Rebels of the West, 1209–1216

which remained unresolved for ten years. The political situation in Ireland and throughout the British Isles had changed greatly since 1210, particularly following the civil war in England, which had brought several English, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish elements together against King John. John’s failure to control these groups before his sudden death in 1216, at the height of this personal war against the king, left the English kingdom and its periphery divided under the long minority of his son, Henry III.

At its core the civil war had been fuelled by very personal vendettas against King John, which gained momentum and authority with the support rendered by the crown of France, and was further aided by the desire of the rulers of Wales and Scotland to assert their independence. Therefore John’s death removed the primary motive for the English lords, in particular, to fight against the English crown. However, the minority government that was immediately installed was still not able to mitigate the threat from these disaffected groups, particularly in Wales and Ireland, until the king reached his majority in 1227.

Hugh de Lacy’s return and his ability to form significant alliances in Ireland, Wales, and Norway were directly due to the failure of King John’s style of rule. The legacy of John’s attack on Briouze and the Lacy’s, and indeed on many of his nobles, was a state of instability that continued to plague Ireland, Wales, and (indirectly) the Western Isles in the early 1220s; Hugh was able to capitalize on this situation and recover his title. Furthermore, the communication restored between the Irish and Western Islesmen between 1209 and 1216 set the stage for a greatly increased level of activity in the west throughout the 1220s and into the 1230s.

The Bluest-Greyest-Greenest Eye: Colours of Martyrdom and Colours of the Winds as Iconographic Landscape

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Fil súil nglas féigthe Éirinn dar a háis…
— attributed to St Columba, sixth-century Ireland

Hope always draws the soul from the beauty which is seen to what is beyond, always kindles the desire for the hidden through what is constantly perceived.
— St Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of Moses, fourth-century Byzantium

ONE of the most distinctive and popularly discussed motifs of early Irish literature, the famed colours of martyrdom, has also been somewhat ambiguous in meaning to many modern scholars. Much of that ambiguity has centred on the term glasmarte, or martyrdom of the colour of glas. Debate about the term is not surprising, as glas in early Irish had a distinctive range of meanings that included what in modern English would be termed green, grey, and blue, used for descriptions of everything from pale complexion and foreigners to tears, shiny metal, fresh vegetables, natural-coloured wool, ice, the sea, and fog. Tatyana A. Mikhailova has termed the word a ‘pre-colour’, hinging on the meaning ‘shining’. Kevin Murray has perhaps best described its range of chromatic connotations in relation to the physical world, as “the colour of sky in water”. And Clare Stancliffe had seemed to pin down


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finally a background and meaning for glasmarte as ‘blue martyrdom’: in a landmark article published a generation ago she successfully showed the term’s likely lineage in Latin Christian literature, where iacintthus referred to the pallid faces of penitents in effect ‘turning blue’ — a patristic form of ‘the blues’! Further analysis of the relevant texts since the appearance of Staciff’s article, and an increasingly informed consensus on the sophisticated Christian cultural contexts of early Irish literature, justify a return to the topic.

The present work takes account of subsequent study of the manuscript of the key text in the Cambrai Homily, and a hitherto unexamined parallel between the sequence of martyrdom colours and the placement of the same or similar colour terms in another famous early Irish motif: the colours of the winds, in Saltair na Rám and related prose texts. Examination of potential analogues in Christian texts from the Eastern Mediterranean — beyond the original scope of Staciff’s inquiry — and including Greek and Syriac hexameral works, also suggests that the conception of the term glasmarte by early Irish literati was probably richer and more nuanced than the notion of ‘turning-blue’ penitence. Moving from an understanding of the term within a genealogical model of source study to one based in a wider context of cultural reception, it can be seen that while Staciff’s study established a consensus of translating glasmarte as ‘blue’ martyrdom, replacing the older accepted translation ‘green’, it did not take into account the full

6 Red, White and Blue Martyrdom’, in Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes, edited by Dorothy Whitelock and others (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 21–46. Iacintthus is the medieval spelling of hyacinthus ‘blue’. The text of the Homily can be found in Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus, edited by W. Stokes and J. Strachan, II (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 246–47, edited further by Rudolf Thurneysen, Old Irish Reader (Dublin, 1946), pp. 35–36, and corrected (since Staciff’s study) by Proinsias Ni Chatháin, A Reading in the Cambrai Homily, Celtica, 21 (1990), 417. The consensus of the editors is that the text dates from the seventh or early eighth century. The edited text of the ninth- or tenth-century Saltair na Rám can be found in Saltair na Rám: A Collection of Early Middle Irish Poems, edited by W. Stokes (Oxford, 1883). On its date and provenance, see n. 46 below. These include texts by St Paul, the fourth-century writers St Basili the Great of Caesarea, St John Chrysostom, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Ephrem the Syrian, Evagrius Ponticus, St Theodore the Studite, and St Athanasius the Great; as well as by St Andrew of Caesarea in the fifth/sixth century, St Maximus the Confessor in the seventh, St John of Damascus in the eighth, and St Photius in the ninth; also homilies attributed to St Macarius the Elder (who lived in the fourth century, although the provenance of the texts is less certain). More detailed references for each follow below.

range of the meaning of the vernacular colour term (unwieldy as it is in modern English) as ‘blue-grey-green’ to its audience. Further recontextualization — while not overturning her important work, which drew on a well-informed sense of early Irish penitential tradition — suggests how early Irish textual representations of the colours of martyrdom and the colours of the wind relate to an iconographic sense of landscape in early Christianity. In terms of postmodern ecocriticism, the effect could even be termed ‘ecocentric’; it involves a focus on the natural world, beyond merely human concerns and allegoration, within a praxis of asceticism, and a dynamic engagement with an exteriorized sense of life larger than self. (Ecocriticism, an approach to narratives that emerged in the 1970s, involves foregrounding literary expressions of nature, previously usually read as background, in order to interpret cultural and cosmological attitudes to the physical environment and identity. Lawrence Buell, a pioneering practitioner, suggested that one of its goals should be to identify and recover alternative traditions, in early Western texts, to the modern objectification of physical nature as a commodity for consumption.)

6 The main text for the colours of martyrdom, found in the Cambrai Homily, reads:

Fílís tre chenélė martre danue adromite ar cruich duiniu, ma desgné : bȃnmartre ocus glasmarte ocus deicartre . is si in bȃnmartre duiniu in tain scaras ar Dea fri ech réit caras, ceni cesa aini na baubir n-oco . is si ind glasmarte dé, inian scaras fria thola leol cészas saithor iPennit ocus aithirg . is si in deicartre dé, fodiu chruthi ocus dione ar Christ, amail tonechonnuccuir dundraí abstolaí, od ingrimim inna clóen ocus oí focrut rece Dée . congribet inna tre chenélė martre-so isinib coñibid tuthégo dagathirgi, scarde fria tola, ceste sáitthu, thesmot a fuil i aíni ocus i laubair ar Christ. 10

Now there are three kinds of martyrdom which are counted as a cross to man, if he practise them, that is to say, white martyrdom, and blue-grey-green martyrdom, and red martyrdom. This is the white martyrdom to man, when he separates for the sake of God from everything he loves, although he does not suffer fasting and labour thereon. This is the blue-grey-green martyrdom to him, when by means of them [fasting and labour] he separates from his desires, or suffers toll in penance and repentance. This is the red martyrdom to him, endurance of a cross or destruction for Christ's sake, as happened to

The apostles in the persecution of the wicked and in teaching the law of God. These three kinds of martyrdom are comprised in the carnal men who resort to good repentance, who separate from their desires, who pour forth their blood in fasting and in labour for Christ’s sake.

Earlier editions implied that white martyrdom had indeed involved fasting and labour, like glasmarre. But Próinséas Ni Chatháin’s recent corrected text, based on the manuscript, indicates that the elements of asceticism involving fasting and labour, which Stanciffe and others had thought to be associated with white martyrdom, were not included.13 Therefore, the simple distinction between white martyrdom and glasmarre, between monastic asceticism and penitence, has become problematic in one sense: glasmarre alone of the three coloured martyrdoms is now seen to be associated with those specific physical/ascetic practices.

