St. Brendan's astonishment (*Bethu Brigitte*, app. ll.36ff). On another voyage, St. Brendan's monks ask him to say Mass quietly since many great and fierce fish are swimming near their boat. St. Brendan laughs at them and sings even louder; “thereupon the monsters of the deep began to rise on all sides, and making merry for the joy of the Feast, followed after the ship” (Waddell, 1953, 111-2). The Welsh also have a tradition of the good dragon. One of them lies for three days on St. Pedrog's doorstep so that the saint will consent to remove a splinter of wood from his eye (Henken, 1987, 205) There are, of course, numerous vicious beasts and wild animals, such as the Cerebrus-like hell guardian who specializes in swallowing kings (Plummer, 1922, 210). In fact, just as the majority of the diseased humans are ‘*superbi et ingrati*’, so monsters tend to be greedy and devouring. Often it is ambiguous whether the creature acts from inherent evil or from mere hunger. St. Ailbe's lions discussed earlier go away peacably once the saint has fed them. There are many other instances of conversion. St. Abban subdues a monster who then pledges loyalty to the saint: “[it] licked his feet, and lowered its horrible bristles and

its venomous sting and did obeisance to him” (ibid., 8). This parallels the instance mentioned above when a leper vows to St. Brigid his life-long devotion: “I will be your servant and your woodman” (*Bethu Brigitte*, l.235). The ability to speak links the terrible creatures closely with the human world while giving them the chance to convert and be assimilated to society. The hagiographers emphasize this special ability in many of the saints’ Lives: “And the flying monster said with a *human* voice, ‘I beseech thee in the name of St. Brigid to let me be’” (Plummer, 1922, 83; emphasis mine). They are even given names that connect them with the human world. St. Colman Ela beheads a monster named Lainn—an epithet typically given to warriors. After he is slain, he is given a splendid burial—the first in a new cemetery, tying him into the world of man even in death.

Other saints are able to accomplish conversion for living monsters. Brendan the Navigator is summoned to a village threatened by two wild lions. Instead of killing them, St. Brendan turns the savage beasts into tame watchdogs (Plummer, 1922, 82). The Welsh St. Pedrog subdues a serpent by binding it with a handkerchief and sending it out to sea with a strict command never to hurt anyone again (Henken, 1987, 204). St. Samson in his Breton *vitae* captures the “dragonish serpents” with a girdle or mantle (ibid., 118). As we have seen, the leper also can have his deformity, either physical or spiritual, removed so that he is no longer cut off from God and man. It is particularly significant that St. Brigid is able to cure one *clam* who initially rejects the opportunity to rejoin mankind, preferring to prey on society. When Brigid promises to heal him, he replies ‘*Natho...is mo at-chotaim in chruth-sa quam quando (i)mundus ero*’ ‘No’, he says, ‘for I obtain more this way than when I shall be clean’ (*Bethu Brigitte*, 23). St. Ailbe, after

subduing the two lions ravaging a camp, urges the king to provide food for them lest the beasts think it more profitable to remain outside society (de Paor, 1993, 229). Typically, both saints succeed in their respective conversions. St. Brigid brings her *clam* back into the community and St. Ailbe makes his lions peaceful—no longer a threat to the king and his horses.

Monsters were not explicitly identified with the disease of leprosy in Old Irish literature. However, the plague was often personified as a devouring *peist* or beast. Many of the saints, when asked to halt the spread of the plague, would go to the outskirts of a town and fight a metaphorical battle with just such a monster which was an embodiment of the plague. If the *peist* was defeated then the plague would not spread into the boundary of a town (Plummer, 1910, cxi, n. 1). *Pestifera*, ‘plague-bearing’, is a common term used to describe the *peist* (ibid., cxxxix, n. 5). As we have seen, the plague and leprosy both coincided in the sixth century, and thus could be identified with each other.

