

The Basis for *The Lyric of Lafracoth*

PART I. Historical and Genealogical Considerations

The events upon which this historical fiction is based occurred between 1100 and 1169 Common Era. Most of the historically verifiable action is contained within one of two periods. The first is a period of no more than eighteen to twenty four months, falling sometime between the years 1100 and 1102, although the exact dates are not entirely consistent across accounts. The second period is longer, between 1111 and 1119 the agreed upon date of Muirchertach* Ua Briain's death. The aftermath of the events of concern, constitutive of conflicts the characters must face, spreads over time until (at least) the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland.

The *fin de siècle*, concluding the first century of the second millennium, 1100 Common Era, bore witness to a brooding, sometimes roiling, political climate poised to dispossess and displace the inhabitants of countries that rimmed the Irish Sea, however accustomed they had become already to storm and stress. The year pivots between 1066 and 1169, which mark two major redistributions of power. 1066 had been the Norman Invasion of England. In the ensuing decades there could be discerned the imprint upon the Midlands, on the marches of Wales and on the northern frontier with Scotland, the Conqueror's emerging pattern for holding sway, a triune strategy of castle, shire and church building.

Perhaps in the spirit of manifest destiny, the Irish Sea was no more insurmountable an obstacle to Norman expansion than had been the English Channel. In 1081, five years before his death, the Conqueror visited the coastal region of Wales. Historian Marjorie Chibnall writes:

It may have been on this visit that he cast an eye further afield: the coast of Ireland is clearly visible from the hills above St Davids.... There must have been some reason for the statement in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that King William 'would have conquered Ireland by his prudence and without any weapons, if he could have lived two years more'.¹

For military and logistical support King William had earlier relied upon trusted vassals, such as Roger de Montgomery, vicomte of the Hiémois in Normandy. Roger had rendered services at the time of the Conquest, which included outfitting William with sixty of the ships in the flotilla he needed to cross the Channel. With the success of the

* A name, like several in this account, spelled by historians and scholars with many variations, among them: 'Muircheartach', 'Murchertach', 'Muircertach', 'Murtagh', 'Moriartak' (in the Norse saga of Magnus) and even 'Murty' (in Standish O'Grady's essay of 1889), each of which has been preserved here in the context of direct quotation. This particular name is derived from words meaning 'sea battler', although O'Grady specifies "Wall of Righteousness". These alternate translations of original Gaelic words from which the name derives suggest ambiguity and ambivalence altogether suitable to the character portrayed in the drama.

Norman juggernaut, Roger's power as a magnate was allowed to enlarge considerably. Once established on the English shore, he almost immediately, in 1067, acquired influence in Chichester and took possession of the castle at Arundel in the south, a strategic location deemed necessary for safeguarding the Sussex estuary and the supply lines from Normandy essential for ongoing Norman expansion. Shortly thereafter, Shrewsbury became another of Roger's holdings and the base from which he could extend his reach into Wales thereby enabling, prior to his death in 1094, one of his younger sons to establish a castellany at Pembroke in Deheubarth.^{2,3,4,5,6}

According to Historian J.E. Lloyd:

The years 1093-1099 may be regarded as the crisis of the Norman attempt to subjugate Wales. Now that the obstacle had been removed created by the position of Rhys ap Tewdwr, a united effort was made to carry the whole country by storm, and scarcely any part of it escaped invasion.... At the beginning of the twelfth century the struggle had been fought out and its broad issues decided.... North Wales, it was decreed, was to retain substantially its Welsh rulers and its independence, while most of what was best worth having in the South was to fall into the hands of the invader....

Earl Roger now moved from his base in Arwystli and at the beginning of July occupied Ceredigion, in which he built the first Norman castle.... Thence the Montgomery hosts poured into Dyfed, which was soon in their power from sea to sea; the land was conferred by the king upon ... Arnulf, who fixed his capital at the place ever since known as Pembroke.... The first Pembroke Castle, which Arnulf entrusted to the custody of his chief follower, Gerald of Windsor, was hastily and roughly constructed in the form of a stockade, but it was erected on a position of great natural strength....

In all of this no regard was paid to the claims of the two younger sons of Rhys ap Tewdwr; Gruffyd the elder was carried off by his friends in alarm to Ireland, while Hewyl, less fortunate, was seized by Arnulf and kept in close confinement....⁷

Arnulf's vantage point at Pembroke afforded him his own opportunity to cast an eye in the direction of Eriu, as Ireland has been poetically termed. It is an uncertainty whether he did so with intentions modeled after those of his father in the role of a trusted (albeit, in Arnulf's case, untitled) vassal to his liege lord (who, for Arnulf, between 1086 and 1100 was King William Rufus, the Conqueror's son) or as confederate to Arnulf's elder brother Robert of Bellême, who had favored (with disastrous consequences for the Montgomeries in Pembroke) Duke Robert of Normandy over William Rufus and after the death of Rufus, in the period of our concern, over Henry I in disputes over succession to England's crown.^{8,9,10,11} It is most likely true that Arnulf harbored his own ambitions in Eriu, as well, establishing honours there *iure uxoris*—by marriage— in accordance with

Norman experience elsewhere.¹² Enduring exile and life as a knight errant, most especially after quitting and then opposing his brother Robert of Bellême, who at this time was at large and wrecking havoc in Normandy¹³, Arnulf was apt to survey the prospects for himself and his progeny. What claim might Arnulf press in Munster on behalf of his disenfranchised children? Any residual pretensions would, of course make powerbrokers in many places uneasy. Among them, in Eriu, there were the patriarchs of the Ua Briain sept, Muirchertach himself, and, more especially, his brother Diarmaid (who had in fact been able to depose Muirchertach and take the reins of power in 1114), and possibly King Murchadh in Meath who had fathered his own heirs-apparent to the throne in Mumu. In England, Henry I was disposed to welcome an end to any persisting Montgomery threat to the cross Channel Norman empire he envisioned under his control. He would eventually take decisive action against Robert of Bellême and have him imprisoned until his death. Reconciliation with Robert’s brothers, Arnulf and Roger, after their banishment notwithstanding, Henry could only regard Arnulf with suspicion, especially when Arnulf attached himself to the Angevin court again *contra* Henry.

Henry I, like his Plantagenet namesake in subsequent years, would not have taken kindly to a rival Norman kingdom across the Irish Sea. Insofar, Arnulf might be considered a historical *forme fruste* of Richard fitz Gilbert better known as Strongbow who, likewise thwarted in ambition to be earl, was able in 1169 to take Norman and Flemish soldiers of fortune from Pembroke across the Irish Sea for what would, retrospectively, be seen as the commencement of the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland and the eventual establishment of the Geraldine Supremacy.¹⁴ It is, in any event, an historical curiosity, perhaps worthy of investigation by a Brother Cadfael or a latter day Sister Fidelma that Muirchertach and Arnulf died in the same year, 1119.

Arnulf and his spouse, who is known to posterity only as Lafracoth, could not in their lifetimes take satisfaction in the irony suggested by genealogical evidence of their descendancy through their abandoned children. It is interesting that older (and many modern) genealogies for the Fitzgeralds and Montgomeries neglect to include Philip or Alice, respectively, as children of Arnulf and Lafracoth.¹⁵ Their descendants through Alice would figure among the Geraldine lineage that dominated the Anglo-Irish, on the one hand; and on the other, through Philip, among the lords and ladies in House Montgomery re-established in Scotland. Alice was closely matched in age to Maurice fitz Gerald, son of Nesta [Nest] Rhys ap Tewdr (the sister of Arnulf’s hostage Hewyl), and Arnulf’s former constable and chief officer, Gerald of Windsor who was now in command of Pembroke and its surrounds with Henry’s stamp of approval. Alice may well have been in fosterage and afterwards remained under the protection of Gerald and Nesta until such time as she married Maurice^ζ. Her brother, Philip, at some point was moved to