HEAVEN, SEA, AND SKY

In an article dated just before Stanciffe’s study, Pádraig P. Ó Néill pointed out that the term glasmarre could not be associated exclusively with penance, since on the basis of the Cambrai Homily text it was associated with ‘twice distinct actions’ or alternatives, namely penance and ‘separation from one’s desires’.12 In supporting this point, Ó Néill cited one of the Latin analogues examined by Stanciffe, a text on the different colours of Scripture from the eighth-century Hiberno-Latin collection known as Catéchèses celtiques, which identifies iacintina with martyrdom involving a twofold effect: ‘desire for heaven’ (caeli desiderium) and ‘abstinence’ (abstinentia).13 In other words, Ó Néill notes, more than one form of ‘mortification’ seems to be covered by the Latin and Irish terms consolidated in glasmarre. He suggests that this in turn may relate to a merging of meanings for green and blue from separate Latin and Irish terms into the Irish word glas, in a line of exegesis which is ultimately traceable to the explication of the precious stones adorning the foundations of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse of St John.14 This was reflected in Bede’s Explanatio Apocalypsis, which identified the stone hyacinthus (again related to the colour-adjective iacintina identified by Stanciffe and others as a Latin analogue for glas) with the heavens, following St Andrew of Caesarea’s


fifth- or sixth-century exegesis.15 In the fourth century, another Greek exegete, Evagrius Ponticus (an important influence on John Cassian’s transmission of desert asceticism to the West, and on Maximus the Confessor’s cosmology, a source for the Hiberno-Latin writer John Scottus Eriugena), wrote, in a passage that also influenced other patristic writers:

When the mind, unclothing itself of the old man, puts on that of grace, it sees in the time of prayer its state like that of a sapphire or of the heavenly color. This state Scripture calls the place of God, seen by the elders of Israel on Mt. Sinai.16

St Andrew’s exegesis subsequently identified both the sapphire and the jacinth (hyacinth) stones of the New Jerusalem with the azure colour of the sky, explaining that this colour in the sapphire ‘symbolizes the blessed Paul, who was raised up even to the third heaven’ and the jacinth colour ‘probably symbolizes Simon, the zealot for the gifts of Christ, who possessed heavenly wisdom’.17 Indeed, the apparent semantic relation of glas to the colour of the sky echoes texts in which St Paul linked interrelated imagery of cloud, heaven, and sea to baptism, the eucharist, the divine glory on earth, and the approaching end of time:18

For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud, and in the sea: And did all eat the same spiritual food, And all drank the same spiritual drink, (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ). (1 Corinthians 10, 1–3)

Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 5, 16)19

From such biblical writings, the heavens and aerial waters (clouds), and, with them, in cosmological cycles, the sea, were closely associated in

imagery of salvation. As Kay Muir has noted, 'The positive water and sea imagery in Christian Irish literature may be partly derived from familiarity with the sea, and from the connection between water and revelation in pagan belief, but it also seems to have been closely associated with the two most important Christian sacraments' 28. Cosmological association of clouds with the heavens, and with the waters above and below the firmament of heaven, was common in early exegesis, and may draw on Plato's description in the Timaeus of water and air together as the Mean that bonds fire and earth to form the tangible heaven. 21 Such an association is found also in the seventh-century De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae by the Hiberno-Latin writer Augustinus Hibernicus, with its vision of the earth founded on waters (the earth including the lower air, and set in cycles of aerial waters), with the firmament separating the upper and lower waters. This drew on Genesis, as explicated in earlier hexaemeral writings such as the fourth-century Greek homilies of St Basil of Caesarea. 22 Basil gave the aerial waters of Genesis — in his view apparently, close to the earth — an eschatological function, in which their eventual evaporation by the heat of the heavenly fires would signal their end of time — a kind of patriarchal 'global warming'. 23 The De Mirabilibus and the related early Hiberno-Latin cosmology of the De Ordone Creaturariam 24 perhaps echoed this cosmic linking of the hexaemeral with the eschatological, associating depletion of the aerial waters with the biblical Flood. In Irish tradition, floods overwhelmed primeval legendary realms, perhaps thereby associating the waters and sea with access to paradisal and otherworldly marvels. 25 In views which perhaps derive ultimately from Basil, an antediluvian 'vapour cover' for earth — a kind of aerial Gulf Stream — could have been envisaged as literally and figuratively the atmosphere of Paradise and a reason for the lush longevity of its life.

The association of sky/heavens and sea also seems to be built into the semantic range of glas as a colour term, including as it does (besides human pallor) sky, water, fog, ice, and fresh vegetation (the latter in line with the way in which Augustinus Hibernicus and other early Irish exegetical writers considered the lower air itself to be a part of the earth). 26 A somewhat indefinite boundary between moist conditions of

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the sky (whether aerial waters, clouds, or fog) and those of the earth also seems quite reasonable, given the climate of an island in the Gulf Stream. That the colours of the skies in islands off the Irish coast suggest such a melding is indicated by Richard Sharpe’s personal observation about Iona, in his English edition of Adomnán’s Vita Columbae, that ‘little has changed in that scene of sea and sky’.

Travellers today often express similar impressions when viewing early Celtic monastic sites where the sky meets the sea, at places such as Skellig Michael off Kerry, or St Ninian’s Cave on the Galloway coast of Scotland. The sense of bridging elements experientially is conveyed by Gearóid Ó Donnchadhá’s description of an Atlantic storm in the prefatory note to his translation of medieval accounts of St Brendan’s sea travels:

> What I can best liken it to is to being among the Himalayas except that the mountains are moving, not regularly, but criss-crossing one another in tumultuous frenzy, running one across the breaking, white-foamed tops of others … One lives in a virtual white-out, stunned and blinded by spray … the auditory cacophonous assault that limits the ability to think … Finally, the harassment and brutalization of one’s senses enters into one’s very consciousness so as to create a virtual out-of-body experience where one is bereft of all but the experience of the moment. Relatives, friends, familiar land places are no more. They are stripped from your consciousness. There is only you and the forces of nature. You have been stripped of civilization, of culture; you are left with the most primal instinct of survival. In this state you are one with the first human beings that tried to make sense of a new existence into which they had been thrust.

Here we glimpse how early Irish monks must have perceived an inescapable cosmic analogue to both baptism and ascetic practice, one related directly to their own regimen in the form of well-attested water-related prayer rules and penitence. Such ascetic practice is mention of many Irish hagiographical texts, which show it was not merely a literary motif but ‘thoroughly incorporated into religious life both as an ascetic act of piety and as an alternative form of penance’. Immersion, involving either devotion or penance, or presumably a discipline combining the two, is described by a ninth-century Irish writer as a discipline for overcoming earthly desires or as an additional labour of piety. A seventh-century hymn to St Colum Cille states that ‘crochais, níp i cinta, a chorp for tonna glash’ (it was not for his sins he crucified his

27 Life of St Columba (Harmondsworth, 1995), Preface. 38 St Brendan of Kerry. the Navigator: His Life and Voyages (Dublin, 2004), pp. 8-9. 29 For a summary of these references see Colin Ireland, ‘Penance and Prayer in Water: An Irish Practice in Northumbrian Hagiography’, CMCS, 34 (Winter 1997), 55-66. 30 Ibid., pp. 54-55. 31 Ibid.

