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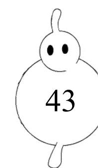

Michael Hemsley

The Day of the Passion of the Men of Britain: The Boar as Revenant Agent of Disorder in Welsh Literature and in David Jones' Late Poetry

ABSTRACT
This paper examines the motif of the giant devastating boar (Stith Thompson B16.1.4.1) diachronically from its early appearances in Greek and Roman literature to later ones in 'Celtic' literature of the medieval and Renaissance periods, and two poems in the modernist David Jones' collection *The Sleeping Lord*. The purposes are to attempt to establish the boar as a species of theriomorphic revenant, and to root out similarities and differences in its portrayal. Making use of stylistic analysis and reference to the imaginary realm of the four elements, it is demonstrated that despite its varying narrative function and relationships with protagonists, the revenant boar in this literature has been, and remains, a powerful symbol of threat both to the environment and to a structured human presence within it.

KEYWORDS
Welsh mythology; Mabinogion; Revenant; David Jones; Boar; Twrch, Dafydd ap Gwilym.

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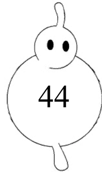
Introduction

Stith Thompson's Motif Index contains references to giant and malevolent boars in Irish, Icelandic, Greek, Italian and Indian myth.[1] Though the creature can in a sense be followed across Europe via Ireland to Wales, the *Motif-index* does not cite Wales as a source. This paper will therefore track appearances of the boar as revenant and quasi-revenant in examples of European literature, with a main focus on the British Arthurian tradition. Medieval and Renaissance Welsh texts are discussed and there is an examination of the significance of the boar in two major Arthurian poems of the British modernist David Jones. Since Jones' works reveal the boar as a trigger for material transformations, reference will be made to essays on the imagination of matter by Gaston Bachelard, supported by a stylistic analysis of key passages.

The European wild boar is a large mammal, active at night. Typically, adults are 180cm or so in length, and stand around 90cm or so at the shoulder. A good average weight for a wild boar is 90 kg, though individual weights can exceed 200 kg. The boar's chief weapon is a pair of tusks, whose total length can reach 30cm, protruding from the lower jaw. These are very sharp, for they rub continuously against a



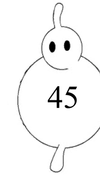
smaller pair of upper canine teeth. Wild boars are favoured hunt objects since they are considered vigorous and courageous. Their tendency to attack rather than flee when cornered earned them respect among Celtic people, and this is one of the reasons why they became a symbol of nobility and martial prowess[2].

Nowadays, the boar is spread across several European countries, including France, Spain and Germany. Left unchecked it can rapidly overrun suitable habitats[3]. In Britain, the handful of colonies[4] now present originate from boar which have either been reintroduced or escaped from commercial farms.

The instinctive rooting behaviour of wild boar can be quite destructive, and it can therefore cause a nuisance to humankind even in today's post-industrial Europe. One example will suffice: in January 2010, the BBC reported that there was to be a cull of wild boar in the Forest of Dean, a hilly and forested area on the border between Wales and England, where these animals have been increasing in numbers to a high of about 150 since reintroduction in 2004[5]. The reason for the cull was reported to be concerns that the creatures were causing damage to the ancient woodland, a place where remnants of the ancient British oak forest of Tudor times still remain[6].

The Boar in European Literature

The fourth of Herakles' twelve labours was to capture a giant boar which lived on Mount Erymanthos, a favourite place of Artemis. The mountain is named for a mortal son of Apollo who had accidentally seen Aphrodite bathing, and was blinded by her as punishment[7]. Apollo retaliated by sending the boar to kill Aphrodite's beloved Adonis. Herakles succeeds in his task by forcing the boar into a snowdrift[8] and capturing it in a net. In another equally celebrated myth, Artemis sends a giant boar to punish King Oeneus of Calydon for omitting to make harvest offerings to her[9]. As told by Ovid, the hunting of the Calydonian boar is a competitive affair in which many heroes vie for glory. This telling also establishes the creature's supernatural character, not least in terms of its size "Huge as the bulls that grassy Epirus breeds,/ Dwarfing the bulls of fertile Sicily"[10]. The creature is raised from a watery domain within a wooded gulley, from which he rushes "like lightning struck/ When clouds collide" (*ibid*., p.181 [lines 337-338]). Fire is indeed the element of his wrath: this creature has "eyes ablaze with fire and blood" (*ibid*., p. 180 [line 285]) and "His mouth flashed lightning and his burning breath/ Seared the green leaves" (*ibid*. [lines 290-291]). There is a kind of antithetical foreshadowing embodied in the eventual death of the boar at the hands of Meleager, for though he gains power and status by his achievement, the hero himself is under a prophecy of his own death by fire should a burning log be reduced to ash (*ibid*., p.185 [lines 452-457]). In addition to possessing fire, enormous size and brute strength, the boar has specific weapons; there are "bristles long and sharp/ Rigid as spearshafts" (*ibid*., p. 180 [lines 286-287]), and "His tusks were huge as Indian elephants'" (*ibid*. [line 289]). There is

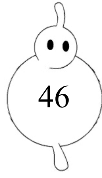


also already perhaps the suggestion of toxic spittle, for "he hissed and snorted with hot foam" (*ibid*. [line 288]), and when he is dealt his death blow "He roared, he raged, he twisted round and round,/ Slavering blood afresh and hissing foam" (*ibid*., p.183 [lines 416-417]). In this myth the boar is agent of the destruction of the harvest; it also causes great destruction to the land and livestock, and puts the people to flight (*i-bid*., p. 180 [lines 291-301]).