Another indirect connection between the malady and the *peist* consists in the association of the monster with a hairless condition. In one story Finn’s men are devoured by a lake-monster and, when cut out of the creature’s stomach, are discovered to have lost all their hair. Similarly, St. Maedoc saves the Irish king Brandub from a gaping hell guardian by throwing a *mart mael-odhar*, ‘a bald, dun, dead cow’, into its open mouth (Plummer, 1922, 210). Brandub had given this animal as alms to a leper probably because of the exterior resemblances between the recipient and the gift (see Sayers, 1988). The loss of hair is a universal, medieval trait of the disease.

St. Brigid does not fight monsters. She encounters a different type of terror—one more concrete than the often abstract symbols of evil which other contemporaries must



subdue. The story of St. George and the dragon was viewed by Christians as a metaphor for the battle between the devil and the Christian for the soul of man. The Irish tradition, borrowing from the apocryphal *Acts of John*, literally represents hell as a monster “with a monstrous mouth and horrible teeth” (Sayers, 1988, 300-301, n.25). Likewise, the devil is called a *monstrum* (*Vita Tertia S. Brigidae*, Ch.30). The *Scela Lai Bratha* paints a vivid description of the ruler in the place of eternal torment:

*Airm i mbia fri taib cach uilc in pheist irdairc úathmar ilchennach  
co rubnib riches rúad. Ní dia tuarascbáil .i. cet muinel forri & cet  
cend for cach muineol. & coic .c. fiacal cach óenchind. cet lam  
forri. & .c. mbas for cach láim. & .c. n-ingen for cach bais.*

A place wherein beside every evil shall be the monster,  
conspicuous, awful, many-headed, with crowds of red glowing  
coals. Somewhat of his description, that is, a hundred necks upon  
him and a hundred heads on each neck, and five hundred teeth in  
each head. A hundred hands upon him, and a hundred claws on  
each hand, and a hundred nails on every claw (Wright, 1993, 163)

The weapons used in this fight were the sacraments, typically administered by an ordained cleric. It is not surprising that very often the saints who fought monsters were priests. The only Biblical female who comes to mind is the Woman who represents the Church and the Virgin Mary in St. John’s Apocalypse; she flees from the dragon into the desert. She ultimately defeats it, but not in a direct battle such as that waged between the dragon and the Archangel Michael.

The closest St. Brigid comes to a monster fight is when the sea-creature calls on her in his fight to protect St. Columcille. She is, in fact, many miles away and seems unaware that she has played any part in such a conflict (*Bethu Brigte*, app. 6). On another occasion, she replaces the king’s pet fox, which was accidently killed, with another fox

(Migne, 1878, 782-3). Other ‘wild animals’ with which she deals include ducks and pigs.

Epic battles with strange creatures are not a part of St. Brigid’s tradition.

St. Brigid, obviously, would not qualify for a role assigned to members of the priesthood. Despite the fact that in one account Bishop Mel accidentally read the rite of episcopal ordination over her, she was unable to receive the sacrament because she was a woman. St. Brigid had to bring a priest with her as her charioteer wherever she went so that her followers and converts could be baptized, shriven and hear Mass. Even when a pagan expresses his reluctance to be baptized by a member of St. Patrick’s retinue, St. Brigid does not offer to administer the sacrament to him. Instead, she forces him to swallow his pride and accept baptism at the hands of his enemy. In all the *vitae*, St. Brigid never once attempts to usurp priestly duties.

Rather, her conquest is over a very tangible monster—leprosy—and her victory is unique among the Irish saints. Several lazar-houses were named after her rather than the typical patrons of leprosy St. Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, or St. George (Lee, 1996, 19ff). She appears to be the only native saint to be taken as a patron for leper asylums. Even as late as 1542, a leper hospital was founded in the city of Galway under the name of St. Brigid. The persistence of the accounts of leper cures in late *vitae* shows that biographers recognized and loved this aspect of the great Irish saint. Even the *Hymnus*, a very late, brief summary of St. Brigid’s life, includes three stanzas on lepers (out of 53). In the end, the *leprosi* would not prove ungrateful. Rather, they would carry her name around the Christian world in return for all the benefits St. Brigid bestowed on them.