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mortal human beings.\textsuperscript{36} Earlier, St Athanasius, in his Life of St Antony (influential in the West in its Latin translation by Evagrius of Antioch), recorded that founder figure of Christian monasticism as saying: ‘Just as fish die when they linger on dry land, so monks are destroyed when they extend their stay in the city ... just as the fish must to the sea, monks must return to the desert’.\textsuperscript{37} The comparison of human souls to fish is found of course in Christian tradition from the Gospels to the writings of St Patrick.\textsuperscript{38} Moreover, in the Macarian homilies, which apparently influenced Cassian as well as Eastern asceticism, we read:

As men in the trade go down naked into the depths of the sea, into the watery death, to find those pearls that will do for a royal crown, and purple dye, so those who live the monastic life go naked out of the world, and go down into the deep of the sea of evil and into the gulf of darkness, and from these depths they take and bring up precious stones suitable for the crown of Christ, for the heavenly Church, for a new world, and a city of light, and people of angels.\textsuperscript{39}

The ambiguous nature of these cosmic elements of water and air, in the physical as in the textual world, is also a factor in the context of glasmartre. In the Irish Life of St Brendan and the Latin Vita Prima of that saint, the gates of both hell and Paradise are found among the waves of the sea.\textsuperscript{40} The sea could be described as a desert of suffering exile for early Irish monastics,\textsuperscript{41} although, as noted by Muhr, waters more often than not had positive connotations in early Irish literature, akin to the often positive connotations of the desert in the Life of St Antony, which is at odds with later Western conceptions of a wilderness.\textsuperscript{42} In Adomnán’s seventh-century Vita Columbae, the sea in a sanctified state showed


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'storm and calm together in the same sea at the same time, but by God's gift a marvellous line kept them apart', just as the liquid sea acts also as a type of solid land for burial in the perhaps eleventh-century Irish Life of St Brendan.\textsuperscript{43} Ambiguous descriptions — and undoubtedly experiences — of the waters under the firmament as unstable and potentially a source of either good or ill are in a sense paralleled by perceptions in early cosmology of the lower air as the residence of cast-down rebel angels.\textsuperscript{44} The lower air, identified with the earth, was, like the waters, seen as unstable, yet also mirroring and promising (or connected with) a more spiritual form of substance. Although the lower air was seen as often roiled demonically by winds, which circulated in cycles of water involving clouds and aerial waters, a path through it for the faithful was presumably cleared through Christ’s bodily Ascension, even as Christ would return through it again.\textsuperscript{45} In that context, while early Irish scholars could sometimes write of the sea (which was inextricably connected with the unstable lower air) as a threatening desert, those natural zones of elements could also become a blue-grey-green path to redemption (drawing again on the use of glas to describe terms related to both sea and sky).

ANALOGOUS WIND-COLOURS

The instability of the lower air was empirically known in the winds related to ocean storms. The other most famous medieval Irish colour scheme, that of the colours of the winds, provides further evidence for contextualizing glasmartre in relation to an interlacing of cosmology and bodily ascetic practice. The wind-colours are described in the ninth- and tenth-century vernacular devotional text Saltair na Rann,\textsuperscript{46} or Psalter of

\textsuperscript{41}14, Sharpe, Life of St Columba, p. 117; Plummer, Lives, 1, 66–65. \textsuperscript{43}An early patristic reference to aerial demons occurs in St Athanasius, Life of St Anthony (Willis, CA, 1980), p. 41. For the Pauline basis of the motif see Ephesians 2, 2 and 6, 12. Also, Basil warns metaphorically of ‘airy thoughts ... light and unstable of mind’, flying beyond human nature, in On the Origin of Humanity, Discourse 1, ‘On that which is according to the Image’, in St Basil the Great, On the Human Condition, translated by Nonna Verna Harrison (Crestwood, NY, 2005), pp. 31–48 (p. 47). \textsuperscript{44}Acts 1, 11. \textsuperscript{45}Gearóid Mac Eoin in ‘The Date and Authorship of Saltair na Rann’, Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie, 28 (1960), 51–67, and ‘Observations on Saltair na Rann’, ibid., 39 (1982), 1–28 argued that the author of the poem was Aibreartach mac Cosse, who in the later tenth century was associated with a monastery in what is now Co. Cork, a suitable location for the possible meanings of the directions described; Aibreartach has also been credited with a geographical poem indicating an interest in topographical poetics (see Thomas Olden, ‘On the Geography of Ros Ailithir’, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, second series, 2 (1879–88), 219–22). The attribution of
The Quatrains (or Versified Psalter), which retells biblical material in Irish verse. The distinctive circle of wind-colours ascribes the colour glas to a south-west wind (a direction of special otherworldly import in early Irish traditions), and also specifically associates the term with the sea, as do many other early Irish texts. The association of the three colours of martyrdom seems to be replicated, with a slight variation in terminology, in the southernmost part of the wheel, which is a significant orientation from both spiritual and geographical standpoints in early Irish Christian tradition. The section on the winds in the Saltair's first canto, which—as early as lines 37–40—suggests the cosmological views already discussed.

Rí rodelbh dhuma iartain
hura cderbh imbhalmain,
rioth rosinn osblit, buaidh agle,
indercor tairis uisce.

Thereafter the King skillfully shaped
further masses around the earth:
subtle circling above the world, radiant
achievement, the cold watery air.

Christ is then said to form and arrange in beauty the wind-colours (lines 57–80):

Ingel, incorcora glan,
inglass, indunait almar,
White, pure purple,
Blue-grey-green, mighty green,

Saltair na Rann to Airbertach was vigorously opposed, however, by James Carney, who placed it in the late ninth century, with later interpolations, attributing the original to an Oengus of Cluain Eidech in Co. Laois (see 'The Dating of Early Irish Verse Texts, 500–1100', Eideg, 19 (1983), 177–216). The apparent adaptation of the cosmological section concerning the winds in introductory material to the Senchas Már (see next note) is also of uncertain date. The section of the text concerning the winds seems to have been adapted in prefatory material to the Senchas Már, the main text of which dates possibly from the early eighth century, roughly the same era as the Cumbræ Homily; however, dating is uncertain and the prefatory material is probably of somewhat later composition. See D. A. Binchy, 'The Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Már', Studia Celtica, 10/11 (1975–76), 15–28. Binchy, in his edition of the Corpus Iuris Hibernici (6 vols (Dublin, 1978), i, xxii), categorized the 'wind' material from the introduction to the Senchas Már with the Pseudo-Historical Prologue, although it is distinct from the opening tale involving St Patrick most often associated with that title. On the dating of this material as a whole, see also Kim McConé, Dubhthach Maccus Lugar and a Matter of Life and Death in the Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Már, Pertita, 5 (1986), 1–39; also John Carey, 'An Edition of the Pseudo-Historical Prologue to the Senchas Már', Ériu, 45 (1994), 1–32. Carey dates the Pseudo-Historical Prologue (or at least the Patrician tale) to probably the ninth century; see also his King of Mysteries, p. 239, and n. 80 below. See Alwyn and Brinley Rees, Celtic Heritage (London, 1961), Chapters 3 and 7. In this, as in following passages, the text is as edited by Stokes, Saltair na Rann, pp. 1–2, and the translations are from John Carey, King of Mysteries, pp. 99–100, slightly emended.

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inbuidi, inderg, derb dán, nisgaib ferg frisodit.
Indub, indiath, indalad, intinen, incheir chálad, indodar, doirchi dathia, nidat soarich sognibita.
Rí rosordig oscamachaid na ocht fogaetha feobhtrait, roddal conditì, dín saeth, crìcha naexeth prìngaeth.
Anair incorcora glanbha, andess ingel gla, amra, atuaid indub gallbech, grotch, anair incoðura engach.
Inderg, inbuidi 'máile, eter gil ocus corcorat, indulni, inglass, eodala (?) li, eter huair tighelegel.
Indliath, incheir, gnáin anguir, eter huair iscidruch, intinen, indalad fair, eter dlb uococs coccorat.

yellow, red, prcoce in skill — no discord comes between in their fair assemblies.
black, grey, piebald, dark, hard jet, dun: the dark colours are not bright or easy to embrace.
Above every plain the King arranged the eight fierce secondary winds; he formed defect-free, a refuge from hardships, the boundaries of the four chief winds.
The bright pure purple from the east, the bright wonderful white from the south, the storm hatch (?) black from the north, the noisy dun from the west.
The red and yellow together between white and purple; the green, and the sea's powerful blue-grey-green, between dun and shining white.
The grey and jet, terrible their ardour (?), between dun and jet-black; the dark and the piebald, in the east, between black and purple.