Both the theme of wasteland creation in Ovid's retelling and the winter setting for the myth of the Erymanthian boar suggest that the boar is a mytheme representing winter. This theme of waste is even extended after the Calydonian Boar's death: a squabble over protocol escalates to Meleager murdering his mother Althaea's two brothers. Furious, she rekindles the log she has preserved in order to protect her son Meleager, "She threw the fatal brand. The log itself/ Groaned, or it seemed to groan, as there it lay/ Licked by the unwilling flames and burned away. Unknowing, absent, Meleager burned,/ Burned with those flames and felt a hidden fire/ Scorching his vitals" (*ibid*., p.187 [lines 513-518]). This burning up of the once powerful hero's masculinity seems a post-mortem echo of the way in which the boastful Ancaeus is disemboweled when "the beast struck first and plunged/ Both tusks high in his groin, the shortest road/ To death" (*ibid*., p. 183 [lines 401-403]).

In Bachelard's terms, Ovid's boar is a pyromenon, an embodiment of fire[11], yet while fire and violence over the land cause short-term damage, "fire purifies everything"[12]. It removes noxious smells and creates olfactory pleasure, for example through the odours of cooked food, as well as having the power to smelt and fuse. Additionally, in agricultural terms it also performs the invaluable function of destroying weeds and enriching the earth (*ibid*., 103-104). The paradoxical outcome of devastation by fire is thus both purification and regeneration: fire is agent of both death and rebirth.

The boar appears regularly in early Celtic literature of the Irish tradition. *Orc Triath* is a supernatural boar[13], and *Torc Triath* is the king of the boar in the *Book of Invasions*[14]. Within the Fenian cycle[15] there is a *Torc Forbartach*, but this is not the same creature as the most central instance of the boar in this cycle, which appears in *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne*. The boar of *The Pursuit* is the revenantal transformation of the half-brother of the hero Diarmuid, who is the son of a king called Donn. Donn's queen bears a son to Roc, the steward of a lord called Angus Og. This son is fostered to Angus, along with Diarmuid, who is the legitimate son of Donn. When Donn murders Roc's bastard son, Roc reanimates him theriomorphically, as a boar variant: "a cropped green pig, having neither ears or tail"[16]. The boar runs off and henceforth becomes the nemesis of Diarmuid, who hunts him on the top of a mountain despite being under a taboo not to do so. In Ovid's account of the Calydonian boar several spears go astray or glance off it, and the same happens here, for Diarmuid's spear makes no mark on the creature; furthermore, his sword is shattered upon it. After being carried downhill and back up again on the boar's back[17] Diarmuid is finally thrown, and the boar makes a successful lunge to disembowel him. The dying Diarmuid manages to throw the hilt of his broken sword at the boar, smashing its skull and killing it. Another enemy of Diarmuid, Finn MacCumhaill, has the power to save him but refuses to do so. In the end the body of Diarmuid is recovered by his foster father who preserves it and is able to revive it from time to time through magic. Thus, in this tale, both the boar and its victim are revenants.



Across the water in Britain, Geoffrey of Monmouth makes a notable allusion to the boar during the battle between King Arthur and the malevolent Giant of Mont Saint Michel: the giant rushes at the king "just as a boar hurls itself at the huntsman, despite the latter's boar-spear"[18]. The king dispatches the giant by plunging his sword into his brain, and the "evil creature… toppled to the ground with a mighty crash, like some oak torn from its roots by the fury of the winds" (*ibid*.). Though this kind of destruction of the pre-eminent tree may be said to symbolize the fall of heaven, it may at the same time also suggest the disconnection of chthonic powers from the worldly realm.

Notwithstanding Geoffrey's simile, the boar can probably more properly be said to be a component of the British Arthurian tradition through its appearance in the Welsh native tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen* in the so-called *Mabinogion*[19] Arthur calls upon the kings of the island to assist in a quest of many stages whose ultimate objective is to retrieve three treasures from between the ears of the boar Twrch Trwyth[20]; these are a pair of shears, a razor and a comb. The underlying aim of this quest is to aid Culhwch[21] who wishes to marry Olwen the daughter of Chief Giant Ysbyddaden. Especially since the giant predicts his own death if the tasks he has set Culhwch are achieved, at the level of myth the story is the well-known one of the usurpation of the older, weaker lord by the younger, stronger one. Nonetheless, the justly celebrated centre of the tale is the pursuit of the boar and his cohorts, in which Arthur plays a major part.

At the start of this episode, one of Arthur's faithful, Menw, travels to Ireland where he transforms himself into a bird and attempts to retrieve one of the treasures. However, the boar is vigilant, and Menw, having been splashed with poisonous spittle, is "thereafter never completely without injury"[22]. After himself traveling to Ireland and raising the boar at Ysgeir Oervel, Arthur fights with it for nine days and nine nights, killing only one of its seven piglets. At this point Twrch is revealed to be a theriomorphic revenant, "His men asked him about the meaning of the pig and Arthur said, 'He was a king, but because of his sins God turned him into a pig'"[23] (*ibid*., p. 171). A negotiator goes to the hogs on Arthur's behalf, but is repelled by Twrch's companion Grugyn with the response "Tomorrow we will set out for Arthur's country and once there we will do the greatest possible damage" (*ibid*.). True to this word, Twrch, with his companions and piglets, makes a break across the Irish Sea to the south-west of Wales, making land at Porth Clais. The pace of the hunt moves up a gear and there follows a helter-skelter alternation of pursuit, battle, and listing of casualties on Arthur's side as the hog band, slowly diminishing in size, is chased across south Wales, via several known locations, into England. At this point further nobles from Devon and Cornwall join the hunt and Twrch is turned back toward the river Severn. He is driven into the river and dunked. The razor is grabbed by Mabon son of Modron[24], and the shears by Kyledyr the Wild. Making land on the English side, Twrch bolts for Arthur's base area Cornwall where the hunters eventually catch up[25] and he is "hunted out of Cornwall and driven into the sea, and from then on it is not known where he went"[26] (*ibid*., pp. 174-175).