^ζ A description of Maurice derived from Giraldus Cambrensis and Hollingshed is given in an annotation on p.42 of the **Annals of Ireland by the Four Masters**: “ A man he was, both honest and wise, and for truth and valour very noble and famous, a man of his word, of constant mind, and of a certain bashfulness, well coloured, and of good countenance, of middle stature, and compact at all points, courteous, gentle, and moderate, a pattern of sobriety and good behavior; a man of few words; more wisdom he had than eloquence; in martial affairs bold, stout, and valiant, and yet not hasty to run into any adventure, but when an attempt was once taken in hand, he would pursue and follow the same.” Prior to his arrival in Ireland, in 1169, he is located Michaelmas, 1136, according to Historian Lloyd (p. 82), at the battle of Crug Mawr in Wales, as a leader of the Normans arrayed against the Welsh under Gruffyd ap Rhys during the Great

an abbey in Normandy, perhaps for education as much as protection. Still at a young age but with little to expect perhaps but peril in Wales and little more in Normandy other than temporary safe-haven, Arnulf's son went to seek his fortune elsewhere by accompanying the Earl Huntingdon who was collecting his retinue among disaffected, out-of-favor Anglo-Normans in anticipation of the crown he would assume as David I of Scotland. Philip would carry into Scotland only the appellation, "Cymbricus" or "The Welshman" to betoken his country of origin. The motto of the Montgomeries became *Garde Bien* perhaps, one speculates, owing to the formative years of Philip whose mother and father had each experienced such a breathtakingly swift abrogation of power, diminution of autonomy, assumption of the burden of ignorance and anguish with respect to the fates of their two children.¹⁶

Not only Normans were in expansion mode in the region circa 1100. King Magnus of Norway had established rule over the Hebrides and the Isle of Man. In 1098, on one of his sallies off the coast of Wales, Magnus had a chance martial encounter with an elder brother of Arnulf named Hugh, called "The Proud", who had become Earl of Shrewsbury after their father, Roger. Earl Hugh had helped to drive a salient across northern Wales against Welsh resistance. Hugh attained The Isle of Anglesey, only there to meet his doom by an arrow said to have been shot by Magnus himself.^{17, 18}

There is little doubt that Magnus (who, by 1093, had already proceeded sufficiently far west that he was able to provide support for Donald Bane in his bid for the crown of Scotland after Donald's brother, King Malcolm Canmore had died) harbored intentions to add to his conquests. He was not this time content with mere forays into Ireland, but rather desired the settlements, such as his Viking forebears had in coastal towns, Dublin, Wexford and Waterford. There is this account from **The Chronicles of Man and The Sudreys** (annals sympathetic to Magnus):

He sent his shoes to Murrough [Muirchertach], king of Ireland, commanding him to carry them on his shoulders throughout the house on Christmas day, in the presence of the envoys, in token of his subjection to King Magnus. When the Irish heard this they were highly incensed and indignant, but their king, following the dictates of wiser counsel, said that he would not only carry the shoes, but eat them, rather than that Magnus should ruin a single province in Ireland. He therefore complied with the injunction, treated the envoys with honour, sent many presents also by them to King Magnus, and arranged a treaty. On their return the envoys reported to their master the situation and delightfulness of Ireland, the abundance of its produce, and the salubrity of its climate. Magnus, hearing this, could think of nothing but the conquest of all Ireland.¹⁹

Revolt. Genealogies have given the date of his marriage to Alice as early as 1135 and as late as 1148. In either case it seems unlikely that Alice would have been in Ireland in the company of her husband until well after her mother's death, presumed for the purpose of this drama to be 1137. After 1169, she would have been in a position to visit Glendalough where she might have arranged to meet her half sister, Dervorgilla by that time restored to her husband, Tiernan.

Magnus seemed to pose a threat to one Irish faction while allied to another. In his corrective commentary upon **The Chronicle of Man and The Sudreys**, Historian P.A. Munch identifies three separate expeditions (which are confounded by their chronicler) by the Norwegian monarch into the area, in 1094, 1098 and 1102, the last of which seemed to actually involve joint operations with Muirchertach in the struggle for dominion with the latter's northern foe, Domnall Ua Lochlainn (Donald O'Lochlan). The campaign was not successful. Subsequently, Magnus died in an ambush, while seeking to hasten the replenishment of provisions. Responsibility for his demise is attributed to Muirchertach by Orderic:

About that time Magnus, the mighty king of Norway, sailed round the islands of Britain and with a vast fleet occupied the uninhabited islands as far as Ireland. He prudently established settlers there and ordered the building of towns and villages in the fashion of other people. The Irish conceived a great distrust for him and tried to harm him by every means in their power, plotting to destroy their enemies by force or guile. So the noble-minded king prepared an expedition against the Irish and approached the Irish coast with his fleet. Greatly alarmed by the king's might, the Irish sent for the Normans and Arnulf hurried to their aid with his retainers. But when they had all assembled they still feared the might of Magnus; they dared not engage in close battle with him, but instead applied themselves to plotting foul treachery against him.

Finally some ready-tongued envoys went to him deceitfully, misled him with specious promises, and persuaded him to disembark with only a few men in order to inspect the province and receive its subjection. He foolishly trusted the traitors, left his mailed squadrons on the shore and followed the scoundrels for two miles, inviting his own destruction. There he found huge troops of enemies lying in ambush; they sprang from their hiding places and the bold Norwegian, who scorned flight, put up a valiant resistance. A few men could not fight off thousands. King Magnus turned to stand with his back against a tree and protected by his shield, wounded many with the darts he hurled; but he perished, alas! overwhelmed by numbers....²⁰

Orderic is echoed, with less prejudicial fervor, by Moore in his **History of Ireland**.²¹ The matter and manner of Magnus' demise represented in both accounts is disputed persuasively by Historian Munch who marshals arguments exonerating Muirchertach of plotting against Magnus.²² It is to be noted that Orderic's sympathies also lie with the Montgomeries (who had patronized his father) against Muirchertach:

He resolved to murder Arnulf himself as a reward for his alliance, but the latter, learning of the execrable plots of this barbarous race, fled to his own people and lived for twenty years afterwards with no fixed abode....²³

In contrast to what is strongly implied by Historian Moore about Muirchertach *vis à vis* Magnus, there is no mention in the **History of Ireland** of Muirchertach engaging in

treachery with respect to Arnulf as he is accused in Orderic's account. Quite the contrary, the Irish king is depicted as expressing gratitude in his correspondence with Archbishop Anselm in Canterbury for the efforts of the latter to intercede with England's King Henry I on behalf of the banished lord who would-be-earl and perhaps more than earl. Historian Chibnall takes a similar view.²⁴

Other historians besides Orderic have portrayed Muirchertach as opportunistic, in degree perhaps more than the average magnate of his time. Historical consensus^{25, 26} attributes to him propagandistic motive in commissioning the **Cocadh Gáedel re Gallaib** ("The War of Gaedhil with the Gaill"), which celebrates his great-grandfather, Brian Bóru in Pyrrhic victory over the 'Vikings' at the battle of Clontarf. Muirchertach might have felt need for propaganda to bolster his claim to be Ard Rí, that is High King, a title that history confers readily upon Brian without qualification but upon his great grandson only reluctantly by appending the caveat, "with opposition." The opposition Muirchertach confronted at many turns in his career came from Domnall Ua (or Mac)Lochlainn who had become king of the Cenél nEogain. According to Griffith:

Domnall Mac Lochlainn and Muirchertach Ua Briain's struggles with each other only increased over time. In 1093, Domnall crafted an alliance of the northern kings and marched southward, gaining the submissions of the Uí Mael Sechnaill king of Meath and Godfraidh [i.e. Godred] Meránach of Dublin. He marched on Ua Briain and defeated him, but his alliance crumbled, and he returned to the north, unsatisfied. Ua Briain followed up his stroke of luck by banishing the kings of Dublin and Meath, finally solidifying his position there.