The description yields the following chart of the 'wind-colour wheel', in which it can be seen that the colours of martyrdom are closely approximated by the southernmost triad of wind-colours (with the difference that the term gel, also meaning white, is used instead of bán). These most 'embraceable' wind-colours (in the Saltair's tangible terminology) were the distinctive colours of early Irish descriptions of types of Christian martyrdom, nestled in the middle of the bright colours of the wheel.52

51Carey translates eodala, apparently an adjective describing the sea and accompanying li, as 'valiant', and takes it to be linked to glas. 'Vivid, 'courageous', and 'bloodthirsty' are all other possible meanings (DL, s.v. eodachta). Elsewhere in the Saltair, David Greene's unpublished glossary list (in the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies archives) indicates that eodala is often used in association with descriptions of biblical cruelty and captivity (typologically linked, however, to redemption through Christ). All these meanings may be relevant to the present discussion of the iconographic qualities of glas, and eodala is translated here as 'powerful' to reflect this range. DL, s.vv. gel and bán. 52The wind-colour wheel as a whole interestingly also reflects one recent digitized scheme for the manuscript colours used in the Book of Kells (see the colour chart at http://www.bookofkells.com/features.html); it is highly speculative but stimulating to reflect on the possible association of the colours of iconographic books and creation in apophatic Christian tradition.
The motif of colours of the winds is found originally in the Bible as the colours of the winds of heaven in a vision of Zechariah (1, 2–5), but also appears in various forms in indigenous cultures in Asia and America. Yet the Irish scheme is also interwoven, not coincidentally, in a multiform manner with the topography of Ireland and the island’s indigenous and early Christian spiritual traditions, and probably by analogy with ascetic practice. The fact that the scheme is extant in both an exegetical devotional poem and in the framing of a native law tract (see below) suggests some cultural connection between cosmology and ancestral law.

The list of winds is a development in part from texts deriving from Classical Latin culture. Rolf Baumgarten, for example, has noted how the ‘wind-rose’ (or circular description of the winds by name) in Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* (which is believed to have been known and influential at least in parts of Ireland as early as the seventh century) derived from Ptolemy’s earlier wind-rose. Isidore drew on Ptolemy also for his description of Ireland’s geographical orientation, which he described as an island *ab africo in boream*, running, according to his wind-names, west-south-west to north-north-east. This, Baumgarten has noted, impressively places Uisnech, a traditional geographical centre of Ireland, at the centre of the Isidorean wind-rose. Of the orientation of the Irish wind-colours, Carey notes that it makes sense as a kind of cosmic map related to colours of light: ‘On an intuitive level it does not seem inappropriate that purple — especially the Irish *cocora*, which tended towards crimson — should be associated with the region of dawn, and *duin* with that of evening, or that north and south should be black and white respectively’. Mikhailova has also pointed out that the lack of light or ‘real colour’ in the north could reflect the boundary of spectrum perception in human eyesight and the physical properties of light, an indication perhaps not only of the acute observation of early Irish writers, operating in what has been termed an Antiochene exegetical approach to the physical world (one partly based on native traditions about nature), but also of early medieval Christian beliefs in human beings as mediators between creation and the divine. Mikhailova has noted that the Irish Twelve Winds involve a sequence of colours corresponding both to the modern colour spectrum and to the diurnal cycle. To such helpful associations, also being developed by Carey in relation to Indo-European analogues, can be added specific connections with Irish climate and geography, including the description of watery air and the orientation of the directions of light to correspond to Ireland’s position in the northern hemisphere.

The north with its light-deprived colours was associated not only with harsh weather but also with sorcery and the devil in early Irish traditions, and it is fitting, given the arrangement of colours in relation to their cultural meanings, that scholarship has placed the probable writing of the text in the south of Ireland. The pseudo-historical Irish *Lebor Gabála* describes the Tuatha Dé Danann, the ‘indigenous’ predecessors of the heroic Iron Age Gaelic-speaking culture, as living first in northern islands and learning diabolical arts of the devil there. The early Irish

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53 John Carey, in ‘Cosmology in *Saltair na Ramh*, Celtica, 17 (1985), 33–52, discusses the biblical and other analogues, including the *Vita Sancti Macarii* (PL, 73, col. 420). Colours in Isidore of Seville’s description of the rainbow in *De Natura Rerum* (§31.2, PL, 83, col. 1004a) are also cited as possible analogues to those of the *Saltair’s* major winds, as are those in the description of directions in *in the Cosmographia of Aethicus Later*, possibly of Irish origin. Carey also cites Asian and Native American wind-colour motifs.


55Cosmology*, p. 38.

56 What Colour’.

57 Handout from ‘The Three Sails, the Twelve Winds, and the Question of Early Irish Colour Theory’, a paper given at the Early Irish Seminar, University College Cork, 25 February 2004.


59 Dated, on the basis of manuscript forms, to the eleventh century, but probably an interweaving of earlier texts and traditions. *Lebor Gabála*, edited and translated by Macalister, iv, 139.
narrative of *Cath Maige Tuired* also describes the Túatha Dé Danann, while living to the north, as being in touch with the otherworldly people known as Fomori, or Fomorians, who in turn during the 'Second Battle of Mag Tuired' became enemy invaders of Ireland from across the sea (expressing disruptive aspects of the Otherworld or spiritual realm).\(^{62}\) In the Irish and Welsh languages, north is also aligned in terminology with the 'left' side or direction, when facing the East in a Christian (and perhaps also pre-Christian) worship orientation, and is contrasted with the 'right' to the south, with connotations of 'rightness' associated with 'right' as in English.\(^{63}\)

The south-west 'quadrant' of Ireland, associated with the Otherworld, the island's quadripartite region leaning farthest west into the ocean in early maps, is identified through its winds with green-blue colours, including glas, the latter explicitly associated with the sea in the *Saltair* text. *Glas* is also attested as part of a legal term for exile from local, identity-defining, political communities, in the phrase *cú glas,* describing an outcast.\(^{64}\) Carey notes that *Tech Duinn* was the Island of the Dead, placed in the western sea in early Irish lore, ruled by the lord Domn, whose name is 'also a color adjective nearly synonymous with *odor* (dun), identified with Satan in one early Irish text'.\(^{65}\) The west-south-western winds seem to be emphasized in the sense of being the only secondary wind-colours with individual adjectival epithets, and the south-western winds are in a kind of colour transition between the brightness of the south and east, and the direction to the west associated with death; such an orientation may be associated with an Otherworld that in early Irish narratives often seems to be in a kind of transitional state between native pagan and Christian beliefs about Paradise and afterlife.

Yet there are other probable — and in some ways more directly Christian — associations as well. A colour-word for purple as the east wind, *corcor,* is also likely to have carried imperial connotations, and we know that the Irish term is given royal connotations elsewhere, as in the verse of Blathmac.\(^{66}\) *Saltair na Rann* itself overtly identifies Christ as cosmic king. Associations of the colour purple with the sunrise in the east and also with kingship are connected with the geographical location of the Holy Land, the place of Christ’s Resurrection and Ascension, to which it was believed He would return, and towards which early medieval graves and churches tended to be oriented. This was also the direction from which Ireland historically was Christianized.\(^{67}\)

While calling all the winds beautiful and ultimately harmoniously ordered, the *Saltair na Rann* divides the wind-colours into those lying from dun to red on the southern tier of the circle — of which it says (in Carey’s translation) 'no discord comes between them in their fair assemblies' — and those along the northern tier from dun to the north-easterly quadrant, of which it says 'the dark colours are not bright or easy to embrace'. Purple in the east is excluded from this evaluative division, perhaps being given special cosmic significance by its identification with the coming Christ. The Rees brothers associated the northern half of Ireland in the native medieval cultural map with heretics, exemplified by the Ulster Cycle,\(^{68}\) yet the wind colour-wheel here could mark a reversal of the prioritizing of warrior ethics as a result of Christianization, in a similar way to that in which the Túatha Dé Danann (thought to represent pre-Christian gods) were made to lend a negative figurative colouring to the north. In addition, an early Irish homily identifies hell with cold, wintry, wet qualities, while relating heaven to summery qualities, again indicating a tendency to relate cosmic aspects of earthly experience to the spiritual.\(^{69}\)