St. Brigid’s intimate connection with lepers may explain one aspect of Irish devotion to her that has long puzzled students of Irish hagiography: how had she become

so popular so quickly? Many have posited the explanation that she did not exist at all, but is merely a Christianized pagan goddess Bríg. Her unique patronage of lepers suggests another reason. There are no stories or traditions connecting Bríg with the *clamha*. Indeed, the only goddess to have a vague link with them is Macha, the eponymous mother of Tara, the seat of the high-kings of Ireland. In a little known recension of a quite different story, Macha disguises herself as a leper, rubbing her body with a concoction of *tóes secal*, ‘rye dough’, and *rota*, ‘bog iron ore’, in order to get revenge on her father’s killers (Sayers, 1988, 296). The goddess never cures or helps the unfortunates and her story has no parallel in St. Brigid’s *vitae*.

Lepers seem to have shared somewhat the poets’ role for the spread of information. Like the *fili*, the *clam* was often itinerant and dependent on the community for support. Indeed, St. Columcille mentions the two together in a poem composed to convince the king of Ireland not to banish the poets.

*Ni beith derc mun beith bochta, clamha truagha tarrnochta;  
Ni beith feile tiar no toir mun beith écse ag athcuingidh*

There would be no alms if there were no poor,  
Lepers, naked and wretched;  
There would be no largess, west or east  
If there were no poets at petitioning (O’Kelleher, 1918, 351).

We need the poets, he argues, to praise the great deeds of men and to shame the miserly just as we need the lepers to encourage Christian charity.

If one examines the literature on the *ollam*, it will be found that poet-initiates were often described as extremely ugly and having qualities similar to those of the *clam*

(Ford, 1990). Amairgen, who becomes the chief *ollam* of Ireland, is particularly revolting.

The mucus ran out of his nose into his mouth. His skin was black, his teeth were white, his face was pallid. His legs and thighs were like to the two forefronts of a smith's bellows...Rough and prickly was his hair. Knobby, bony, scabby his back. And so he was not handsome. (Ford, 1990, 28).

Another poet is named Senchán Torpéist or Senchán 'helped by a monster'. He earned this name when a very hideous boy with 'putrid matter [which] would flow down to his neck' finished a poem-riddle which Senchán was unable to solve (ibid., 32). The 'putrid matter' of the boy-poet is a strong link to the physical traits of lepers since *lobhar*, one of the Irish words for a victim of this infirmity, is derived from a root which means 'putrefaction' (cf. *lobaid*, 'rots'; Sayers, 1988, 295). These descriptions of ugliness may be the result of a similarity in function between the *ollam* and the *clam* which prompted a corresponding transference of characteristics. In his introduction to the *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Plummer notes that 'their demands were as unreasonable as those of the poets' (cxi, n. 9).

Unreasonable requests can only be made when there is some threat to be carried out in the event of refusal. In the case of the poets this menace was the ability to satirize anyone who displeased them. Satire was carefully regulated by law as it was regarded as terribly destructive to the person at whom it was aimed. If a poet wrongfully satirized someone, he was required to pay the victim's honor-price. The power of legitimate satire held by the poets caused them to be universally feared as well as courted (Kelly, 1988, 137). The lepers likewise made outrageous demands and had some method of intimidation to back them. In the *Vita IV S. Brigidae*, a king supplies a spear to Brigid

after an unruly leper asks it of the saint. The king explains that he wishes to loose Brigid from the impudent *leprosus* (*Vita IV S. Brigidae*, 2.25). Though St. Brigid generally is effective in restraining obnoxious petitioners, in several instances the lepers warn St. Brigid that they will depart and obtain their request from someone else if she does not fulfill their desires immediately. This threat implies the ability to destroy the reputation of those who did not satisfy a particular demand. Indeed, their words are an echo of the poets' in other Old Irish literature. It is not unimaginable that, like the poets, the tribe of lepers could also spread and encourage a favorable report among the Irish about a saint who succored them in their distress. Thus, the swift and widespread dissemination of St. Brigid's fame throughout the Celtic world could be the result of the gratitude of her lepers.