What followed could only have been the most frustrating years of Muirchertach Ua Briain's career. On at least seven separate occasions, the *comarb* of Patrick, who at this period was generally the lay abbot of Armagh, intervened in what would have been major (possibly even decisive) battles between the two forces....²⁷

Conflicting attributions from historians and the very fact of his endurance while beset with foes on all sides, suggest that Muirchertach was often shrewd and sometimes surreptitious in statecraft, such that *theorizing his mind* or (as would have been said in literary times), *drawing his character*, must not have been an easy enterprise for even his contemporaries. 'As convoluted as a *celtic knot* or an *illuminated initial*', it might be said of Muirchertach, but it is not necessary to characterize him as a cipher. Uncertainty about his behaviors might be resolved by appeal to an intentionality driven by the basic motive of retaining and enlarging power: might makes right, with less sleep-debt than was incurred either by Macbeth or his Lady.²⁸ However it is more intriguing to imagine him a monarch whose designs were susceptible not only to shifting political realities, but also to those persons in a position to engage his conscience. In such enduring circumstances, he might be seen possessed of a dynamic, if fluid, intentionality, with currents created by his will to dominate locally, that is in Eriu, and persistence if not felt presence in the larger world, as it must have appeared to him, ever more pressed to conform to the Norman brand of crusading globalism. Perhaps his sponsorship of two synods as the means to church reform was generated not so much by religious fervor as by his prescient belief that ecclesiastical accommodation in his time might reduce Eriu's vulnerability to powers

outré mer, powers eager to utilize Irish heterodoxy as pretext for invasion. Insofar, he may have been able to forestall what eventually would occur, in 1155, when Pope Adrian IV (an Englishman) issued the *Laudabiliter*, extending papal privilege to Henry II and authorizing conquest of Ireland for the sake/under the guise of church reform.^{29,30} Although he is described as forward-looking in international politics³¹, it is also Muirchertach who likely commissioned the **Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh**. His need for propaganda notwithstanding, Muirchertach (it may be speculated) is engaged by the allure of his own family historical romance. Perhaps he is caught up in a rodomontade of his own making, but by the same token, he is susceptible to advocacy from a loved and admired daughter who strives to preserve autonomous social, legal and moral traditions. His claim to hegemony as Ard Rí, is, after all, rationalized according to Brehon law and the **Lebor na Cert, the Book of Rights**, also substantially and favorably revised according to his interests.³² Moreover, there is little possibility of reconciling his statecraft (which has involved making and dissolving marriage alliances for his daughter as the political winds blow) with his sponsorship of church reforms that decry Irish marriage and divorce practices. In the eddies of so many shifting currents, Muirchertach alternates in resisting and allowing himself to be challenged by Lafracoth. Her verbal engagements and illuminated presentations incite insurrections in his heart, which compel him to operate from better reasons. It is true his better reasons are mostly in concert with— rather than in opposition to— his baser motives. Hence, his moral enterprise is more counter-vicious than it is virtuous, but it is still within the moral realm. In any event that is how he is imagined in this drama.

Naming neither women nor men involved, the chronicler of **Annals of Inisfallen** (AI 1102.6) reports on two marriage alliances made by Muirchertach: one with the French, which must refer to the Normans occupying Wales (i.e. the Montgomeries), and one with the Norsemen, which must refer to the Norwegians occupying the Isle of Man under King Magnus.³³

One daughter offered in the marriage alliances became known as “Lafracoth” in the Welsh chronicles; the other “Bjadmunja” (or “Biadmuin”) in the Norse saga; but their names appear nowhere in the various annals of Ireland. According to Historian Chibnall, in her translation of Orderic Vitalis, “Lafracoth” is likely a corruption of the father’s name attributed to his daughter in an ambiguity of translation. Returning to an intriguing passage in his notes, previously cited (see endnote 10), Historian P. Munch interprets Orderic as asserting that the reason for King Magnus making the expedition in 1098 was:

[T]hat having made a treaty with the Irish king, and even marrying his daughter, he found that Muircertach played him false, wherefore he both sent him his daughter back, and afterwards in person went to the West with a powerful fleet....

The reader is at first apt to think there has been an error, and that Historian Munch is referring to the marriage of Biadmuin to Magnus’ son, Sigurd, as is corroborated elsewhere, but occurred later, in 1102. That the historian has in mind a marriage alliance of a daughter of Muirchertach directly with Magnus, sometime before 1098, is supported subsequently in the same note by Historian Munch’s musing *en passant*:

From Iona [Magnus] went to Isla, and from there to Cantire, ravaging as well the coasts of Ireland as those of Scotland; perhaps it was at this period that he sent the Irish princess back to her father. Ordericus says that [Magnus] found the coasts of Ireland too well defended to effect any great achievements; the annals of Ulster say even that three Norwegian ships were taken by the Ultonians, and the men killed....^{34, 35}

Could Lafracoth have been betrothed and even sent to Magnus before she was married to Arnulf? The woman identified in Orderic as Lafracoth, thought to have been born in 1076, by 1093 would have been 17 while Magnus would have been 20. If she had been party to such a marriage alliance, Lafracoth would have acquired some experience of the world at large, alternative cultures and politics from perspectives other than that of her father. Accepting the premise, it becomes a matter of speculation what might have prompted King Magnus to send her back to Muirchertach. For example, it may be that Magnus envisioned the possibility of a marriage-alliance with Scotland, instead. Although he was destined to be disappointed when Scotland's King Eadgar married his daughter, Mathilda, to King Henry I in England, he finally settled for a Swedish princess, Margaret. Or, Lafracoth may have made herself disagreeable at court by refusing to submit more than the alliance absolutely demanded. It was, after all, not of her own making –a circumstance common in that time perhaps, but in Eriu, one which might encounter an individual's opposition strengthened by cultural background in which women's rights made a more robust presentation than on the continent. If Historian Munch's sources and his interpretations of ambiguous passages are correct, a failed marriage alliance between Lafracoth and Magnus might well have contributed ill to her reputation. There is little enough about her early in the account from Orderic to shed light on this matter:

Arnulf had taken to wife a daughter of an Irish king named Murchertach, and hoped in her right to secure his father-in-law's kingdom....³⁶

But later on, this is found, in a passage that begs for deconstruction:

When the Irish had tasted blood by killing King Magnus and his companions they grew more unruly and suddenly turned to kill the Normans. Their king took his daughter away from Arnulf and gave the wanton girl in an unlawful marriage to one of his cousins.³⁷

With that, the name 'Lafracoth' disappear altogether from historical accounts.³⁸

While neither Lafracoth nor Bjadmunja are so-named in the annals of Ireland, a daughter of Muirchertach does receive attention from two chroniclers, separated by different perspectives on events of their time. She is referred to by both as "Mór":

M 1137.11

Mór, daughter of Muircheartach Ua Briain, the wife of Ua Maeleachlainn[§], died at Dermhach Choluim-Chille after penance.³⁹

LC 1137.7

Mór, daughter of Muirchertach Ua Briain, wife of Murchadh Ua Maelsechlainn, chief queen of Erin, *in poententia mortua est*.⁴⁰

This same Mór had, by Murchadh, a daughter, Derbforgaill (Dearforgail), the namesake of Mór's paternal grandmother latinised to Dervorgilla,. Mor's daughter was renowned for her beauty. Like Nesta, the daughter of Rhys ap Tedwr in Wales, Dervogilla was likened in her lifetime (1108-1193) to Helen of Troy. And like Helen of Troy her beauty occasioned international conflict. She became wife of the King of Bréifne, Tigernán Ua Ruairc, but was abducted by the King of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough, who was, in consequence of her kidnapping, expelled from Ireland. MacMurrough returned only with assistance from Strongbow and the Anglo-Normans who after rendering their services, would decide to stay on.⁴¹

It seems entirely plausible to believe that the 'cousin' of Muirchertach, to whom Orderic refers, and to whom Lafracoth was given 'unlawfully' (that is, from the Norman perspective) was Murchadh Ua Máelsechlainn. He assumed kingship of Meath after his predecessor was deposed in 1106, presumably by Muirchertach Ua Briain.⁴² His career can be traced through the **Annals of the Four Masters**⁴³ and in **The Annals of Loch Cé**.⁴⁴ In them can be discerned the vagaries of holding power in Meath, as well as the ruthless maneuvering, altogether expectable in the age, in which Murchadh believed himself obliged to engage. All of this must have seemed wearily familiar to Mór/Lafracoth (allowing the assumption they are one and the same), such that continuous resort to an abbey, even as an *inclusus*, might have had strong appeal. Before reaching a state of extremis, however, she would, by virtue of her marriage to the King of Tara, which had been the traditional seat of power before the Ua Briain hegemony, be sensible of her royal obligations, and might well have been in a position to wield some influence.