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\(^{41}\) According to the consensus of modern scholarship, the main extant narrative is probably an eleventh- or twelfth-century redaction based on a ninth-century original text: *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired,* edited by Elizabeth A. Gray, TTS, 52 (London, 1982), p. 11. \(^{42}\) ibid., p. 2. \(^{43}\) *S.v. deis in D.L.* \(^{44}\) Thomas Charles-Edwards, 'The Social Background to Irish *Perigrinatio*,' *Celtica,* 11 (1976), 43–59. *Cú* refers to a dog or wolf; and the term etymologically seems to refer to wild or otherworldly aspects of an exile. \(^{45}\) *Cosmology*, p. 38 and n. 12. \(^{46}\) Gbathae ti Thorcorae immund rig lásan senad co

*ndimbrig*: 'The Poems of Blathmac', *The Poems of Blathmac. Son of Cú Brettan, together with the Irish Gospel of Thomas and a Poem on the Virgin Mary,* edited and translated by James Carney, TTS, 47 (London, 1964), pp. 2–89 (p. 18, §52). The verse is attributed to Blathmac, an eighth-century poet who was son of a probable king of the Fir Rois sept of the Airgialla, in modern Louth and Monaghan (Aidan Breen, 'Blathmac', in *Medieval Ireland: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Duffy, p. 42). \(^{47}\) Since this was a direction that culturally could include both the probable Romano-British origins of Irish Christianity, together with Rome and Constantinople and their still contemporary imperial associations, it also perhaps included a slight identification with *romantias,* a cultural nostalgia which is evoked in the later Welsh texts in the collection now known widely in its English translation as *The Mabinogion* and in the Welsh Triads; on this Welsh *romantias* see my 'Writing an Icon of the Land: The Mabinogion as a Mystagogy of Landscape', forthcoming in *Peritia.* \(^{48}\) Rees and Rees, *Celtic Heritage,* pp. 123–24. \(^{49}\) 'An Old-Irish Homily', edited and translated by John Strachan, *Eriu,* 3 (1907), 1–7 (p. 5). For a recent translation see Oliver Davies, *The Old Irish Homily*, in *Celtic Spirituality, Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York, 1999), pp. 366–68 (p. 367).
The grouping of the bright, and by contrast ‘easy to embrace’, wind-colours of the south in the tier between death in the west and the purple of the east may be weather-related, expressing in a sense Ireland’s own somewhat rough nesting in the Gulf Stream. It may also point towards Spain, the direction from which the ancestors of the Gaels, the sons of Mil, were traditionally said to have come, and whence Christian Irish literati had apparently absorbed fruitful cultural influence. The southern orientation of the cosmic wind-colours of ‘bright embracing’ may also reflect identification of the sun with Christ, going back to fifth-century writings of the British Gildas and St Patrick, and elaborated upon in later accounts of Patrick’s life. This is also generally the direction of the old Western Empire and Rome, the seat of Peter’s successor and the papal seat of Western Christendom. The southern tier, moreover, lies to some extent between the cosmically changing power of Christ’s second coming from the east and the end of the current age in the west. Furthermore, it may be linked by orientation with southern Ireland as a human Christian community on an earthly island. The possible thematic clustering of colour analogues to Christian society may also be related to the red-white-and-blue colours (grouped due south in the wind-rise) of Dumézil’s theories of the tripartite structure in Indo-European societies, which Hamp has related to Celtic archaic colour schemes. If there were any lingering association of the three colours with the three classes of human society posited by Dumézil — priestly (white), warrior (red), agricultural (blue) — then the colours at the bottom of the Saltair wind-rise would essentially represent the Christian oikoumené as a whole, or at least the Irish microcosm of the same. This triad of colours also parallels substantially the colours of the three cosmic sails referred to in a dialogue between an otherworldly youth and St Columba. Here reference is made to the yellow sail which carries the glas sail which drowns, and the red sail ‘under which bodies were conceived’, which, as Carey has speculated, may relate to a pre-Christian sense of cyclical rebirth as well as a scheme of primary colours related to the ‘spectrum’ also evident in the wind-colour wheel of the Saltair. Glas in that matrix would be associated with earthly death.

ICONOGRAPHIC COSMOLOGY

All of the foregoing continues to suggest the possibility of cosmic associations in the vernacular reception of the term glasmarté, together with the Latin-mediated understanding of penance noted by Stancliffe. Before leaving the wind-colours, however, it is worth also considering briefly further lines of verse from Saltair na Rann (present also in the version in the prefatory material to the Senchas Már), in which the winds are described as having (in Carey’s translation) ‘an ordering accomplished by wisdom, to gléasa without concealment’ (lines 89–100). Here we can further glimpse how supposedly peculiar aspects of the Irish colour motifs in question actually reflect aspects of an ascetic cosmology has noted in conversation. While gorm is absent on the wind colour-wheel, glas, with its connotations of blue and grey, could be an approximation of gorm, especially given both the possible association between glas and gorm in relation to the red-white-blue colour complex of martyrdom as noted by O Neill (‘Background’, p. 142), and the expression c’u glas’ ‘wolf’ for alien/exile in an Irish community from overseas (not from another kingdom in Ireland), which suggests literarily as well as figuratively a darker social association for glas, despite its more common extant associations with brightness (cf. Mikhaliova, ‘What Colour’). Glasfrie is a term for a son of a woman and a cu glas or foreigner in exile in Ireland, often a Briton (Charles-Edwards, ‘Social Background’, p. 97). See Carey, ‘The Lough Foyle Colloquy Texts’; Carey ascribes the Immaculada Cholamh Chille 7 ind Oileac oc Carroic Eolaing to a generally early date, though probably not earlier than the eighth century, contrary to James Carney’s arguments for an older date. Carey, Single Ray of the Sun, p. 7. The model of cyclical rebirth, said by classical writers to be an indigenous tradition of Celtic druids, is related to the following discussion on Christian incarnational notions of logos and divine energies in nature, which in Maximus’ writings connect doctrines of rebirth and resurrection with a return of the cosmos to the divine. Early Irish notions of rebirth may likewise have been integrated with Christian world-views, as is perhaps suggested by an ambiguous definition of the term tuirgin in Sasan Cormac (c. 900), perhaps referring to successive rebirth in this cosmic context (Sasan Cormac, edited by Kuno Meyer (repr. Lampeter, 1994), §1224, p. 106).
that is some in ways more analogous to Byzantine than to later medieval Western spiritual practice:

Ri dosartair iarasaib
imthalmain con-ilgasaib,
cach digaeth dib imglés ngle
iseongles foraib hulie.

Ri dosart iarasaib cleocht,
armhessaib centairneach,
indarhauir, blath iarainblai,
indair ale ainitreche.

Ri tadh an tomus donleig,
othallmain conrfinmint,
fris domaid, met ghamna,
frigeit natalamna.

The ‘glésa [orderings, arrangements, harmonies] without concealment’ apparently function in the poem as wisdom (identified often in Christian patristic traditions with the Logos, Christ) ordering the form of even the chief winds, and they are implicitly related to a dynamic sense of the seven heavens around earth. They are part of the interactive relationship between nature and Christ in the poem and in patristic cosmology. The difficult term glésa can readily be contextualized in the seventh-century cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor, a Greek scholar writing, at the height of his career, in Rome, as translated and adapted by the ninth-century Irish scholar John Scottus Eriugena. There, the purposes or logoi of created beings were personal manifestations of a personal God, the Logos, and were not merely objectified abstractions. As Maximus put it: ‘The one Logos is many logoi, and the many logoi are one.’

86There ratio is related to the etymology of the root—sen—of senchas, which is also identified with diged, a term often glossed in Old Irish as ratio or law. From such legal lore, we are told, come the names of fruit and colours, naming and colours being related to the search for the wisdom of all things.