That these unfortunates did, in fact, travel extensively both within Ireland and outside of it, is proven by the story discussed at the beginning of this paper. The meeting of St. Patrick with a leper is on the continent and both men proceed from there to Ireland (Bieler, 1971, 133-4). In the Middle Irish *Betha Colum Chille*, St. Columcille brings twelve *clamha* from the continent to Scotland. Lepers were not forced into communities or hospitals at this time; rather, the right to stay in one of these facilities could only be earned through good behavior. Most of the afflicted either through inclination or force of circumstances took to the road. One such wanderer crosses the Irish Sea to find St. Brigid.

*O dhocuaid immorro clu & oirrdhercus Brigte fo Eirinn, tancadar  
da dhall do Bretnaibh & clam ica remthus dia n-íc co Brigit.*

Then when the fame and renown of Brigid went about upon  
Ireland, there came two blind men of the Britons and a leper at  
leading them to their healing with Brigid (Stokes, 1890, 41)

Here is a perfect example of a leper contributing to the spread of the saint's fame by leading Celts from outside Ireland to her.

Thus, while it is impossible for St. Brigid to have made all the journeys attributed to her in Celtic literature outside of Ireland, *clamha* could easily have accomplished most of them. Welsh tradition explains how St. Brigid traveled from Ireland to Wales in the *I San Ffraid*:

*Ni cheisiaist lestri echwyn  
Dros Fôr o'th oror i'th ddwyn  
Ond dy Arch oedd Dywarchen  
Urddo'r Rhôs o'r ddaear hen:  
A'th Forwynion, jaith freiniol,  
Yn llawn dawn yn llywio'n d'ôl.*

You did not seek borrowed vessels  
To take you over the sea from your border  
But your request was a sod;  
You dignified the moor from the old earth;  
And your maidens, privileged people  
Full of grace, steering behind you (Henken, 1987, 164)

Rather than a plot of ground, it was probably more animate messengers who carried the story of St. Brigid or Ffraid to Wales. A trace of her connection with lepers is found in the name of a Welsh plant *cribe Shôn Ffre* 'crest of St. Brigid' which is a home cure for shingles—a disease which very likely came under the heading of leprosy in sixth century Ireland.

Brigid's fame was not limited to the Celtic world. She eventually became popular in Italy (see Young, 1998) and England. Bede speaks of her in his Martyrology (O'Hanlon, 219). The Middle English *South English Legendary* gives a condensed version of her life, focusing on her family relationships. Immediately after relating the story of her veiling, the *meseles* (lepers) enter the story. They are thirsty and St. Brigid

has run out of ale, so she turns a nearby vat of water into ale for them. Other ailments are merely mentioned in a summary at the end: *Boþe blinde & dumbe also to gode hele he[o] brogte*, ‘both blind and dumb also she brought to good health’ (D’Evelyn, 1956, 46) while the *meseles* merit a whole story. The English biographers recognized that her dealings with lepers were the distinctive feature about St. Brigid.

By contrast, most modern secondary literature tends to focus on the miracles and attributes of St. Brigid which she shares with numerous other saints both in Ireland and in the universal church. Numerous articles and books discuss her miracles of fire and ale as well as with her connections with the dairy.

The fire miracles in particular are extremely common among Irish saints. In fact, Plummer, in his introduction to the *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, uses these miracles to make the claim that about half of these Irish saints are derived from solar deities. Most of these miracles are reminiscent of Pentecost, however, and therefore seem to be Christian rather than pagan. In Muirchú’s *Life of St. Patrick*, workman see fire rising from Patrick’s grave and they retreat in fear (de Paor, 1993, 196). St. Colman Ela has several miracles of this nature:

*Cum iam appropinquasset tempus egressionis sanctissimi Colmani de hoc seculo, signum celeste datum est ei; id est crux ignita apparuit in aere supra cellam eius. Videntes fratres signum ignotum, timuerunt multum.*