As conceived dramatically, Lafracoth/Mór might well perceive herself called out against her will from her beloved scriptorium where she has found first resignation and then aesthetic-spiritual fulfillment. By this time she holds herself accountable to a higher power. She is shown the means to re-engage the world morally and narrow the value-motive gaps in her life, resolving the eccentricities between which are *best* and which *strongest* among an inevitable mix of motives inside her: base—even survivalist— and

[§] Another name with spelling variants that can be confusing: 'MaelSechnaill', 'Maolseachlin', 'Malachy', 'Omachlachcherlin'(Geraldus Cabrenis), 'Melaghlin' (O'Grady) or 'MacLaughlin'. According to an annotation entitled *On Irish proper names* in **The Annals of the Four Masters**, pp.41-42, *Maol* is prefixed to the names of ecclesiastics, and signifies a bald or tonsured person, who became the spiritual servant of some saint, in this case St. Sechnall. The same annotation gives the meaning of 'Mor' as "a fine or majestic woman" and 'Dearforgail' as "a purely fair daughter."

altruistic— perhaps, even supererogatory or eleemosynary— ones. Early on, she intercedes on behalf of Murchadh (who in 1109 had led a predatory excursion “in violation of the Staff of Jesus and the successor of Patrick”⁴⁵). However, she presumes further than what her commission as her husband’s envoy actually entails and seeks to reprise her peacekeeping role among contentious factions, by establishing an effective liaison with Cellach, the current successor of Patrick.^{46, 47} In keeping with the dramatic character that has been conceived for her, she even meets with her father’s arch-enemy, Domnall Lochlann, again on behalf of her husband under threat of being deposed by her father’s one time protégé, the King of Connaught, Turlough O’Conor.⁴⁸ She incurs her father’s wrath by doing so, but ensures a tenuous balance of power for a while longer. Most especially, she omits no opportunity to mount resistance to the church reform, which has already cost her dearly in personal terms, and which she now sees will be a mode of oppression of her people and suppression of enlightenment and spiritual diversity, indeed a menace to the world at large in the form of the crusades. Having been denied a voice in the first synod at Cashel she takes keen interest in her emissaries carrying her message to the second held during her father’s tenure. Once more, it is Lafracoth *contra* Muirchertach, although her views do not prevail:

M 1111.5

A synod was convened at Fiadh mic-Aenghusa by the chiefs of Ireland, with Ceallach, successor of Patrick; Maelmuire Ua Dunain, noble senior of Ireland; with fifty bishops, three hundred priests, and three thousand students, together with Muirchertach Ua Briain and the chiefs of Leath-Mhogha, to prescribe rules and good morals for all, both laity and clergy.⁴⁹

From on-going concerns about blunting the edge of ecclesiastical reform and working towards a sustainable peace, she is diverted when her father is afflicted by a life-threatening illness in 1114. They are reconciled and she nurses him. At best only partially recovered, The High King with Opposition passes into a state of decline, which, however, he meets stoutly “with opposition” of his own design, receiving encouragement from his daughter and support from her husband. It is not until 1118 when the new powerbrokers determine at last Muirchertach is no longer fit to rule. Father and daughter are among many souls living at the time who are touched by famine in 1115, plague in 1116 and by the subjugation of Mumu by Torlough O’Conor. She is at her father’s side when he succumbs in 1119.⁵⁰

The vicissitudes of her life following banishment include Lafracoth’s abduction, forced divorce and re-marriage, and the experience of two very young children reared apart from her in fosterage constantly under threat of becoming hostages at any time it might be deemed politically expedient. After her marriage to Murchadh, Lafracoth/Mór adds to the litany of her losses, first Connor, her lover, then her father, then her son, Connor’s namesake, Conchobhar, the royal heir to Tara, who is slain in 1133 by the royal heir of Leinster. There follows in the annals record of “a great depredation” in Fine-Gall and east Leinster committed by Murchadh in revenge for their son. The depredation commences this way:

M 1133.7

Lusca , with its church full of people and relics, was burned upon the Fine Gall...in revenge of the son of Murchadh, i.e. Conchobhar.

As conceived in the drama, Lafracoth's bereavement over the death of Conchobhar is arrested by these acts of revenge killing and desecration. Grief gives way to abandonment of any hope of salvation for humankind. Her abhorrence becomes complete with her recognition of her own desire for retribution, which in light of the atrocities committed by her husband, she feels must be repudiated, and can only be, by utter self abnegation. Her desire to remain any more in the world is dealt a *coup de grace*. Forsaking even the joys she experienced in copying and illuminating manuscripts, she becomes an *inclusus*. In Lafracoth's reverie, the periods of her life spent in the monastic sanctuaries of Eriu acquire their own continuity and timelessness, allowing suspension of spatial and temporal constraints, for 'a hard-look at herself' as much as a vision in which she achieves awareness of her assigned place in history, a place of obscure ill-repute. Accepting the injustice history will mete out to her, she dons the second Ring of Glaucon crafted, it would seem, especially for her and which will be her only apparent legacy. Thus adorned, she is enabled by Grace to affirm the goodness and mystery of her being, of her faith, hope and love. Like a Celtic loop she is brought back to a moment of forgiveness and gratitude, leaves the confinement she had imposed upon herself in order to seek out her Mathilda, formerly her niece by marriage and assist the latter in reconstructing the convent once dear to Montgomery religieux, destroyed by Robert of Bellême.

¹ M Chibnall (1987): **Anglo-Norman England 1066-1166**. p.47 and Chapters 1-3 entire.

² Orderic Vitalis (1141a): **The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis**, Vol. II, book iv, pp. 210-11.

³ Chibnall, pp.11-13; pp. 19, 22, 27, 47, 142-143, 298.

⁴ T Montgomery (1863): A Genealogical History of the Family of Montgomery, pp. 13-26.

⁵ W Fraser (1859): Memorials of the Montgomeries, Earls of Eglinton, pp. 1-4.

Nota bene disputes in this and the aforementioned genealogy with respect to whether or not Roger was actually present at Hastings. The genealogy according to Roger's descendent, Thomas Harrison

Montgomery cites Taylor's translation of Robert Wace's *Roman de Rou*, (op. cit, pp. 15-16) to support not only Roger's presence but also engagement in the battle with both valor and distinction.:

“The Normans were playing their part well, when an English knight came rushing up, having in company one hundred men, furnished with various arms. He wielded a northern hatchet, with the blade a full foot long, and was well armed after his manner, being tall, bold, and of noble carriage. In the front of the battle where the Normans thronged most, he came bounding on swifter than the stag, many Normans falling before him and his company. He rushed straight upon a Norman who was armed and riding on a war horse, and tried with his hatchet of steel to cleave his helmet; but the blow miscarried, and the sharp blade glanced down below the saddle bow, driving through the horse's neck down to the ground, so that both horse and master fell together to the earth. I know not whether the Englishman struck another blow; but the Normans who saw the stroke were astonished, and about to abandon the assault, when Rogier de Montgomerie came galloping up, with his lance set, and heeding not the long handled axe, which the Englishman wielded aloft, struck him down, and left him stretched upon the ground. Then Rogier cried out, ‘Frenchmen, strike! The day is ours!’”

Modern historical consensus favors Orderic's account that Roger's role was to govern Normandy in the absence of William and only later arrived in England in 1067.

⁶ Memorables of the Montgomeries. A Narrative in Rhyme, p. 3:

Earl Rodger then the greatest man,
Next to the king was thought;
And nothing that he could desire,
But it to him was brought.
Montgomerie town, Montgomery shire
And earl of Shrewsburie,
And Arundel do shew this man,
Of grandeur full to be.

⁷ J Lloyd (1911): **A History of Wales From the Norman Invasion to the Edwardian Conquest**. Chapter 2, pp. 33-34.

⁸ Orderic Vitalis (1141b): **The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis**, Vol. XI, books xi, p.12:

In the year of our Lord 1101, the ninth indiction, Henry king of England was confirmed in his authority in the kingdom after making peace with his brother, Robert [Duke of Normandy, Robert Curthose]. Little by little he took steps to punish the traitors who had infamously deserted him in his hour of need. He summoned to judgement Robert Malet, Ivo of Grandmesnil, Robert of Pontefract the son of Ilbert of Lacy, Robert of Bellême, who was mightier than all these, and various others, and charged them, not all together but individually at different times, with the offence of violating their pledged faith in many ways. He imposed large fines on some of them who were unable to clear themselves of the crime laid to their charge, and disinherited and drove into perpetual exile others whom he considered still more suspect.

pp. 21-23:

In the year of our Lord 1102, the tenth indiction, King Henry summoned the mighty earl, Robert of Bellême, to his court and after charging him with forty-five offences in deed and word committed against him and his brother the duke of Normandy, commanded him to answer publicly to each one. For a whole year he had had Robert watched assiduously and all his evil deeds

thoroughly investigated by private spies and noted down fully in writing. When Robert had asked for permission to go and consult with his men, as is customary, and on receiving it had left the court, he recognized that he could not possibly clear himself of the crimes laid to his charge. Quickly springing to his horse he fled, panic –stricken and breathless to his castles. The king waited with his barons for an answer until a royal servant brought back the news that Robert had fled without ceremony. The king was vexed at the deception, but knew for certain that the day of vengeance would come. He therefore publicly condemned Robert as a man who had been openly accused and had failed to clear himself by process of law, and pronounced him a public enemy unless he returned to do right and submit to justice. Once more he summoned the rebel to court, but Robert flatly refused to come. Instead he strengthened the ramparts and walls of his castles everywhere, and called on his fellow Normans, the alien Welsh, and all his neighbours to assist him. The king, however, summoned the army of England, laid siege to Arundel castle, which stands near the sea-coast, built siege-castles, and left officers there with his household troops for three months....

pp. 23-25:

Meanwhile the king sent envoys to Normandy, and informed [the Duke of Normandy, Robert Curthose] in forthright letters how Robert [d'Allême] had incurred forfeiture to them both and had fled secretly from his court. He then reminded him that according to the treaty they had made in England they should join forces to punish the man who had turned traitor to either of them....But because the duke was indolent and soft, and had not the firmness proper to a prince, Robert of Montfort and other fellow conspirators, who were divided among themselves,deliberately set fire to their own tents, created turmoil in the army, and fled from the scene though no one pursued them. In this way they forced others who hated Robert and wished to harm him to shameful flight. The garrison, witnessing the utter discredit of the Norman army, howled derisive abuse at them. From that time, having little to fear, [the Norman based troops of Robert d'Allême] waged cruel war all over the Hiémois.... [T]he outlaws....plundered the goods of the peasants all over the province and ,when they had taken everything, burnt down their homes.

p. 25:

The king ... mustered all the troops of England in the autumn, and led them into the province of Mercia, where he besieged Bridgnorth for three weeks. Robert himself had withdrawn to Shrewsbury....
He ...had made a treaty with the Welsh, and formed an alliance with their kings, Cadwgan and Iowerth... whom he sent on frequent forays to harass the king's army

p. 27:

The earls and magnates of the kingdom met together and discussed fully how to reconcile the rebel with his lord. For, as they said , ‘ If the king defeats a mighty earl by force and carries his enmity to the point of disinheriting him, as he is now striving to do, he will from that moment trample on us like helpless slave-girls. Let us make every effort to reconcile them, so securing the advantage of our lord and our peer alike within the law, and at the same time, by quelling the disturbance, we will put both parties in our debt.’

[The king] withdrew, confounding the schemes of the seditious lords. Then he sent for the Welsh kings... and, by disarming them with gifts and promises, cautiously won them and their forces from the enemy's side to his own....

pp. 29-31:

When Robert heard that his strong fortress of Bridgnorth in which he had placed his trust had surrendered to the king he was in despair; almost insane with grief he did not know what course to take. The king commanded his troops to go by way of *Huvel hegen* [translated 'the evil hedge' and naming a road the terrain around which offered frequent opportunities for ambush].... The wood was cleared and many hands levelled out a very wide road.

When the news reached Robert he was greatly alarmed; seeing disasters all around him, he was brought to his knees and forced to beg for mercy from the unconquered king. The stern king, however, remembered all his wrongs and resolved to hunt him down with a huge army, and grant no quarter until he surrendered unconditionally. Robert, gnawed by anguish at his wretched fate, took the advice of friends and went out to meet the king as he approached the town, confessed his treachery, and handed over the keys of the town to the conqueror. The king confiscated Robert's whole honor and the estates of the vassals who had stood by him in his rebellion, allowed him to leave unharmed with his horses and arms, and granted him a safe-conduct through England to the sea-coast. All England rejoiced as the cruel tyrant went into exile, and many flatteringly congratulated King Henry, saying, 'Rejoice, King Henry, give thanks to the Lord God, for you have begun to rule freely now that you have conquered Robert of Bellême and driven him out of your kingdom.'.... Robert crossed to Normandy, bursting with rage and grief, and savagely attacked those of his compatriots who had attempted to help their weak lord, leaving a trail of fire and slaughter behind him. Like the dragon of whom John the apostle writes in the Apocalypse, who was cast out of heaven and vented his bestial fury by warring on the dwellers on earth, the fierce disturber of the peace, driven from Britain, fell in wrath upon the Normans. He pillaged their estates, burning all behind him, and tortured to death or mutilated the knights and other persons whom he was able to capture. He was so cruel that he preferred tormenting his prisoners to growing rich on fat ransoms offered for their release.

Robert's brothers, Roger the Poitevin and Arnulf, were wealthy earls in England, and had been richly endowed with great honors through the efforts of their father, Earl Roger.... Because of Robert's evil-doing the mighty king of England withdrew his favour from all his progeny and kinsfolk and determined to root them all out from the kingdom. He therefore looked for grounds of complaint against the two brothers, exploited to the full whatever grievances he found, disinherited them, and drove them out of Britain. So ruthless was he in his vengeance that he pitilessly deprived the nuns of Almenèches of the land which the first Earl Roger had given them, because the abbess, Emma, was a sister of the earls Robert, Arnulf, and Roger....

p. 33:

...Robert was clever and powerful, and had already amassed great wealth in the thirty-four powerful castles that he built to further his rebellion. He alone enjoyed the inheritance of his ancestors, allowing no share to the brothers who had been disinherited on his account. So Roger withdrew to the castle of Charroux, which was his wife's patrimony and remained there until he grew old and died, leaving honourable sons to succeed him. As for Arnulf, outraged at all the struggles he had endured to no purpose on his brother's behalf, he went over to the duke, seized the castle of Almenèches by surprise, and surrendered it to him, and took with him a number of his brother's supporters. At that time the region of Sééz was greatly disturbed. Many men of the province took Arnulf's part and deserted Robert, handing over their castles to the duke's supporters. Robert abandoned by his own brother, was full of fears and scarcely dared trust anyone; since he himself was a figure of terror to almost everyone he doubted the loyalty even of those who still stood by him.

p.35:

In the month of June the duke's retainers gathered together in the nunnery and rapaciously preparing to plunder the region, turned the consecrated buildings into stables for their horses. Getting word of this, Robert rushed to the spot and, setting fire to the buildings, burnt the nunnery to the ground....

p. 37:

After the nunnery of Almenèches had been burnt... the defenceless community of nuns was scattered in great distress. Each one retired to the home of kinsfolk or friends as chance and opportunity allowed. Emma, the abbess, fled with three nuns to Saint-Évroul and lived there for six months in the chapel where the blessed father Évroul had devoted himself in solitude and heavenly meditation. The following year she returned to her own church and, with the help of god and good Christians, toiled to restore the ruins. She lived for about ten years afterwards and in that time patiently rebuilt both the church of the Virgin and Mother and conventual buildings, and brought back to the monastic enclosure all the nuns who had been dispersed. After her death Matilda, the daughter of her brother Philip, succeeded her, and laboriously restored the monastery with all its buildings after it had been unexpectedly burnt a second time.

Cf. Memorables of the Montgomeries. A Narrative in Rhyme, p. 4:

At last king William yields to fate;
And then his second son
Mounts on the throne, which had almost
The kingdom quite undone:
Some for the eldest son stand up,
As Rodger's sons did all
But the usurper keeps the throne,
Which did begin their fall.

⁹ Chibnall, p. 73.

¹⁰ Montgomery, pp. 26-33. By all contemporaneous accounts which are carried forward in the genealogies, Robert of Bellême was both cruel and formidable, pp. 30-31:

“The character of this extraordinary man, whose great talents distinguished him from most of the turbulent nobles of his age, seems to have inspired all the contemporary historians with horror. ‘ He was a very Pluto, Megaera, Cerberus, or anything you can conceive still more horrible,’ says Henry of Huntingdon, who gives details of his cruelties which are omitted by Ordericus. William of Malmesbury particularly enlarges on the powers of dissimulation by which his victims became his prey.” His barbarism passed into a proverb; and he “was well pleased to be

accused of barbarity for the excessive rigor of his punishments, preferring the pleasure of so doing to the increase of his treasure by ransoming his captives.” And indeed his savage and infamous conduct rendered him insupportable to his associates, friends, and vassals.