Though Twrch Trwyth does not appear explicitly in the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym (b. ca. 1315/ 20 – d. ca.1350/ 70), the poet makes a number of references to boar and hogs in his characterisation of other troublesome beasts. Dafydd was a Welshman thought to have been relatively at ease

with Anglo-Norman culture, at least inasmuch as he served Welsh lords who were probably not politically antagonistic towards a certain degree of English authority. He appears to have had a somewhat European orientation and may even have known French. As a poetic speaker, he shows a high degree of self-awareness; he thus may be broadly characterized as a Renaissance, rather than a medieval poet.

In Dafydd's poetry, the kind of malevolence displayed by the hog of the *Mabinogion* is, on the surface at least, realigned from the almost cosmic level to the individual one, while at the same time being shifted onto individual persons, other creatures, or situations. Regardless of type, these instances invariably fulfil the narrative role of complicators. These may cause the poetic speaker physical or emotional discomfort; most typically they present barriers to his achievement of a tryst. In poem 68[27] *Tri Phorthar Eiddig*[28] the speaker faces three obstacles – the *Eiddig's Three Gatekeepers* of the title – in his efforts to reach his girl. These are "a damp-stinking fierce barking dog" which "jumped out at me from a pigsty", "an angry door/ which squeaks", and "a nasty sick aching hag"[29], who is "an ailing sow complaining". Such domestication also features in *Y Pwll Mawn* (*ibid*., poem 59) where standing in the speaker's way is *The Peat Pit* of Gwyn ap Nudd, whom he curses for digging what has become a filthy pond into which he tumbles while disorientated in the darkness on his way to a nocturnal meeting with a lovely girl. The pit is "A haven where pigs washed themselves". Here, even for those unfamiliar with the Welsh language, the orthography is likely to suggest that the English translation comes nowhere near doing justice to the watery, sloshing phonology of the Welsh[30], which seems to further the identification of the boar as a creature of the element water. The speaker's apparent nemesis Gwyn ap Nudd[31] reappears in poem 61, *Y Dylluan* (*The Owl. Ibid*., poem 59), as the person to whom this "slut", this "chopsy witch" with its "constant hoarse shout" is assigned. Among several ways in which the contemptibility of the owl is shown, it is characterized as *baedd* which means at once both 'boar' and 'outcast', indirectly suggesting the boar Twrch Trwyth.

Y Llwynog (*The Fox. Ibid*., poem 60) presents a more complex picture. As the speaker-poet sits under the trees which are to be the shelter for his tryst, his enemy the fox sits "like a tame boar"[32] near his lair. The boar simile is indeed urbane: the fox "would love a hen, and vain fowl". Nonetheless, while the speaker intends "like a hotshot bowman,/ on the brow of the hill…/ to strike him with a long thick arrow/" he overshoots his mark and his bow breaks into three pieces. The trees in this poem carry "Ovid's branches", and the allusion to Ovid's first two hunters to attempt to bring down the Calydonian Boar – Echion and Jason – is clear, for their spears either fall wide or are too strongly thrown. Likewise, the snapping of the bow seems an echo of both the theft by Artemis of Mopsus' spear-point in Ovid's account, and the shattering of Diarmuid's sword upon the back of the boar in *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne*. In addition, like Artemis' giant boar, Dafydd's fox-boar is a penetrator of the earth, and strongly linked to the imaginary of fire:

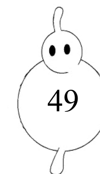
> He's ruddy against gravelly land
> […]
> Acre-leaper, red as an ember,
> […]
> His pelt proverbial, his flesh red-hot,
> Auger of the fair, hollow bellied earth'
> A lantern on a lair's windowsill,
> A copper bow, light of foot,
> Like pincers with his bloody snout.
> (Lines 29-40).

The fox also has "an ape-like form", is "like an ape amongst the green trees", and is "a man". It seems a quasi-human rival, almost a revenant. This reading is not weakened by the observation that the speaker's ambition as a poet, as a protector of nature, and as a conduit of inspiration is frustrated by the presence and the unassailability of the fox. If we allow the tree to be read as an instance of the *axis mundi* or world tree[33] (the fox-boar is revealed as confounder of the poet's access not just to heaven's grace in the worldly form of the girl, but also to a source of poetic inspiration – the Celtic otherworld or underworld, *Annwfn*, the entrance to which the fox is of course directly guarding: "It's not easy for me to follow him/ since his dwelling is as far down as Annwfn". The symbol of the mountain, column or tree as marker in the horizontal plane of the centre of the world, and as link in the vertical plane between heaven and earth is widely distributed (*ibid*., p. 42), and it is precisely the horizontal location which enables the vertical function (*ibid*., p. 45). As an exemplary archetype, this symbol in fact links "the three worlds": Earth is connected to Heaven by the branches of the tree, and to Hell by the roots (*ibid*., p. 44). For Bachelard, such a tree "is grand because it is hard"[34]. As we have begun to see, it is this grandeur, and the 'hard' power it devolves to the bow and arrow, from which Dafydd ap Gwilym's speaker is severed by the fox-boar in *Y Llwynog*, for there is a "passionate adherence to the certainties of a hard object" where "one sees a dreamer discovering the solidity of his own being in the company of an unshakeable tree" (*ibid*., p. 52). "The tree" continues Bachelard, "is hard so it can lift its airy crown, its high winged foliage. It gives to human beings a towering image of legitimate pride" (*ibid*., p. 53). For this thinker the tree, even the ancient hunched and knotty oak, is always an image of awakening, is always uplifting (*ibid*., p. 55).