When the time had now approached for the departure of the most holy Colman from this age, heaven’s sign was given to him; that is a fiery cross appeared in the air above his cell. Seeing the burning sign, the brothers feared greatly (Plummer, 1910, 273)

This mirrors the often-cited miracle described in the *Bethu Brigitte*:

*Laae n-and I suidiu luid in Broicsech do bleogan & ni facaib nech inna taig nisi in(d) [n]oeb-ingen tantum ina cotlad. Co n(d) accatar ro-las a tech dia n-eis. Fa-*

*reith in tuath. Anda leu nicon airsitis cli fri alaile. Fo-gabar a tech slan & in[d]ingen ina cotlad.*

In that following day, Broicsech went to milking and she does not leave anyone in the house except the holy daughter only in her sleeping. And they see that (fire) which the house put forth behind them. The people run forward. It is thought by them that they would not find one house post against another. The house is found safe and the daughter in her sleeping (*Bethu Brigitte*, 1)

The fire coming from the house and the fear of the people who behold it reflects the account in the *Acts of the Apostles* when the apostles receive the Holy Spirit and the people outside are filled with awe and amazement. St. Declan, another Irish saint, has a ball of fire appear on the roof ridge of his house on the day of his birth (de Paor, 1993, 248). The saints also work miracles to protect people from fire. St. Ailbe keeps one of his monks from burning himself when he picks up live coals (*ibid.*, 241). St. Declan saves the fort of the chief of the Déisi from burning to the ground by throwing his staff into the flames whereupon the fire immediately dies (*ibid.*, 267). St. Ciaran preserves a boy unhurt while the house around the child is reduced to ashes (*ibid.*, 275). The list goes on and on. There are scarcely any Irish saints who have not worked fire miracles. The universality of fire miracles is also demonstrated in the Breton *vitae*. St. Samson has fire come out of his mouth upon ordination just as St. Brigid has a column of fire over her head at her veiling ceremony (Henken, 1987, 361; *Bethu Brigitte*, 19). The Gaulish tradition has many saints who both protect people from fire and are seen with spiritual fire blazing near them. St. Martin saves a cathedral from a fire by reversing the direction the wind is blowing (Van Dam, 1993, 298). After the saint cures a madman, the healed man sees a radiance of light shining from Martin's church (*ibid.*, 237). St. Burgundofara (603-645), who lived slightly later, receives communion in her Gaulish monastery, and then she begins singing in the choir:



In her mouth, a globe of white fire shone glittering and sparkling. While none of those who were near her spied the bright fire, two little girls whom innocence rendered immaculate, standing hand in hand, saw the glittering and sparkling rays escaping from her mouth between the modulations of the song. Not knowing enough to keep silent, they began to speak in amazement (McNamara, 1992, 168).

What is unique, then, about St. Brigid is that her fire miracles could involve *leprosi*. For instance, on one occasion St. Brigid punishes a haughty *clam*, causing him to contract the disease a second time. He cries out in the process, “*Atar leamsa...is oeible teined mhoidhid triam croicenn*” “It seems to me it is sparks of fire breaking through my skin” (Stokes, 1890, 49). St. Brigid’s miracles are inevitably bound up with lepers.

The same parallels can be discovered for St. Brigid’s famous miracles of providing ale. St. Darerca, an Irish nun, turns water into wine for a convent of nuns. She also multiplies beer so that a small vessel provides drink for two days. Even posthumously St. Darerca makes sure no one goes thirsty: one of her wells supplies ale for St. Finnbar (de Paor, 1993, 281-94). However, she does not heal any lepers or even come into contact with them. Moving outside of Ireland, the Gaulish St. Julian replenishes the wine cask continuously on his feast day. The Welsh St. Non has a well providing ale similar to that of St. Darerca (Henken, 1987, 158). One of her fellow countryman, St. Gwenfrewi, could be termed the patron saint of intoxicating wells. The various poems about her are effusive in their praise:

*Llawwin ffons llenwi yn un ffair*

A fountain full of wine filling/flowing in one fair/?gush

*Bob dwyfil dieiddil y dôn*

*Ar ffyniant bawbi i’r ffynnon*

*I brofi miragl purwyn*

*A’I flas ymhell gwell na gwin*

Every two thousand very weakly they came  
For the sake of prosperity of everyone to the fountain  
To experience a pure, holy miracle  
And its taste far better than wine

*Goreu gwin gwir a ganwn  
I dorri haint yw'r dwr hwn*

The best wine, true do we/would I sing  
To break disease is this water

*Down atti wen dan y to  
Ai ffib win a ffawb yno*

I would come to her pure under the roof  
With her pipe of wine and everyone there (ibid., 148-9)

It seems St. Brigid is merely fulfilling a woman's duty when she provides intoxicating beverages for guests. The poet of *St Brigid's Alefeast* has her say, '*Ropadh maith lem cormlind mor do righ na righ*', 'It would be good with me a great alefeast for the king of kings' (Greene, 1950, 151-2). Many other saints, most of them women, could have said the same thing. But they, unlike St. Brigid, did not work these miracles for the benefit of thirsty lepers (Cogitosus' *Life* in de Paor, 1993, 211; *South English Legendary* in D'Evelyn, 1956, 46).

The dairy miracles are likewise a commonplace among the Irish *sancti*. Tirechan, in his account of St. Patrick, mentions a list of saints whom Patrick left at a certain church. Even though these saints only enter the story once, almost as a footnote, Tirechan takes the trouble to tell the reader that Catnea 'milked wild deer, as old people have informed me' (de Paor, 1993, 156). Many times miraculous milk must be produced when a nun or monk fosters a small child. One nobleman gave his son to St. Coemgen to protect him from the spells of the druids.

*Et non habens sanctus Coemgenus unde haberet novum lac infantulo nutriendo, quia mulieres et vacce longe erant a suo monasterio, oravit ad Dominum, ut aliquod adiutorium tribueret ei. Et Deus ilico misit de monte propinquo cervam ad sanctum Coemgenum, de cuius lacte infans Felanus nutritus est.*

And St. Coemgen was not having anything from whence he might get new milk for the nourishing of the little infant, because women and cows were far from his own monastery, he prayed to the Lord, that he might give another help to him. And God sent to that place from a nearby mountain a deer for St. Coemgen, from whose milk the infant Felanus is nourished (Plummer, 1910, 250-1).

Miracles with cows are frequent as well. This is not surprising since cows were a unit of exchange in early medieval Ireland. Thus, Dubthach refers to his sword as *pretium .x. vacarum*, ‘the price of ten cows’. Cogitosus (who, unlike Brigid’s other biographers, records only three of her miracles benefiting lepers) relates that the Mary of the Gaels made a cow foster another cow’s calf when an *ingratus leprosus* demands that the best cow and the best calf be handed over to him (Migne, 1878, 782). St. Darerca performs similar miracles—but not for lepers. She forces a wolf to restore a calf which it stole and she raises another calf from the dead. St. Brynach’s cattle in Wales produce more milk than other cows (Henken, 1987, 326) while St. Cadog turns a stream into milk and heals cattle (ibid., 327-8).

By contrast, St. Brigid’s cures for lepers are not common in any of the Celtic saints’ *vitae*. Most of the saints discussed above do not even encounter these afflicted ones. The few *sancti* who do meet *leprosi* only do so on one or two occasions. Even the nuns who deliberately try to model themselves upon the Mary of the Gaels do not as a consequence take over her patronage of the *céile Dé*. St. Ita is described as *secunda Brigida meritis et moribus*, ‘a second Brigid in merits and customs’ (Plummer, 1910, 130) and indeed the same miracle of the ‘burning house’ happens when she is a small child (ibid., 116) just as it happened in the *Bethu Brigte*. However, not one *clam* appears

in her *vita*. Another nun, St. Samthan, gives half of her cloak to someone who appears to be a leper. When the supposed *leprosus* vanishes, it becomes clear that he was really a heavenly visitor. St. Samthan does not cure any of the victims of this disease. Another nun, St. Darerca, is not troubled by any *leprosi* throughout her long life despite the fact that St. Brigid is her model in the pursuit of holiness. In addition, her biographer says ‘she is even reckoned second only to Brigid for holiness, for worthy practices and for her gift of virtue’ (de Paor, 1993, 282). The numerous female saints who seek to emulate St. Brigid do not take over her unique role as the patron of lepers.