But while he spoiled all by his excessive ambition and cruelty, and clouded the gifts which God had bestowed on him with the blackest of crimes; and while his insolence and covetousness involved him in frequent wars with his neighbors, his character exhibited many good qualities. He was a brave and daring soldier, distinguished for his genius and eloquence, as well as his courage. Skilled in the profession of arms, he was ingenious in inventing new machines of war, and he was deemed one of the ablest engineers of the age....

p. 33:

Agnes, Countess of Ponthieu, was not herself free from feeling the effects of her husband’s violent temper. He treated her harshly, even, it is said, on one occasion imprisoning her at his castle of Belêsmes. But after remaining here a long time in prison, she found means of escaping; and retiring at first to the Countess of Chartres, she returned there to Ponthieu, where she passed the remainder of her days....

¹¹ Fraser, p. 5.

¹² Chibnall, p. 59.

¹³ Montgomery, pp. 39-41.

¹⁴ J Lydon (1998): **The Making of Ireland From Ancient Times To The Present**, pp. 40, 57, and 59:

By now [1170] Henry II had become alarmed at what was happening in Ireland. Helping Mac Murrough was one thing; conquering land, capturing cities, possibly establishing an independent English kingdom was quite another. He had no reason to trust Strongbow, long since out of favour since his attachment to King Stephen in the civil war. It was time for the King to establish his authority over his subjects in Ireland....

And also see: Chapter 6, entire.

¹⁵ *Nota bene* Alice de Montgomery is the only identified child of Lafracoth and Arnulf in the Heritage Consulting *Millennium File* most recently accessed via **Ancestry.com** on 6/8/07. See the endnote, which follows, for a genealogy in which Alice is ignored.

Cf, Fraser’s genealogy mentions neither. After dealing in depth with Roger’s sons including Arnulf, he proceeds to characterize the Montgomeries in Scotland. According to Fraser the family line begins with (p.7):

Robert de Mundegumbri, First of Eagleshame [1103-1178]

Was the first of the family who settled in Scotland....When Walter [the High Steward] emigrated to Scotland, he was accompanied by Robert Montgomerie, who appears to have been the son of Arnulph, fourth son of the first Earl of Shrewsbury.

Owing to the destruction of the Montgomerie muniments, by the burning of Eglinton Castle in the beginning of the sixteenth century, it may now be impossible to discover direct evidence of the affiliation of Robert the first of Eagleshame. Arnulph was married, as we have seen, in 1101, to the Princess Lafracoth. Hollin[g]shed states, that the first ancestor of the Carew

family was named Montgomerie, and that in the time of Henry II. (1154) he married the lady Elizabeth, daughter to Roscius, Prince of South Wales, by which marriage he was advanced in honour, and made baron of the Castle of Carew, wherefore his posterity took their surnames called Carew. Camden too declares, that this family was anciently called Montgomerie, and believe themselves to be descended from Arnulph de Montgomerie, brother of Robert, Earl of Shrewsbury, in the reign of Henry I. Arnulph therefore had a family, and it is probable that Robert was one of his sons, and received his Christian name from his uncle, Robert, third Earl of Shrewsbury. Arnulph and his family, when in England, were closely connected with the family of Walter the Steward. It was natural, when they had lost their English possessions, that some of them should gladly accompany Walter to Scotland, and that Robert did so is ample evidence, and that he acquired large possessions from Walter soon after arrival in this country. The connection, then, which existed between the families of Montgomerie and Fitzalan in England, the loss by the former of their English possessions, and the simultaneous appearance of both in Scotland connected as closely as ever, lead to the inference, that Robert was of the family of the English Montgomeries, and if so, he could only have been the son of Arnulph; the children of Arnulph's brothers being otherwise accounted for.

Nota bene the drama follows T. Montgomery's genealogy rather than that of W. Fraser. The latter scholar very likely skipped a generation in his account, as a comparison of them side by side readily shows. In Montgomery's account Robert is one of Philip's two sons and therefore the grandson of Arnulf. The genealogical accounts come back into agreement, however, in asserting that Robert was succeeded by his son Alan de Montgomerie.

¹⁶ Montgomery, p. 41:

Arnulph de Montgomerie had an only son:

PHILIP DE MONTGOMERIE, was born about the year 1101, at Pembroke, and appears to have been named after his uncle, who died in the Holy Land during the first crusade. When father was banished the kingdom, he was but an infant. The next we hear of him is his arrival in Scotland; which was at an early age, as he came over with the Earl of Huntingdon, afterwards David I. of Scotland, on his return from his visit to the monastery of Tiron, One of the first acts of David, as Prince of Cumbria, "was taking a colony of Benedictine monks from the newly founded monastery of Tiron [in Normandy], and to plant them beside his forest castle of Selkirk. This was in 1113; and even thus early he had gathered round him, as his charters show, many Anglo-Norman knights, through whose help he was to effect a momentous change in the land." During this visit David must have made the acquaintance of the house of Perche and that of Montgomerie their relatives. Routrou II., count of Perche, had founded, in 1109, the abbey to which David was now on a visit...and this will account for the introduction of Philip de Montgomerie to the Scottish prince, and his accompanying him, with other Normans, on his return to Scotland. This arrangement could not have but been satisfactory to Arnulph, his father, not only from the enmity his house bore to the English king, but also from the fact that the boy's future life, if spent in Normandy, would be devoid of material prospects.....

In this account, Philip married Lady Margaret Dunbar, daughter of Cospatrick, second Earl of Dunbar and March, probably no earlier than 1120.

¹⁷ Lloyd, pp. 38-40:

Earl Hugh of Shrewsbury joined forces with his brother earl and the army made for the shores of the Menai Straits. Gruffydd ap Cynan and Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, as leaders of the Welsh resistance, adopted the policy of withdrawing, with all their people, into the isle of Anglesey and there with the help of a hired fleet from across the Irish Channel, defending themselves, in the expressive language of Gruffydd's biographer, "as a fortress girt by the ocean." It was a wise movement, had the honour and good faith of the Danish mercenaries been proof against corruption, but when the two earls encamped on the coast of Arllechwedd, it soon appeared that

the foreign fleet was open to consider a higher offer, and ere long Gruffydd found his allies turned against him and the Normans pouring into the island. Thinking that all was lost, he and Cadwgan fled in panic to Ireland, and the triumph of the invaders was for the moment complete. There followed a week, perhaps more, of rapine and carnage, when even the protection of religion was to no avail. Men especially remembered, in the light of his tragic fall so soon afterwards, the impious violence of the Earl of Shrewsbury, how he had made the church of Llandyfyrdog a kennel for his dogs and had cruelly mutilated an aged priest who had given counsel to the Welsh. When the riotous fury of the victors was at its height, a sudden change was wrought by the appearance off Priestholm of a strange flotilla. It was that of Magnus Barefoot, king of Norway, who in the course of a great raid upon the islands of the West had reached Man and was now making for the sister isle of Anglesey. He had no special quarrel with the Welsh or their oppressors, but in the true pirate spirit at once attacked the force which he found in possession, and “the battle of Anglesey Sound” began. . . . The Earl of Shrewsbury, known to the Normans, as “Hugh the Proud,” was a conspicuous figure on the Anglesey shore, clad in full armour and riding hither and thither in the swirling shallows. In the midst of the conflict he fell, pierced through the eye by an arrow which was universally believed to have been aimed by Magnus himself. The sea closed over his body, which was not recovered until the retreating tide left it where it sank. . . .

¹⁸ **The Chronicles of Man and The Sudreys, 1098:**

[Magnus] compelled the men of Galloway to cut timber and bring it to the shore for the construction of the forts. He sailed to Anglesey, an island of Wales, where he found two earls Hugh, one of whom he slew, the other he put to flight and brought the island under subjection to himself.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Orderic Vitalis (1141b), Vol. XI, books xi, pp. 49-51.