Moving forward to the twentieth century, the boar makes an important reappearance in the writings of the Anglo-Welsh artist-poet David Jones (1895-1974). Deeply motivated and inspired by his Catholic faith, Jones modestly suggested his task as a maker had something to do with reconnecting readers with the historical and mythic past of, *inter alia*, Roman Europe, the milieu of Christ and the apostles, and Romano-Celtic Britain. For Jones, the strata of two millennia of accrued *materia* – shards of historical facts, myths, non-English lexis, and preserved objects – are equally valuable, and 'real' material for poetic making. Such use of sources is of course not unique within modernism; one may think more immediately of T.S. Eliot, and in fact Eliot turns out to have been one of Jones' admirers, including him in a class alongside himself, Pound and Joyce[35].

Jones makes use of the specific motif of Twrch Trwyth in a number of works. The boar appears twice in Jones' first published work, *In Parenthesis*, which concerns the First World War. Its rampage is summarized, and the outcomes for two of Arthur's faithful (Menw – harmed by the boar's poison, and Llaesgeven – who escaped unharmed) are contrasted; later, the bombs created by "properly organized chemists" are credited with more "riving power" than Twrch (*ibid*., p. 86, 155).

The poems in Jones' collection *The Sleeping Lord and other Fragments* were composed over a 45 year period, so while the book itself was not published until the year of the author's death, they should not simply be seen as late poems in the strict sense of the word. Two of the nine poems in the collection are major additions to the canon of Arthurian literature, and both concern transformations; these are *The Hunt*, and the title poem. In the first Twrch is the



catalyst for a hunting expedition during which Arthur's relationship with his companions undergoes a transcendent metamorphosis and he himself is enmeshed in the forest. In *The Sleeping Lord*, a much longer poem whose macro-structure consists of three phases, the first and third phases deal in large part with the possibility of Arthur's gradual transformation into landscape. The third phase is triggered by a reflection on the destruction done by the boar to nature, to human settlement, and to Arthur's people, and is immediately prefaced by a miniature and very lovely image of the lord himself sleeping in a specific Welsh landscape. This image is at once both textual and literal[36] and marks, with appropriate emphasis, the start of the final metamorphosis.

David Jones' four-and-a-half-page poem *The Hunt* is dated 1964, though portions of it were written prior to 1950, when Jones was still working on his longest poem, *The Anathemata*. Here, as in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, lords and warriors – collectively the *Arya* – congregate around Arthur from various parts of the island of Britain as well as from France as they prepare to hunt Twrch Trwyth[37] Like Menw, Arthur is "fouled with/ the hog-spittle"[38], though he is not incapacitated by it. The devastation wreaked by the boar inspires Arthur's sorrow and love:

> If his eyes are narrowed for the stress of the hunt and because of the hog they are moist for the ruin and for love of the recumbent bodies that strew the ruin. (*Ibid*.).

A few lines later, a cognitive poetic analysis reveals the figure of Arthur hovering ambiguously between the status of figure-trajector (rider of forest) and that of ground-under-landmark (ridden by forest):

> …the excessive fury of his riding when
> he rode
> the close thicket as
> though it were an open
> launde
> (indeed, was it he riding the forest-ride
> or was the tangled forest riding?) (*Ibid*.).

The 35 or so lines which follow seem to express a hierophany encompassing the transcendent immensity of the cosmos as well as the 'showing forth' of Christ's passion. Arthur's becoming enmeshed, 'lost'[39] in the immense space of the forest is achieved by his being "starred" (*ibid*., line 71) into it by tiny vegetable particles. Here, in a beautiful and densely alliterative passage (*ibid*., lines 69-75), voiceless consonant phonology dominates. At the outset the 'soft' fricatives [f] and [s], and the plosives [t] and [m] strongly predominate, and are accompanied by the semivowel [w], whose slight interference to the sound flow is caused by lip-rounding only:

> For the thorns and flowers of the forest and the bright elm-shoots and the twisted tanglewood of stamen and stem clung and meshed him and starred him with variety.

This all seems to emphasise the natural sonic characteristics of the forest, and the effect is only enhanced by the organic accretion of phrases achieved by the ten iterations of the conjunction 'and' within these eight lines. After the shift to the voiced plosive [g] upon which line 71 is centred, the phonology of the alliteration becomes more emphatic, making use of [k] and the more energetic bilabial plosives [p] and [b] to underscore a transcendent metamorphosis, which may be read as a reconfiguration of the King as the constellations of space:

> and the green tendrils gartered him and briary-loops galloon him with splinter-spike and broken blossom twining his

royal needlework
and ruby petal-points counter
the countless points of his wounds (*Ibid*., lines 71-75).