It is fruitful to look at St. Brigid’s dealings with lepers precisely because they are so unique to her. St. Brigid was the only one to wage all out war against the disease in a century in which it was rampant. Because St. Brigid was a woman, she cared for lepers rather than overcame monsters—the duty of ordained priests. Her involvement with *clamha* explains why many of the other Irish saints have been long forgotten while St. Brigid’s fame is spread far and wide. As she loved her lepers, so they in turn made her beloved.

Sancta Brigida, ora pro nobis

## REFERENCES

### Primary:

#### St. Brigid:

- Colgan, *Trias Thaumaturgas* (1647), Louvain  
D'Evelyn, C. et al., *The South English Legendary* (1956), Oxford University Press, London  
Migne, J. P., 'Cogitosus' *Sanctae Brigidae Virginis Vita* in *Patrologia Latina*, 1878, vol. 1, pp.776-90  
Ó hAodha, D., *Bethu Brigte* (1978), Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin  
Stokes, W., *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (1890), Clarendon Press, Oxford

#### St. Patrick:

- Bieler, L., *Four Latin Lives of St. Patrick* (1971), The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin  
de Paor, L., *Saint Patrick's World* (1993), Four Courts Press, Dublin

#### St. Columcille:

- Forristal, D., *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (1990), Clarendon Press, Oxford  
O'Donnell, M., *Betha Colaim Chille. Life of Columcille* (1918), University of Illinois, Urbana

#### Other saints:

- Colgrave, B., *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (1956), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge  
Henken, E. R., *Traditions of the Welsh Saints* (1987), D. S. Brewer, Cambridge,  
McNamara, J. A. et al., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (1992), Duke University Press, Durham and London  
Plummer, C., *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1910), Clarendon Press, Oxford  
Plummer, C., *Bethada Náem nÉenn*, *Lives of the Irish Saints*, Vol. II (1922), Clarendon Press, Oxford

### Secondary:

- Ford, P. K., 'The Blind, the Dumb, and the Ugly' in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, Summer 1990, vol. 19, pp.26-40  
Greene, D., 'St. Brigid's Alefeast' in *Celtica*, 1950, vol. 1, pp. 150-3  
Joyce, P., *A Social History of Ancient Ireland* (1903), Longmans, Green & Co., New

- York, 2 vol.
- Kelly, F., *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (1988), Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dublin
- Lee, G. A., *Leper Hospitals in Medieval Ireland* (1996), Four Courts Press, Dublin
- O'Hanlon, J., *Lives of Irish Saints*, The Catholic Publishing Society, New York
- Quin, E. G., *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (1990), Royal Irish Academy, Dublin
- Ryan, J., *Irish Monasticism* (1972), Cornell University Press, Ithaca
- Sayers, W., 'Ludarius: Slang and Symbol in the Life of St. Máedóc of Ferns' in *Studia Monastica*, 1988, vol. 30, pp. 291-304
- Sharpe, R., *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives* (1991), Clarendon Press, Oxford
- Van Dam, R., *Saints and their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (1993), Princeton University Press, Princeton
- Waddell, H., *Beasts and Saints* (1953), Constable and Company Ltd., London
- Wright, C. D., *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (1993), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Young, S., 'Donatus, Bishop of Fiesole 829-76, and the Cult of St. Brigit in Italy' in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, Summer 1998, vol. 35, pp.13-26

Most of the translations of St. Brigid's *vitae* are mine; all other *vitae* are translated by the editors of the respective texts.