²¹ T. Moore (1843): **The History of Ireland**, p.228

²² P. Munch (1874): **The Chronicles of Man and The Sudreys, Manx Society Volume XXII. Note 5:**

Ordericus Vitalis who generally is very accurate and trustworthy, says that the reason why King Magnus made the great expedition in 1098, was this, that having made a treaty with the Irish king Muircertach. . . . he found that Muircertach played him false, wherefore he both sent his daughter back, and afterwards in person went to the West with a powerful fleet. Although this certainly was not the sole motive why Magnus went there, yet there is no reason to question the facts themselves; the treaty here spoken of must accordingly have taken place before 1098, that is to say during the first expedition in 1093-1094. And why was the treaty made? The Irish Annals explain it. Muircertach, grandson (sic) of Brian Boromy, who had succeeded his father Tirdelvagh in 1080 as King of Munster, was engaged in a fierce war with his rival for supreme power, Donal O' Lochlan, King of Ulster. In 1094 the war raged in the neighborhood of Dublin, and among the princes who fought on Donald's side was Godred, who had brought no less than ninety ships. Muircertach was at first completely routed, but afterwards returning, he got the upper hand over Godred, and expelled him from Dublin. Remembering that just at the same time the King Magnus was within his fleet near the coasts of Ireland, we are justified in making the combination that Muircertach sought and obtained his alliance against Godred, and that Magnus took Lagman [the son of Godred, King of Dublin, styled the Defender of the Northern Islands who was being pursued across the region by Magnus] prisoner chiefly to have a hold upon [Godred], who might thereby be so much easier compelled to resign his lordship of Dublin to Muircertach. We have, moreover, an authority in the Saga [of King Magnus] for king Magnus having helped Muircertach to take Dublin, forasmuch as it is said that this was done in 110, on the last expedition of Magnus to the West. But as it is sure enough that the capture of Dublin by Muircertach took place in 1094, and it has been sufficiently shown that the author of the Saga sometimes assigns to one of the

three expeditions what belongs to another, we are fully entitled to believe that the same error has been committed here, and that the author, in speaking of this event, is not mistaken as to the fact, but only as to the time, which was 1094, not 1102.

Note 11:

It was undoubtedly the intention of Magnus at this time to punish Muircertach, but he was prevented from doing so, either by his severe loss in the Battle of Anglesey, or as is probable, by the necessity in which he may have found himself to turn his forces against [King Eadgar of] Scotland. . . .

It is said in the Saga that during this expedition King Magnus effected a marriage between his son Sigurd, then only nine years old, with Biadmuin, daughter of Muircertach, being only five years old, and that he constituted him king of all Norwegian possessions in the West. That the marriage did not take place till in 1102, on the king's third expedition, is evident from the Irish and Welsh annals. . . .

Between Muircertach and Magnus there was apparently no contact at all during this [1098] expedition. That Magnus intended to make war on him, must be regarded as certain. . . . He passed, however, the winter either at Man, or in the Isles, probably intending to attack Ireland in the spring of 1099. . . . In the years 1100 and 1101 Magnus was occupied with the Swedish war. In the year 1102, however, he went forth on his last expedition, which this time was undertaken directly against Ireland. What the Chronicle tells about his sending his shoes to King Muircertach and the unconditional submission of the latter, seems to be merely a fable; yet if something like it took place, it must have been in the winter immediately preceding the expedition. From the Irish and Welsh Annals, as well as from Orderic, we learn how matters stood with Muircertach. His war with Donald O' Lochlan raged more fiercely than ever; and although, on the whole, Muircertach had the upper hand, yet Donald was an obstinate and dangerous foe, against whom he felt the necessity of strengthening himself through an alliance with other powerful rulers. Shortly before, King Henry I (Beauclerc) had ascended the English throne, excluding, as is well known, his senior brother Robert, Duke of Normandy, with whom he had to sustain a hard feud. Among the Barons who embraced the party of Robert were the two brothers of the above mentioned Earl Hugh Montgomery, who was killed by king Magnus, Robert [of Bellême], who after the fall of Hugh had purchased his earldom, having besides many other possessions in England as well as in Normandy, and Arnulf, who had Dyfed and Pembroke in Wales. Robert made an alliance with the three Welsh princes, Jorwerth, [Cadwgan] and Meredith. . . and Arnulf sought the alliance of Muircertach, asking, through ambassadors, his daughter Lafracot[h] in marriage, to which Muircertach immediately gave his consent, promising not only to support Arnulf against the English king, but also to make him his successor. In this manner a rather strong league had been formed against King Henry; and the allied lords and princes, especially the two Montgomeries, as avengers of their brother, must at the same time have been the enemies of King Magnus, this prince was consequently brought somehow into friendly relation with the English monarch. . . . We learn from the Welsh chronicles and the Irish annals that Magnus before visiting Ireland landed at Man, where he. . . established his headquarters, erecting forts as before, and making a personal visit to Anglesey, where prince Griffith [Gruffydd] received him cordially, and gave him permission to cut what timber he might require for his fortifications. . . . Meanwhile Robert [of Bellême] had been declared an outlaw, and several of his castles taken; one of the Welsh princes had been induced to embrace the king [of England]'s part; Arnulf of Montgomery had betaken himself to the court of Muircertach, craving assistance, but the latter, far from being able to afford any, on the contrary was expecting aid from Arnulf against Magnus. Under these circumstances Muircertach found it safest first to make peace, or truce for a year with Donald O'Lochlan and then to enter into negotiations with Magnus. In what manner these negotiations were conducted is nowhere told; we learn only from the Irish annals that the peace was concluded for a year. . . and that Muircertach gave his daughter in marriage to Sigurd, the son of Magnus, who was now proclaimed king of the western possessions. . . .

Ordericus states expressly that Muircertach acted treacherously towards Magnus, as well as Arnulf. It is easy to see from the following facts that the principal object of Muircertach was to crush his Irish rivals, and that to this end he deemed it necessary to secure the powerful assistance of Magnus, with the hope, perhaps, of having afterwards an opportunity to get rid of him. The treaty was strengthened by giving hostages from both sides.... Arriving in Ireland Magnus was friendly received by Muircertach, and no doubt got possession of Dublin with its district....

In the winter, the Saga tells, Magnus was the guest of Muircertach in his residence of Kinkora, and in the spring, it is farther told, both kings went to Ulster.... The Irish annals say that Muircertach, having encamped his army... on the plains of Cobha, he divided his forces, going with one part to Dalaraide... leaving the rest at Cobha, where during his absence it was attacked and completely routed by Donald O' Lochlan.... [I]t is to be supposed that the Norwegian king with his main force was on board his fleet, ravaging the coasts, while Muircertach made war on land, and that the diversion of the latter to Dalaraide was effected in order to meet and operate in conjunction with Magnus. In any case it is evident that the defeat at Cobha put an end to the operations, as it is expressly stated in the Saga that the expedition to Ulster having been ended, Muircertach returned to Kinkora, and Magnus prepared to go home; these preparations must have taken place immediately after the battle of Cobha, as the fall of Magnus occurred only nineteen days afterward, on St. Bartholomew's Day....

²³ Orderic Vitalis (1141b), op. cit, p. 51

²⁴ Ibid, p. 50 note 1.

²⁵ B. Hudson (1996): **Prophecy of Berchán; Irish and Scottish High-Kings of the Early Middle Ages** p.179.

²⁶ M. Ní Mhaonaigh (2003): *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*, **The Encyclopedia of Ireland**, edited by B. Lalor, pp. 216-17.

²⁷ P Griffin (2002): *The Mac Lochlainn High-Kingship in Late Pre-Norman Ireland*. p.11.

²⁸ *Nota bene* Hudson, pp. 224-5:

The man responsible for the death of Donnchad was Mac bethad, the king of Cenél Loairn. He was the model for Macbeth, whose literary fame would make him the best known of the early Scottish monarchs. The tortured villain of Shakespeare's drama is unknown to Berchán who welcomes him (st.194), and describes him as a red king who is generous....

Mac bethad ruled in Scotland 1040-1057, was killed by Máel Coluim III known as Malcolm Canmore who (p. 226):

... contested with kings of the English , William the Conqueror and William Rufus and developed a rapprochement with the new, Norman, order that was being established in Britain.

The period of his rule, 1058-1093, overlapped with that of Muirchertach, 1086-1118. He was succeeded by Duncan II, perhaps killed by Donald Ban (mentioned prior as having support from Magnus, King of Norway), who ruled 1094-1098, then Edgar who ruled 1098-1107 (and in 1106 sent Muirchertach a camel), who was in turn succeeded by Alexander, 1107-1124.

For a detailed correlation of reigns in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England and elsewhere see: **Successors of Rome: the Periphery of Francia , 445-Present.**

²⁹ M Flanagan (2003):*Laudabiliter*. **The Encyclopedia of Ireland**, p. 612.

³⁰ Lydon, pp.51 and 57.

³¹ A Candon (2003): *Ó Briain, Muirchertach*, **The Encyclopedia of Ireland**, p. 795.

³² Hudson, p.182.

Cf. Griffin, p.10:

On the Uí Briain side of matters, Muirchertach's own legal experts appear to have crafted a Uí Briain-friendly interpretation of the laws. The passage appears thus; "[a provincial king is king of Ireland without opposition] when the estuaries are under him, Dublin and Waterford and Limerick besides."