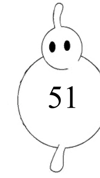
For Bachelard the knotty tree achieves "toughness only by turning in upon itself", yet paradoxically this avoidance "of its own upward tendency" does not negate its uplifting effect upon us, for "the mimesis of energy is… the antithesis of mimesis in form" (*Earth,* p. 55). This enmeshment, wounding, and implied upward transfiguration of Arthur connote both the green man and Christ, and the lord is in fact later characterized as "the speckled lord of Prydain/ in his twice-embroidered coat / the bleeding man in the green" (*Sleeping Lord*, p. 68, lines 99-101) making the link even clearer. Yet the King is not entirely disembodied. Bachelard reveals the torsional force implicit in the image of vegetation growing back into itself, and it is precisely this force which helps provide a substantiality, a hardness, which Arthur could otherwise be in danger of losing[40]. In fact, in a pre-echo of the earthy transformation he undergoes in *The Sleeping Lord*, a simile in lines 94 to 98 (*ibid*.) allows the condensation of crystalline droplets onto him, and in lines 104-105 the pure and alabaster-like "whiteness of his body shone" and "so did his dark wounds glisten" (*ibid*.). A few lines later, the sweat of the men and the horses "salted the dew of the forest floor"[41] (*ibid*., lines 112-113).

Yet, despite all of this, when the speaker broaches the notion of metamorphosis explicitly (*ibid*., lines 106-109) it is to reveal the unutterable depth of the Christ-like love of the king for the faithful band around him. The poem closes with a richly allusive intertextual reference to the day of Christ's passion upon the tree of Golgotha[42], which simultaneously creates a sense of foreboding at the unstoppable trend toward civilization signified by the boar and a painterly summation of the transformations already undergone, while nevertheless still refusing the Hog the last word:

as when the change-wind stirs and the colours change in the boding thunder-calm
because this was the Day
of the Passion of the Men of Britain
when they hunted the Hog
life for life. (*Ibid*., p. 69).

I turn now to Jones' *The Sleeping Lord*[43], in which the closing metamorphosis of King Arthur into the landscape of South Wales is set in motion by a 23-line passage in which the collapse of society is assigned not to "long-hafted whetted steel axe-blades" (*ibid*., p. 89) but to "the riving tusks of the great hog". In Jones' view of post-Roman British history, the Romano-Celts were representatives of culture, despite having experienced four centuries of the utile, civilising influence of Roman administration. Incoming Germanic peoples are also seen by Jones as agents of a Spenglerian return to civilisation. The sleeping lord of the poem may thus be read as a cultural potential awaiting recall at the appropriate moment in the alternating cycle between the matrices on the one hand of civilization, technocracy and the utile; and on the other of culture, art and the sacramental[44]. The tusks first fell the upwardly striving trees "that graced the high slope", and soon afterwards the goddess of nature herself is "ravaged" (*ibid*.). However, knotty wood is also destroyed; Christianity is threatened, and perhaps even heaven and hell are reversed[45]:

It is the Boar Trwyth
that has pierced through
the stout-fibred living wood



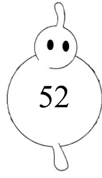
> that bears the sacral bough of gold.
> It is the hog that has ravaged the fair *onnen* and the hornbeam and the Queen of the Woods. It is the hog that has tusk-riven the tendoned roots of the trees of the *llwyn* whereby are the tallest with the least levelled low and lie up-so-down.[46] (*Ibid*., p. 89-90).

At this point, the speaker continues in 'prose' mode[47] but turns from destruction at the cosmic level to that at the domestic and human level. Instead of 'hog' (a word of uncertain origins) and the Germanic 'tusks', the beast is the Latin *porcus Troit*, and its weapons are the Welsh *ysgithrau*. It has broken both hearth – "shattered the *pentan*-stone", and home[48] – "it has stove in/ the wattled walls of the white dwellings". This time the hog is a fire-thief which decorates the bright trees with the white limbs of the people, so that the paradoxical destructive and rejuvenating forces it unleashes[49] are once again suggested: the "life-sap of the flowers of/ the forest mingles the dark life-sap of the fair bodies of the men" (*ibid*., p. 90).

There then follows a beautiful nine-line 'landscape drawing', which shows forth the possibility of the bright lord being in slumber in an entirely appropriate location: under stormy skies at the foot of the hill whose name may be translated into English as 'Mount Head-of-the-Summit'[50]. Though the closing six pages of the poem do enclose a two-page parenthetical episode in which the speaker, as deictic clues reveal, sides with the Romano-Celts against the incoming Anglo Normans, they largely constitute a speculation, in interrogative mode of mainly 'yes/ no' and 'or' questions, on whether Arthur's body has become the landscape of South Wales. As one would expect in a reflection on a metamorphosis with such a physical element, the questions contain many locative prepositional phrases. There are also many relative clauses which contribute to Jones' typically parenthetical structural tendency, the purposes of which include the avoidance of a sense of over-direct – or 'overcivilized' – argument. Within these closing pages, the boar makes a further two appearances. The first tells of Arthur's dream recalling of "his nine-day's fight/ which he fought alone / with the hog in the Irish wilderness" (*ibid*., p. 92). Here the dreaming protagonist and the dreamed antagonist are placed in powerful antithesis, and the fiery nature of Ovid's account of the boar resurfaces so that the most obvious reading has Arthur cast in the role of Christ, to Twrch's Satan[51].