Maximus’ configurating of Dionysian apophaticism into an orthodox Christian context in his cosmology arguably involved a role for the logoi similar to that of the divine willingas described in the Dionysian corpus (which was also translated by Eriugena). These play a dynamic, interactive mediating role between the divine and the physical world, which is comparable in Maximus’ cosmology to the doctrine of the uncreated divine energies, as Joseph Farrell has argued. The latter Eastern dogma, rooted in fourth-century Cappadocian cosmology and theology, continued to be articulated throughout the history of Byzantine religious culture, until its full development by St Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century, by then in conscious differentiation from the mainstream Augustinian view of grace and cosmology that had solidified in the West by the High Middle Ages. This doctrine of divine energies related to the development of the Eastern sense of iconography, distinct from Western art—a contrast highlighted by explicit conflict between the aesthetic views of the Carolingian Libri Carolini in the West and those articulated by the ninth-century Patriarch Photius in the East.

Arguably such foundational world-views from patristic texts and from the milieu of desert asceticism help us to contextualize both the notion of glésa or ‘harmonies’ in the Salair and the combined ascetic–cosmological by Binchy, ii, 343–45, from London, British Library, MS Harley 432 (the senchas discussion at 3). Carey dates this synthesis of introductory material to the tenth or eleventh century (‘Introduction to the Pseudo-Historical Prologue’, p. 3), although he also speculates that the loose conglomeration of material, including the senchas discussion, may date more generally to the late Old or early Middle Irish periods (ibid., p. 7). Compare the not always reliable translation by W. N. Hancock and others, Ancient Laws of Ireland, 1 (Dublin, 1865), p. 37. A concordance between that earlier work and Binchy’s more reliable text is at Corpus Iuris Hibernici, i, xiii.

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backgrounds to glasmarte proposed here. The unknowability of God's
esence was screened in such Eastern doctrines (as if on an iconostasis)
by the iconographic uncreated energies or activities of God, which were
experienced in — and potentially merged with — the physical world by
holy saints. Vladimir Lossky emphasized the difference between this
important strain of patristic–monastic cosmology and that developed by
St Augustine of Hippo, noting how, in the Eastern view, the ideas of
created things in God

are not . . . the eternal reasons of creatures contained within the very being of
God, determinations of the essence to which created things refer as to their
exemplary cause, as in the thought of St Augustine which later became the
common teaching of the whole Western tradition and was more precisely
formulated by St Thomas Aquinas. In the thought of the Greek Fathers the
divine ideas are more dynamic, intentional in character. Their place is not in
the essence, but in 'that which is after the essence', the divine energies: for the
ideas are to be identified with the will or wills which determine the different
modes according to which creative beings participate in the creative energies.
It is thus that Dionysius characterizes the 'ideas or models' which are 'the reasons
of things which give them substance', . . . 'for it is by them that all
things have been determined and are created by the supersubstantial God' [De
divin. Nomin. V, 8, PG III, 824 C].

Interestingly, Dionysian analogues have been detected in the Altus
Proator, attributed to St Columba and probably one of the earliest
extant Irish poems, with its distinctive account of the movement of
water around the world through clouds, sea, winds, and marsh
(Adomnán noted Columba's own interest in tidal movements). The
poem also appears to show influence from Cassian's writings, reflecting
another purported interest of Columba's, at least according to the Anra
Coluim Cille, a poem written in tribute to the sixth-century saint,
perhaps shortly after his death. Such a juncture of references in the Altus
Proator, a significant early Hiberno-Latin poem about the Creation,
suggests the degree to which early Irish monasticism may have made
cosmological–ascetic connections, parallel to those in Eastern asceti-
icism. The probably Syrian writer of the Dionysian corpus shared
significantly common ways of thinking about the cosmos with Desert
Fathers, Cappadocians, and early Irish monastics alike.

By contrast with such apophatic asceticism, Lossky concluded that, in
the deep structure of Augustine's cosmological model, 'the divine ideas
remain static — unmoving perfections of God . . . It is interesting to note
that John Scotus Eriugena . . . together with the Easterns . . . puts the
ideas outside the divine essence, but at the same time he wants to
maintain with St Augustine their substantial character'. Eriugena's
rejection in his Periphrasis of the Augustinian view of the 'dual
procession' of the Holy Spirit (known as the filioque on account of the
addition of the phrase 'and the Son' to the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan
Credo), in favour of the Eastern view, supported his adaptation of
Augustinian cosmology to a Greek patristic context. This may further
elucidate the cosmological background of glasmarte, since views of
nature behind it can be seen to be normal within a larger spectrum of
Christian views than those of high medieval Western Europe. Julia
Kristeva notes how the Eastern trinitarianism championed by Eriugena
(in contrast to the enthusiasm for the filioque of his Carolingian Anglo-
Saxon counterpart, Alcuin) involved a dynamic in which

in the Father the Spirit loses its immanence and identifies with the kingdom
of God as defined through germinal, floral, nutritional, and erotic metamor-
phoses that imply, beyond the cosmic energy theory often viewed as specific
to the East, the openly sexual fusion with the Thing at the limits of the
nameable. Within such a dynamics [sic], the Church itself appears as a soma
ptoumatikon, a 'mystery', more than an institution made in the image of
monarchies . . . the Spirit emerges with the two other centers and, by the same
token, endows them, beyond their value as distinct entities or authorities,
with an abyssal, breathing, and certainly erotic depth, where the
psychological experience of loss and ecstasy finds its place.

By contrast, the developing conventional Western view of the Trinity (still
following Kristeva) in effect marginalized the Holy Spirit, from which,
according to the Eastern Fathers; the uncreated grace infusing creation
emanated. The Western view supported a more individualized, auotronic
vision of Christ — one reflected in the growth of Western proprietary
feudal monarchies and the papacy, and, indeed, in Western notions of the
reality of an internalized space of self. Augustinian trinitarianism
contains a significant analogue, in linked themes if not precise terminology, to
the Saltura na Ramn's cosmology: the fifteenth chapter of the Celestial Hierarchy
speaks of winds and clouds as symbolic of angelic beings in a discussion that
also explains the meaning of the colours of biblical stones: Pseudo-Dionysius:
187–88. Lossky, Mystical Theology, p. 96. Julia Kristeva, 'Dostoevsky, the
Writing of Suffering, and Forgiveness', Black Sun, translated by Leon S. Roudiez
had the advantage of providing a basis for the political and spiritual authority of the papacy on the one hand, and on the other for the autonomy and rationality of the believer’s person, identified with a Son having power and prestige equal to that of the Father. What had thus been gained in equality and therefore in performance and historicity had perhaps been lost at the level of the experience of identification, in the sense of a permanent instability of identity. Difference and identity, rather than autonomy and equality, did on the contrary build up the Eastern Trinity, which consequently became the source of ecstasy and mysticism.94

While the early Irish De Ordine included the Western filioque approach to the Trinity rooted in Augustine, the probably early-ninth-century Stowe Missal, a rare surviving liturgical manuscript from Ireland, included the filioque only as a later addition, one again essentially rejected by Eriugena. Drawing on Maximus, Eriugena sought to demonstrate that a more dynamic perichoretic, and more deeply apophatic, sense of the Trinity depended as much on a certain milieu of spiritual praxis as upon formulae wording — the kind of praxis arguably connected with the term glasmarte. In that sense, the De Ordine’s view of the ultimate transformation of the physical world at the end of time can be read as being more akin to Eriugena’s cosmological eschatology — and that of his sources, St Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus — than to that of Augustine.95

A similar process to Eriugena’s adaptation of Augustinian cosmology to a model more akin to Eastern monastic doctrine can be seen in the writing of an earlier Irish cosmologist, Augustinus Hibernicus, in his seventh-century De Mirabilibus Sacrae Scripturae. This process provides another model for contextualizing the concept of glasmarte in a larger Christian tradition. The De Mirabilibus seeks to explain the ‘naturalness’ of biblical miracles as a process by which God brings out the hidden nature of one thing as manifested by another,96 using the Latin term ratio in a way that would seem to parallel the use of the Irish gles in the Saltair’s passage on the winds. A higher ratio is assigned to ‘the unusual


and also according to which discerned in miraculous things’ and a lower ratio is ‘understood as the daily governing of things’, both integrated in God’s natural government of creation.97 In fact, as Carey has noted, despite obvious surface resemblances in their cosmological exegesis, the Irish Augustine eschews the specific terminology and conceptualization used by his earlier namesake, St Augustine of Hippo.98 Augustine of Hippo had described his two tiers of cosmic archetypes as eternal reasons in the Word of God and causal reasons implanted by God in the Creation, using an array of terms including rationes, aeternae rationes, superiores rationes, rationes incomputabiles, divinae incomputabiles aeternaeque rationes for the former, and causales rationes, rationes seminales, causae, rationes, semina futurorum, rationes primordiales for the latter, in his influential work De Genesi ad Litteram.99 Hibernicus’ seemingly more integrated delineation of higher and lower ratio is more engaged in the world, less conceptually abstract, as he sees actively to demonstrate the naturalness of miracles. His emphasis is on dynamic patterns on an earth naturally engaged with the government of Christ, rather than on the quasi-Platonic archetypes and seeds of his predecessor, which one scholar has aptly compared to a computer programme.100 Hence the importance of the analogues between Hibernicus, Maximus, Eriugena, and the Saltair, which again help to normalize an ascetic-cosmological context for glasmarte that is less familiar from a perspective based solely on Augustine’s writings.