Cf. O'Grady, p.294, regarding Domnall Mac Lochlainn (Donald O'Loughlin) who was Muirchertach's arch-rival:

An Irish Ard-Ri might indeed lead a fairly quiet life, if he was content with homages, hostages, and clearly admitted tributes and privileges. These were fixed by ancient custom. They will be found clear and explicit in the Brehon treatise known as the 'Book of Rights.' But all political power instinctively aims at aggrandisement. Moreover the genius of the age more and more imperatively demanded a new type of kings, who would not be satisfied with the annual receipt of so many ships from Waterford and swords from Ossory, cloaks, slaves, cattle and sheep, gold, &c., tributes, gifts, mage, and precedence, but who would intervene strongly in dynastic quarrels and make their power felt and their persons feared....

It is interesting, however, as Historian Lydon notes (p. 60) that while reducing Strongbow, granting him only Leinster as fief, King Henry II of England retained the Hiberno-Norse towns and their extensive lands as a royal demesne. These were comprised of the very towns and estuaries that Muirchertach's propagandists specified entitled him to be called Ard-Ri.

³³ **The Annals of Inisfallen (AI): AI 1102.6**

³⁴ P Munch (1874): **The Chronicles of Man and The Sudreys, Manx Society Volume XXII. Note 9.**

³⁵ **The Annals of Ulster (AU): AU 1098.2:**

Three of the ships of the foreigners of the Isles were plundered by the [Ulaid] and their crews were killed....

³⁶ **Orderic Vitalis** (1141b), Vol. XI, books xi, pp.31-32: The passage continues: "Excessive greed by which many men reach out for superfluous things often leads to the sudden loss of their just acquisitions...."

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.51.

³⁸ Unless one follows a rather tenuous interpretation of Orderic by later genealogical scholars that Arnulf was reconciled to Muirchertach and reunited with Lafracoth shortly prior to Arnulf's death in 1119. Montgomery, T (1863): A Genealogical History of the Family of Montgomery, p.40:

About a year later than this [1118], we find [Arnulf] had returned to Ireland, was reconciled to his father-in law to outward appearances at least, and was reunited to his wife; but on the morrow of his new nuptials fell asleep after a banquet, from which he never awoke.

The citation given for this account is Orderic, book xi, chapter 8.

Aside from the obvious difficulty that already, according to Orderic, Lafracoth had been given to another, albeit ‘unlawfully’, and hence was no longer available to Arnulf, exact translations do not imply any such reconciliation. Cf. Historian Chibnall’s translation of the pertinent material from that chapter is as follows (p. 51):

At last in his old age he was outwardly reconciled to the king and married a wife; on the morrow of the wedding he fell asleep after the banquet and breathed his last, leaving the bridesmaids to sing funeral dirges instead of festive songs....

It is by no means clear in these passages, to which king, Muirchertach or Henry, Arnulf is reconciled or who it is that he takes for a wife. Regarding reconciliation with a monarch, there is reason to believe Henry is meant. In an earlier footnote, p. 32, note 1, Historian Chibnall writes:

Both [i.e. Arnulf and his brother Roger] were temporarily reconciled to Henry I; a letter from King Muirchertach to Anselm shows that Arnulf’s reconciliation had been effected by Anselm..... Both revisited the king’s court, Arnulf shortly after the death of Anselm, Roger in 1109; but they never recovered their English lands. Arnulf later became attached to the Angevin court and fought against Henry.

In his history, Lloyd indicates that “...the difficulties have been needlessly enhanced by the general assumption that the ‘regi’ to whom Arnulf was finally reconciled was Murkertagh, and not Henry I.” (p. 292 note 44).

³⁹ **The Annals of the Four Masters (M), AD 913-1163, Volume II: M 1137.11.**

⁴⁰ **The Annals of Loch Cé (LC), AD 1014-1590: LC 1137.7.**

⁴¹ Gerald of Wales (1189): **Expugnatio Hibernica (The Taking of Ireland)**, cited in *Sources of British History*:

...O’Roric, prince of Meath, having gone on an expedition into a distant quarter, let his wife, the daughter of Omachlachcherlin, in a certain island of Meath during his absence; and she, who had long entertained a passion for Demitius [Demot] took advantage of the absence of her husband, and allowed herself to be ravished, not against her will. As the nature of women is fickle and given to change, she thus became the prey of the spoiler by her own contrivance, for as Mark Anthony and Troy are witnesses, almost all the greatest evils in the world have risen from women.

Cf. A Connon (2003): *Dervorgilla, The Encyclopedia of Ireland*, p. 287:

...Though sometimes depicted as complicit in her seizure, Dervorgilla returned to Tígernán within the year. A patron of churches associated with both her own family and Tígernán’s, she died at one of them, that of Mellifont, in 1193.

Cf. **The Annals of Ireland, Translated From The Original Irish of The Four Masters By O. Connellan with Annotations by P. Mac Dermott and O. Connellan** (1846), vol. I: 1171, p.1 note 6.

Nota bene: The allegation by Gerald of Wales that Dervorgilla was complicit in her seduction calls to mind a similar allegation lodged against Nest attaching to the story of Owain’s abduction of this Welsh ‘Helen of Troy’ in 1109, as is recounted by Historian Lloyd in **A History of Wales** (pp. 45-46):

...The first disturber of the peace was Cadwgan’s own son Owain, whose bold and romantic abduction of Nest in 1109 was an act of reckless defiance to the English king....
At a great feast which Cadwgan gave this year in one of the courts of his land of Ceredigion, Owain heard much of the beauty of Nest, the wife of Gerald of Pembroke, and, as the lady was his

own second cousin, he resolved to pay a visit to the castle of Cenarth Bychan, where she was at the time in residence with her husband, and see with his own eyes the graces of form and feature which were the occasion of so much eloquence. He found them not a whit less marvelous than they were reported, and left the castle with the determination, in spite of all laws and regardless of risk, to become possessor of the fair one who has been not inaptly styled the “Helen of Wales”. One dark night he and some fifteen companions stealthily worked their way into the stronghold by burrowing under the threshold of the gate: directly they were within the wall they rushed with wild cries upon the sleeping inmates and added to the alarm and confusion by setting fire to the buildings. By the advice of his wife, Gerald attempted no resistance, but made a hurried escape through a garderobe; thus the raiders found their task an easy one, and, having burnt and dismantled the castle, Owain carried off Nest and her children to Ceredigion. The story suggests that the heroine did not play an altogether unwilling part in the affair: at any rate she did not disdain afterwards to use her influence over her lover to bring about the return of Gerald’s children to their father’s roof....

Of particular interest: to escape the vengeance of Gerald of Windsor, Owain was obliged to flee to “...the hospitable court of King Murkertagh.” Since not only Nest but also the children for whom she cared were kidnapped by him, if Alice and Philip were among Gerald’s and Nest’s wards, Muirchertach might have had news of his grandchildren —and Lafracoth, therefore, of her children directly— from their abductor. In the drama, Nest’s abduction affords the opportunity to deliver Philip from his fosterage in Wales to the abbey in Normandy where he meets the future king of Scotland.

Nota bene Giraldus Cambrenis, *that is* Gerald of Wales, does not provide this account of his maternal grandmother in **The Journey Through Wales**. However, the reader does learn from that account the following (p.149):

The next thing Gerald [of Windsor, also of Pembroke] did was to marry Nest the sister of Gruffyd, Prince of South Wales, with the object of giving himself and his troops a firmer foothold in the country. In the process of time she bore him a large number of children, both boys and girls. With the help of this family the sea coast of Wales was held secure by the English, and Ireland, too was stormed....

Nest had a child by Henry I prior to her relationship with Gerald and, after Gerald died, she married again.

⁴² **M** 1106.12.

⁴³ **M** 1109.4, 1109.6, 1109.7, 1114.10, 1115.11, 1120.1, 1120.4, 1123.10, 1125.6, 1128.17, 1131.8, 1133.6, 1133.7, 1133.13, 1135.21

⁴⁴ **LC** 1125.3, 1127.7, 1133.3, 1133.4, 1133.5.

⁴⁵ **M** 1109.6

⁴⁶ **M** 1110.13

⁴⁷ **M** 1113.10

⁴⁸ **M** 1120.2 and **M** 1120.3

⁴⁹ **M** 1111.5

⁵⁰ **M** 1114.9, 1116.5