Throughout these closing pages, the landscape character of the sleeping lord is upland. The uplands are directly cited (*ibid*., p. 91), and there are references to waters draining downwards and outwards (*ibid*., p. 90, 91). His sighs" are "canalled where the mountain-ash/ drops her bright head" (*ibid*., p. 92). When he stirs in his sleep perhaps a "covering stone" will "dislodge, and roll to Reynoldstone", undoubtedly from the landmark known as Arthur's Stone, the 4,500 year old burial chamber located on Cefn Bryn ('back of the hill' i.e. 'hill crest') the highest point on the Gower peninsula (*ibid*., p. 94). This elevated position echoes Christ's hill of Golgotha. From such a place Arthur can truly be said to have dominion, and Satan's 'arrêt in terra' is reversed: rather than being the site of arrest of a fall (Bachelard, *Earth*, p. 296, 299), the earth in this case is created by ascension, a kind of apotheosis. Finally, on the closing page, Arthur is either the guardian or guarded of the inwardly growing trees assigned such resonance by Bachelard; in fact, he may even have become such trees, through a transmigration of life essence like that described earlier:

> does he ward the tanglewood
> and the denizens of the wood



are the stunted oaks his gnarled guard
or are their knarred limbs
strong with his sap? (*Sleeping Lord*, p. 96).

Here we explicitly have the knotty oak cited by Bachelard as one of the trees which are "images of awakening" (*Earth*, p. 55). Knots in fact elicit the revelation of a paradox in both Bachelard and Eliade. For the latter, knots are both benefic and malefic, because while they may be used to bind enemies of both a concrete nature (human opponents, beasts) and formless ones (disease, spells, death), they may also be used by others to bewitch one (*Images*, p. 110, 112). "In this complex" humans recognize, says Eliade, "a sort of archetype of their own situation in the world" (*ibid*., p. 117).

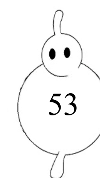
Following on from this passage, Jones presents further development of this ascension theme, including the image of the lord's sleep as arrested motion in the landscape, especially in the lines "are the still undulations/ the still limbs of him sleeping?"[52] The poem is drawn to a close with the final mention of the hog and a broad, summative question, one whose cognitive potential encourages reverie on the complex relationships between myth and history, and body and land, as well as, in what can perhaps be seen as a more contemporary mode, that between resourceful and resource:

do the trickling gullies
yet drain his hog-wounds?
Does the land wait the sleeping lord
or is the wasted land
that very lord who sleeps? (*Sleeping Lord*, p. 96).

Perhaps this transmutation of Arthur into hard upland landscape can be characterized as an instance of the Medusa complex, with the boar as bearer of a petrifying gaze[53]. Nonetheless, and saliently in the case of Arthur's struggle against this theriomorphic, quite possibly chthonic revenant, Bachelard also points out that "we must henceforth consider the active contemplation of rocks an expression of defiance, an engagement with monstrous powers, a domination over crushing imagery" (*Earth*, p. 147).

Conclusion

Within the literary examples selected here, which stretch from early appearances of the boar in European literature to its role in the work of a central modernist, its role as upsetter of the balance of human existence within nature seems a constant. What does appear to vary is its ultimate character as harbinger of renewal. In Ovid we may reasonably infer the benefits of its fiery riving over and into the earth despite its malefic impact, even beyond death, upon human beings. The ambiguity of its disappearance into water in *Culhwch ac Olwen* is a kind of counterpart to the uncited future status of Arthur as the tale ends. For the urbane and self-aware Renaissance poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, who nevertheless remained fiercely connected to nature, the boar is a disruptor of channels of inspiration and thus a threat to the masculine self-image and creativity of the poetic speaker. Much more recently, in the Arthurian poems of David Jones, the boar is once again the Twrch Trwyth of the *Mabinogion*, whose role is as symbol both of powerful technocratic incomers into Celtic Britain from mainland Europe and of what Jones saw as the nineteenth- and twentieth-century decline into a phase of utility and civilization. For Jones the boar is not just an archetypal 'difficult test' set for the hero-king, nor is it, as it is in Dafydd ap Gwilym, largely a complication in the poet-speaker's quest for artistic and sexual triumphs. For Jones the boar is also the stimulus for the



incorporation of Arthur into the forest and into the upland landscape. It thus constitutes not simply a revenantal appearance of an earlier, ill-behaved king, but also, symbolically, the casting of the 'civilisational phase' in the guise of a theriomorphic revenant whose appearance marks this recurring period of the Spenglerian cycle. In these poems, Arthur is the centre around which the strata and *materia* of culture accrue. In repose throughout the significant locations and vegetation of his kingdom, he awaits the turning of the cycle, the return of a cultural phase. Arthur himself is thus an earth-incorporated revenant in waiting, an antithetical counterpart to the watery boar.

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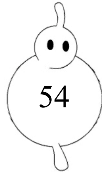

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Notes

[1] B16.1.4.1 giant devastating boar; B184.3.0.4 magic swine is a transformed person; venomous boar B776.4.2; giant boar B871.1.2. Stith Thompson. *Motif-index of folk-literature: a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, medieval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends*. Bloomington, 1955-1958. 17 Mar. 2011, http://www.ru-thenia.ru/folklore/thompson/index.htm>.

[2] Amaury Piedfer. *Le sanglier, traditions et symbole.* 28 Aug. 2008. 16 May 2010 http://www.paperblog.fr/1033004/le-sanglier-traditions-et-symbole.