Indeed, Augustine of Hippo’s exegetical emphasis in the De Genesi, in explicating the ‘two stories’ of Creation in Genesis, included an articulation of creation more distinctly two-tiered than that found in Augustinus Hibernicus, Eriugena, or many of the Greek Fathers.101

93III.9–10; MacGinty, p. 168. 98See Carey, Single Ray of the Sun, pp. 50–51, in which he explains this interpretative difference from Smyth, who, contrary to Carey (and this discussion), sees the Irish Augustine’s cosmology in its deep structure as a simple, lacuna-laden imitation of the African doctor, based probably on an incomplete source text (Understanding the Universe, pp. 44–45).
101Eriugena uses the term ratio in terms of ‘causes’ of the places we now experience’ (Harrington 150) in his Periphyseon, v PL, 122, cols 8858 and 906a, translated by I. P. Sheldon-Williams with John J. O’Meara, Periphyseon (The
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Whereas St Augustine's semiotics of theophany includes an arbitrary insertion of temporal objects into creation, such as the fire in the burning bush (the supernatural objectified), the Irish Augustine emphasizes a cosmic pattern engaging with the physical world, in which the seemingly unnatural can express a higher though normally hidden natural order, and can be an incorporeal activity—or even 'illusion'—described in figurative terms. Hibernicus' discussion of the fire in the burning bush, for example, is arguably closer in spirit to St Gregory of Nyssa's than to St Augustine's, despite similarities between all three. The Irish Augustine's cosmological 'spin' on Augustine provides a glimpse of how elements of air, sea, and cloud could be distinctively related to notions of ascetic and penitential martyrdom in early Ireland.

Augustinus Hibernicus' key term ratio is again a word used as a Latin synonym for the Greek term logos as employed by Evagrius and Maximus. Eriugena writes that 'the Word [the Greek Logos] itself and the multiple and most primal reason [Ratios] of the whole created universe are one and the same', even as he could write, sometimes using Augustinian terminology, sometimes Dionysian, of primordial causes or theophanies in creation as either uncreated or created, depending on the viewer-participant's perspective. In the dynamic fourfold view of creation in his Periphyseon Eriugena described his primordial causes as 'second things' between God and creation. He placed these in creation, but as theophanies in physical nature, in effect the 'energeta' or uncreated activity of God, which again offers us a possible analogue to cosmological-devotional aspects of glasmarrt. Eriugena said of these 'second things' that


Eriugena, using ratio in a way that echoes both its use by the Irish Augustine and the role of gles in the Saltair na Raoin wind-texts, writes that the primordial causes participate in God immediately, and are the principles [principia] of all things ... constituted in and after the One Universal Principle; and the essences that follow after them subsist by participation in them ... But participation is understood of all. For as between the terms of numbers — that is, among the numbers when they are constituted under one principle [ratione], the proportions are similar, so between all the natural orders from the highest to the lowest the participations by which they are related are similar; and as between the numerical proportions there are proportionalities, that is to say, similar principles [ratio] of proportion, in the same way the Wisdom that is the Creator of all things is constituted between the participations of the natural orders marvellous and ineffable harmonies by which all things come together into one concord or unity of peace or love or whatever other name can signify the unification of all things ... Participation, therefore, is not the taking of some part, but the distribution of the divine gifts and graces from the highest to the lowest through the higher orders to the lower. 185

According to Eriugena's scheme, the narrative of creation in Genesis suggests that the primordial causes are in effect above the firmament, which relates to the basic four elements, indicating that bodies are brought forth as earthly beings from the primordial causes and then return to them, through the medium of the elements. Likewise, the wind-colour texts seem to relate the seven glesa to the seven heavens, in a horizontally dynamic rather than vertically abstract hierarchy of interactive levels around earth.

Thus, what Carey rightly saw as distinctively Irish in Augustinus Hibernicus' seventh-century re-working of Augustine's cosmology can be seen also as particularly sophisticated and cosmopolitan in its

182I., emphasis added. The teacher in Eriugena's voluminous dialogue is here claiming to be synthesizing Augustine, though, as usual in the case of the Irish cosmologist-philosopher, doing so with a twist; translated by Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, p. 259. 183I., translated by Sheldon-Williams and O'Meara, pp. 246-47. 184See I., 18-40, including Eriugena's study of the days of Creation in Genesis — the differences from Augustine's emphasis on a double creation narrative hinge on Eriugena's stress on the theophanic nature of creation, reflecting his Greek sources.
parallels. Hibernicus’ adaptation occurs where readings of Augustine intersect with a monastic tradition steeped in practices derived from a milieu analogous to Eastern monasticism. Those practices preserved and evolved a cultural context for the reception of ideas not only through textual transmission, but also via scholarly elders and abbots in intergenerational communities of social tradition—a kind of socially organized orality merged with devotional praxis. Such a process may also be a model for the development of glasmastræ from Latin sources. While a number of scholars have argued that Eriugena’s later direct encounter with Greek patristics was a kind of abstract textual engagement, Thomas O’Loughlin is surely nearer the mark in proposing that

Within his own religious background in the Celtic lands there was a formal theological awareness that the Source of Being must never be thought of in a similar way to the creation, can never be identified with the creation, and can be more truly thought of in terms of negations. It was perhaps this basic formation in faith that first spark an interest that caught fire when Eriugena met the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor and the pseudo-Dionysius.  

ASCETICS AND AESTHETICS

This again has relevance to a deeper contextualizing of glasmastræ as a kind of cosmological asceticism. The effect of that early monastic emphasis on an apophatic distinction between the essence of God and creation, as described by O’Loughlin, led—paradoxically for us moderns—to a view of nature as a panoply of theophanies involving the uncreated divine energies; in this lies the key to the confluence of glasmastræ as idea and praxis. Andrew Louth notes that “particularly central to Eriugena’s own vision was the Dionysian idea of the world as a theophany, as a manifestation of the splendour of the divine glory, and the idea that this theophany—in the ordered cosmos, and in the incarnation—calls on man to share God’s nature, to be deified”.  

This is in a sense the kind of exteriorized dialogic advanced by the Soviet literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (who was influenced, as recent scholarship has noted, by Eastern patristics), but it is one applied to the natural world: the paradox of an externalized sense of self involving a deeper compassionate engagement with others and the world. The result of a dynamic, non-objectified, yet essentially iconographic sense of the physical world can be glimpsed in Eriugena’s distinctive development of sea imagery, a literary subject often related to use of the term glas in early Irish colour descriptions:

Let us spread sails, then, and set out to sea. For Reason, not inexperienced in these waters, fearing neither the threats of the waves nor windings nor the Syrtis nor rocks, shall speed our course: indeed she finds it sweeter to exercise her skill in the hidden straits of the Ocean of Divinity than idly to bask in the smooth and open waters, where she cannot display her power, until the grace of God leading and helping and aiding and moving her by patient and assiduous study of the Holy Scriptures, she may return and reach again that which in the Fall of the First Man she had lost, the contemplation of Truth...