[3] Boar numbers have increased by 800% in Luxembourg since 1971 (Piedfer n. 1). One recent report suggests that a newly emerging reason for this ability may be increased fertility in female boar. Hugh Schofield. *French hunters urged to declare war on the boar.* BBC News. 23 Dec. 2010. 17 Mar. 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11948612.

[4] In the Forest of Dean, East Sussex, and Devon. Isolated appearances are occasionnally reported from other locations.

[5] Despite their tenacity, and the relative wildness of this area, boar were hunted to extinction in the Forest of Dean around 700 years ago.

[6] *Wild boar cull is given go ahead*. 4 Jan. 2010. 30 Jan. 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/-2/hi/uk_news/england/gloucestershire/8439997.stm>.

[7] Robert Graves says that Apollo transforms himself into this boar, and suggests that Aphrodite is a later substitute for the original Artemis, for the mountain is sacred to the latter (*The Greek Myths vol. 2*. Harmondsworth, 1990, p. 113). According to Frazer, Adonis is either killed whilst boar hunting, or by Ares in the form of a boar (James Frazer. *The Golden Bough*. Project Gutenberg, 23 March 2003. 29 May 2010, http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/Further_Research/e-books/The_Golden_Bough%20-vol.1%20by%20Sir%20James%20George%20Frazer.pdf.

[8] Apollodorus, *The Library*. Oxford, 2008, p. 75-76 [II.5.4].

[9] In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the female chorus threatens the male one with something similar, but with an appropriate gender variation, warning of their own potential metamorphosis into "a blazing sow" (Aristophanes, *Birds and Other Plays,* Oxford, 1998. P. 121 [lines 683-684]).

[10] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. Oxford, 1987, p. 180 [lines 283-284].

[11] In chapter 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tusks and fire combine in Venus' warning to Adonis to avoid hunting the boars whose tusks have the power of lightning.

[12] Gaston Bachelard. *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (1938), Boston, 1968, p. 58.

[13] Equivalent to the Breton Tourtain, and the Welsh Twrch Trwyth (MacKillop, *The Oxford Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford, 2000, p. 45).

[14] James MacKillop. *The Oxford Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford, 2000, p. 45.

[15] i.e. in the "Fionn Cycle".

[16] *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne*. 31 Mar. 2010. 16 May 2010, http://www.maryjones.us/ctexts/diarmuid.html>

[17] In Norse myth, Freyr, the god of peace and plenty, rides the boar Gullinbursti.

[18] Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 240.

[19] Strictly speaking, this consists of four tales 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi' (*Y Pedair Ceinc y Mabinogi*); however, the 'native tale' of *Culhwch and Olwen* is one of the seven (sometimes eight) other tales traditionally published alongside them in the collection which has come to be known as *The Mabinogion*. The text sources for this are *The White Book of Rhydderch* and *The Red Book of Hergest.* These date from the early and late fourteenth century respecttively, though the four native tales, of which *Culhwch* is one, may originate around 1100.

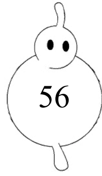
[20] /t rx tr i θ/

[21] The Welsh word *twrch* means not only 'boar', but also signifies a snuffling or rooting action such as that performed by these creatures in the forest. Significantly, there is both a village and a narrow wooded river valley on the fringes of the industrial valleys of South Wales called *Cwmtwrch* ('Boarvale'). The name may perhaps originate in the historical presence of wild boar in this area, or in the action of the stream itself. Additionally, the name Culhwch provides an onomastic hunt: Hamp reaches the conclusion that this figure is a cousin of Arthur who is at once also both a boar in a class with Twrch Trwyth, and a divinity (Eric Hamp. 'Culhwch the Swine', in *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* (ZcP), Volume 41, Issue 1, 1986, p. 257-258. 28 Oct. 2009. 16 May 2010, http://www.reference-global.-com/doi/abs/10.1515/zcph.1986.41.1.257.

[22] *The Mabinogion*. Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 169.

[23] The basic transformation resembles that of Nebuchadnezzar (see O.T., Daniel 4) who is transformed into a beast which goes on all fours into the wilderness and eats grass. But because of the link to the three treasures, it is of course tempting to think of Twrch as a transformation of Vortigern, who according to the *Historia Brittonum (History of the Britons)* exiles himself (perhaps to North Wales) as a result of the sin of siring a child upon his own daughter. The boy is taken away by St. Germanus, who will only return him when he himself has been given a razor, scissors and comb which the boy can then pass to his father. *Historia Brittonum* [*History of the Britons*]. 25 Feb. 2006. 19 May 2010, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1972/1972-h/1972-h.htm.

[24] Literally, 'man' son of 'mother': probably the euhemerized Romano-Celtic god Maponus, son of Matrona. Maponus is "the god… above all, of the ritual hunt" (Dimitri Boekehoorn. *Bestiaire mythique, légendaire et merveilleux dans la tradition celtique : de la littérature orale à la littérature écrite (Mythical, legendary and supernatural bestiary in Celtic tradition: from oral to written literature)*. PhD Thesis. Rennes and Cork, Université Rennes 2 Haute Bretagne CRBC – Rennes 2, and University College Cork, 2008. 18 May 2010, http://hal.inria.fr/-docs/00/29/38/74/PDF/theseBoekhoorn.pdf,



p. 147, my translation). Citing "Classical writers", David Jones identifies this deity with Apollo. David Jones. *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (1974). London, 1995, p. 55, n.1.