Unlike the darker imagery of the sea as representing a condition of danger and alienation from God, as generally found in Latin writings from St Augustine to St Gregory the Great (and, for that matter, often in allegorized Anglo-Saxon poetry), Eriugena’s use of sea imagery is...
more akin to that of St Ambrose, an earlier Greek-attuned Latin Christian writer, who in his *Hexaemeron* wrote of the Gospels as a sea to be explored like an unfathomable mystery, a significantly different emphasis from Augustine’s view that the firmament separating heaven and earth represented Scripture, and one more akin to St Columbanus’ comparison of the depths of the sea to the mystery of the Trinity.\(^\text{112}\) Édouard Jeanneau writes that, whereas high medieval Western philosophy has been imagined as a cathedral, Erigena’s cosmology can be seen as embodied in his image of the sea, in which Erigena turns around the trope of the sea (deriving from classical literature) as a place to be traversed rather than a destination. Jeanneau relates this ‘reversal of the dynamics of marine images’ to the writer’s early Irish cultural background.\(^\text{113}\) ‘The cathedral is, also, a ship [nave], but a ship at rest, whose hull was facing the sky’, Jeanneau wrote:

La nef érigénienne, au contraire, est toujours en mouvement ou, à tout le moins, en partance. L’Ériégène, en effet, ne se représente pas la théologie ou la philosophie — car, pour lui c’est tout un — comme l’abri tranquille où le

The Bluest-Greyest-Greenest Eye

Alfred K. Sievers

people fidele viendrait chercher refuge contre les tempêtes du monde. Pour lui, philosophe est nager sur une mer dangereuse, c’est préférer l’inconfort du voyage à l’oisiveté du port, c’est risquer sa pensée sur l’océan infini de l’écriture avec une ferme confiance dans l’Esprit qui entle la voile et dans la raison humaine qui tient le gouvernail.

The Erigenian ship, on the contrary, is always in movement or, at the very least, in departure. Erigena, in effect, does not depict theology or philosophy — for him it is all one — as the tranquil shelter where the faithful people come to find refuge against the storms of the world. For him, to philosophize is to navigate on a dangerous sea, to prefer the inconvenience of the voyage to the laziness of the port, to risk one’s beliefs in the infinite ocean of Scripture with a firm confidence in the Spirit, which swells the sail, and in human reason, which holds the rudder.\(^\text{114}\)

This view of ‘philosophy’ in relation to imagery of the natural world shows itself as a potential analogue to glassmarte as well. St Theodore the Studite, a Byzantine contemporary of Erigena, commented similarly to Erigena on the storms and dangers of the sea as stable and safe in comparison with the spiritual dangers of relaxation in a harbour of the mind.\(^\text{115}\) St John Chrysostom, commenting on St Paul’s statement that ‘This hope [of faith] we have as an anchor of the soul’ (Hebrews 5, 19), wrote:

For through hope we are already in heaven... And you see how very suitable an image he [Paul] has discovered: for he did not say ‘foundation’, but ‘anchor’. For that which is in the tossing sea, and seems not to be very firmly fixed, stands on the water as upon land, and is shaken and yet is not shaken.\(^\text{116}\)

Compare this nuance with Augustine’s statement: ‘As yet we bear the mortality of the flesh, and take future immortality upon trust; and on the sea we are tossed about by the waves, but we have the anchor of hope already fixed upon the land.’\(^\text{117}\) Chrysostom speaks of being already in heaven through hope, standing on the water as upon land (not connected with the distinct land of salvation via an anchor). In a nutshell, he is articulating an iconographic landscape as distinct from the objectifying and allegorical view of nature that became predominant in the West.


While Augustine wrote of human pride as a huge hollow mountain blocking spiritual harbour and rest, swallowing up the sea traveller desperate for port, the image of the hollow mountain in the fourth-century exegesis of St Ephrem the Syrian was that of Paradise, in which (as in the Hiberno-Latin De Ordine) Paradise was above the earth, and (as in all-embracing otherworld motifs of Celtic narratives) encompassed it in a hollow otherworldly mountain. St Gregory of Nyssa, a source for Erigena, held similar views. To Gregory and Ephrem, Paradise was a place of which only the foothills had been touched by the Flood, whose inhabitants ‘dance on the sea’s surface’. Within this perspective we may also place the early Irish tradition in which St Brendan is said to have built his boat on a mountain before setting out to sea to find the land of promise — a kind of homage-in-reverse to Noah’s ark landing on top of a mountain.

In the end we return to the cosmic connections of water, winds, and bodily penance in tears and fasting in an early Irish monastic context, all of which relate ultimately to a sense of engagement with the original aspects of creation, in which Paradise is amid the aerial waters, as in the writings of St Ephrem, the De Ordine, and — in a more diffuse sense — in early Irish otherworldly narratives such as Immram Brain. In the process, the chromatic aspect of the word glasmarte becomes incarnational in a sense akin to Christ: a logos of the Logos, participating in the Incarnation that St Gregory the Sinaite, writing later in the Greek

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way foreign to modern objectification of physical nature. In the Eastern Mediterranean practice of hesychasm we can glimpse in this sense a final analogue to the Irish concept of glasmartre, in the involvement of the physical body — through posture, breathing, fasting from objects of sensual passion, and speaking the iconographic name of God in rhythm with the body — in directing the nous, or eye of the mind, to the heart and to a oneness with the uncreated light of the divine energies which was traditionally evidenced by saints and was known as theosis. This praxis of penance is also integrative ascetic devotion. To return for a moment to St Columba’s glas eye, we can think here of St Ephrem the Syrian’s fourth-century writings on the need for a luminous heart to renew a luminous eye, leading beyond prayer to wonder (the Syriac word translated ‘luminous’, shavyā, important in Ephrem’s writings, means also ‘limpid, lucid, clear, pure, transparent, serene or sincere’ — the colour of sky in water, perhaps). To Ephrem, Eve and Mary are the two eyes of the world; Mary’s eye was kept luminous and ‘she is the land which receives the source of light: through her it has illuminated the whole world with its inhabitants, which had grown dark through Eve’.

Blue-grey-green martyrdom, the working ascetic’s route to salvation in Standliff’s analysis of Irish penitence and its Latin sources, was also, in a fuller context of early Irish tradition and the Christian world, a discipline of cosmic synergy enabling the ascetic to see through the luminous eye — a discipline sometimes mislabelled Pelagian, but really a Cassianic spiritual medicine. Striving towards noetic white martyrdom through a more specific, earthly range of colour, glasmartre is an ultimately ‘ecentric’ motif set in a larger cultural project (with its own particular political contexts) aimed at crafting a textual iconographic landscape for realms of early Christian Ireland as the earth that is (in Ephrem’s terms) also Mary and the mystery of the human heart.

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medieval Ireland was indeed 'odd', as Kathleen Hughes famously noted, but only in its engagement with a deeper and wider array of traditions than was common in the medieval West.

Another (Large) Piece of the Jigsaw: The Acts of Welsh Rulers

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Writing in the early 1970s on the sources of medieval Welsh history, Ian Jack pointed to 'texts of major importance still uncited, fundamental work still to be undertaken.' He believed, in particular, that the records of documents issued by Welsh rulers 'could be consolidated into a small regesta principum Walliae', and suggested that it was 'high time that proper diplomatic examination was made of [the] remains of the Welsh documents', a point which echoed a still earlier remark by James Conway Davies, who had described that task as 'one of the most clamant needs in Welsh medieval historical research'. Here at last is that volume of regesta, and contained within it is the proper diplomatic examination for which Jack and Davies called. It is not, however, a small volume: in over 950 pages, 444 documents for which texts survive are very fully summarized in English, printed in the original language, and discussed in accompanying notes. A further 174 documents which can be demonstrated to have existed are calendared as fully as the evidence allows. The acta themselves are preceded by a long introduction of outstanding value. The histories of those polities for which acts survive are sketched, and the diplomatic characteristics of the documents are fully and illuminatingly explored: the various categories into which the acta fall are discussed, as are important issues relating to the survival and transmission of texts, and there is careful analysis of the development of rulers' styles, palaeography, and sealing.


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