[25] Though once the hunt begins in earnest the time-frame is not explicit, the vast distances covered, the speed of the boar, and his ambiguous end all consolidate a supernatural if not divine interpretation.

[26] The Erymanthian boar is raised from water, Twrch returns to it after crossing it several times. In these examples there is no doubt that the boar is a creature of water. The parallel creatures in the Irish tradition are Torc Tríath/ Orc Tríath; both *torc*/*orc* and *tríath* can signify either 'boar' or 'lord', but as Boekehoorn also points out, *tríath* can also signify "mer, vague" ("sea, wave") (*Bestiare mythique*, p. 273, n.1604).

[27] All the poem numbers cited for Dafydd refer to those used on the Dafydd ap Gwilym project website.

[28] *Gwaith Dafydd Ap Gwilym* [Works of Dafydd ap Gwilym]. The Welsh Department of Swansea University. 16 May 2010, http://www.dafyddapgwilym.net/eng/3win.htm.

[29] "*Gwrach heinus ddolorus ddig*", where 'ch' is [x], and 'dd' is [ð]

[30] "*Lloches lle'r ymolches moch"*: / xəs e r əmlxəs m x/.

[31] In Celtic myth, both Arawn and Gwyn ap Nudd are Lords or Kings of *Annwfn*. According to *Culhwch ac Olwen*, Gwyn is the one "in whom God has set the energy of the demons of Annwyvn" (*Mabinogion*, p. 159).

[32] There is one species of fox in Britain – the Red Fox. In poem 68 the troublesome dog is also red. Directly translated, the Welsh "*Yn eiste fal dinastwrch*" means "sitting like a city-boar".

[33] Mircea Eliade. *Images and Symbols* (1952). New Jersey, 1991, p. 37, 53. Furthering the boar-water link we may note that the euhemerized Brythonic god-king Bladud, father of Lear, is according to Boekhoorn associated with swine (*Bestiaire mythique*, p. 275). Geoffrey of Monmouth relates how Bladud founded the baths of *Aquaue Sulis* (i.e. Bath) (*History*, p. 80), and Boekhoorn tells us that this location was "the centre of the island of Britain, which was itself the centre of the world. This cosmological tradition implies that there existed at the centre of the world, at Bath, an entrance to the otherworld" (*Bestiaire mythique*, p. 275-276, my translation).

[34] Gaston Bachelard. *Earth and Reveries of Will* (1943), Dallas, 2002.

[35] 'A Note of Introduction'. In David Jones, *In Parenthesis* (1937). New York, 2003, p. viii.

[36] By this I mean that I believe Jones here provides a concrete-poetic image of a specific terrain under specific weather conditions – quite literally a landscape drawing.

[37] Jones identifies the boar as Twrch in a note to *The Hunt* (*Sleeping Lord*, p. 69 n. 1).

[38] David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (1974), London, 1995, p. 67.

[39] See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Boston, Beacon Press, 1992, p.185.

[40] "[T]his very force implies the presence of hard matter which hardens while twisting" (*Earth*, p. 51).

[41] On the cold hardness of stone and it's ability to condense water from the air see Bachelard, *Earth and Reveries of Will* (p. 178 n. 42).

[42] Luke 23:45-46: "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst".

[43] Written in 1966-1967.

[44] This is rather baldly put; interested readers are referred to Jones' essays, especially those in section 2 of *Epoch and Artist* (David Jones. *Epoch and Artist* (1959). London, 2008, p. 85-185).

[45] Jones was of course fully aware not only of the centrality of the tree in Christian symbolism, but also of European tree mythology more generally. In a 1949 letter he says, "the Yggdrasil of Northern mythology, the great tree with its roots far in the earth and its flowers in heaven no doubt comes into the picture – *for all these things are one thing in some sense*" (Dai, p. 152, my emphasis).

[46] *Onnen* = ash tree, *llwyn* = grove.

[47] I do not mean prosaic, for Jones' diction is poetic throughout; rather, I mean text in which line lengths and breaks conform to the standards of prose.

[48] Jones would have probably considered this type of home a sacramentally modified element of the forest. As Jones tells us, *pentan* means hearth (*Sleeping Lord*, p. 90, n. 2).

[49] Which, despite the absence of fire in Jones' portrayal of the boar at this point, recalls the colliding clouds in Ovid's account of the Calydonian boar (*Metamorphoses* p. 181, line 338).

[50] "*Pen-y-fal"*. The Welsh *pen* means 'head'. As in English, in addition to the part of the body this denotes both 'apex' (as of a hill) and chief.

[51] "the eighteen twilights/ and the ten midnights/ and the equal light of the nine mid-mornings/ were equally lit/ with the light of the saviour's fury/ and the dark fires of the hog's eye" (*Sleeping Lord*, p. 92).

[52] This resembles the ridges above the valley of Llanthony, where Jones spent formative years in Eric Gill's idealistic community of Catholic artists, though Jones certainly has in mind the ridges above the industrial valleys of the Taff and Rhymney, etc. In any case, and speaking of such "petrifying reveries", the more important point is that, as Bachelard says, in the poet who can "reinvest such images with freshness and novelty, we recognize that the literary imagination has a truly primary function" (*Earth*, p. 173).

[53] Here it seems worth remembering that Medusa was a wronged mortal, and was further victimized as a result of the initial wrong done to her. In view of the fact that for the Celts the boar was symbolic of courage and lordship, we may conclude that we do not have 'rock solid' evidence that Twrch is not also a victim of such an injustice.