

The Heroic Tradition of Kei

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In the Welsh tradition Kei is and remains one of the leading heroes of the Arthurian court from its earliest appearance in literature. He and his inseparable companion Bedwyr are two of Arthur's closest and most loyal followers, who can on occasion outshine Arthur himself. This tradition survived into non-Celtic literature in a rather diminished form in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace, who both predate Chrétien de Troyes, and in the Anglo-Saxon poet Layamon who is writing after Chrétien but seems to be uninfluenced by him. After Layamon the tradition survives in Bardic poetry, but on the continent and in the romances influenced by continental writers Kei rapidly deteriorates into an unpleasant, or worse, seneschal who is often the object of ridicule on the part of the court or the author.

Kei's role as a mighty hero is apparent in the earliest Welsh sources. Thus in *Pa gur yw y porthaur* (What man is the gatekeeper), which is contained in the Black Book of Carmarthen and probably dates from the tenth or eleventh century¹ Kei is eulogised by Arthur when Glewlwyd Gavaelwawr refuses entry to the pair of them. This may be a literary device to give Arthur the occasion to praise Kei or it may represent a tradition in which Arthur and Glewlwyd were enemies in spite of their association in *Culhwch and Olwen*, but in either case the result is the same. Kei is praised as one of the great, if not the greatest, hero of Arthur's warriors.

Cai entreated them
as he hewed them down by threes.
When Celli was lost, men endured cruelty,
Cei mocked them as he cut them down -
Arthur, though he was laughing (?).
the blood was flowing.
In the hall of Awarnach

fighting with a hag.
 He smote the chief (or head) of Palach
 in the settlements of Dissethach,
 on the mountains of Eidyn
 he fought with the 'Dog-heads'.
 They fell by the hundred,
 by the hundred they fell
 before Bedwyr Strong Sinew (?);
 on the banks of Tryfrwyd
 fighting with Garwlwyd.
 Furious was his nature
 with shield and sword.
 A host was futile
 compared with Cai in battle.
 He was a blade in battle,
 to his hand (hostages) were delivered ...
 Before the kings of Emrys
 I saw Cai hurrying.
 He carried away booty
 the 'long man' was hostile (?).
 Heavy was his vengeance,
 fierce was his anger.
 When he drank from a buffalo-horn
 it was for four that he drank;
 when he would come into battle
 by the hundred he would slay.
 Unless it were God who should cause it
 the death of Cai were impossible.
 Cai the fair and Llachau
 they made slaughter.
 Before the pang (i.e. 'death?') from blue spears
 on the heights of Ystafinion
 Cai killed nine witches.
 Cai the fair went to Môn
 to destroy hosts (or 'lions?').
 His shield was a fragment (?)
 Against Palug's Cat.
 When people ask
 'Who killed Palug's Cat?'
 Nine score fierce (warriors) would fall as her food,

Nine score champions ...²

Even if allowance is made for poetic exaggeration, in this fragment Kei is the leading warrior capable of an immense slaughter. He is worth an army in himself and is so nearly invincible that only God can bring about his death. He can defeat the supernatural represented by the nine witches, and it seems that he was the conqueror of Palug's Cat, an adventure which is transferred in later, continental literature to Arthur.³ The poem is so fragmentary and the language so stylised that Kei is 'a mythical monster-slaying hero, with little reality about him'.⁴ Nevertheless it is clear from this poem that Kei is one of the great heroes whom Arthur himself admires and with whom he is on the closest terms.

Many of these features are still present in the slightly later *Culhwch and Olwen*⁵ where Kei and Bedwyr are the first named of Arthur's warriors by Culhwch when he calls on Arthur to get him Olwen for his bride. Culhwch has been well received at court by Arthur, who is his cousin, despite the fact that he has had to break with custom to welcome the young man in, as Culhwch in fact arrived after the gates had been shut and Glewlwyd would have preferred not to admit him. His description of Culhwch is such that Arthur orders his immediate admittance, but Kei disapproves. 'Quoth Cei: "By the hand of my friend, if my counsel were acted upon, the laws of court would not be broken for his sake." "Not so, fair Cei. We are noble men so long as we are resorted to. The greater the bounty we show, all the greater will be our nobility and our fame and our glory." ' (p.99)⁶ This is the scene in which Loomis saw the seeds of the disagreeable nature of Kei which became so important in French romance.⁷ This is surely to attach too much significance to this episode. The aim of the author is to highlight the generous, spontaneous nature of Arthur who is not to be bound by a slavish adherence to protocol. To achieve this a foil is necessary, and the choice falls upon Arthur's leading warrior who can see no reason to make an exception to the rules for this untried young man. There is nothing here to suggest to Kei is either spiteful or evil, and as the rest of the tale goes on to show, he has many other qualities. 'Cei, however, is hardly recognisable as the disagreeable character of later romance; he displays, it must be admitted, a grudging hospitality when Culhwch seeks entrance to Arthur's hall, as Sir Kay does also on similar occasions; but his prowess is far from contemptible, and

he possesses several remarkable properties (*cynheddfau*), among them the ability to grow to the height of the tallest tree and to provide heat for his comrades in cold weather.⁸

These properties show how close Kei is to the Kei of the Black Book of Carmarthen. He is the son of Cynyr⁹ who had told his wife about their son; 'If there be anything of me in thy son, maiden, cold will his heart be ever, and there will be no warmth in his hands. Another peculiarity will be on him; if he is my son, headstrong will he be. Another peculiarity will be on him; when he carries a burden, be it great or small, it will never be seen, neither from in front nor from behind. Another peculiarity will be on him; none will endure water and fire so well as he. Another peculiarity will be on him; there will be no servant or officer like to him.' (p.103) With these attributes he fits well into the magical atmosphere of *Culhwch and Olwen* with its talking beasts and shape-shifters, of whom Kei is or was probably one, given that he can increase his height at will. He may in fact be connected to a solar deity in some remote past as he has unexpected reserves of heat. 'Cei had this peculiarity, nine nights and nine days his breath lasted under water, nine nights and nine days would he be without sleep. A wound from Cei's sword no physician might heal. A wondrous gift had Cei; when it pleased him he would be as tall as the tallest tree in the forest. Another peculiarity had he; when the rain was heaviest, a handbreadth before his hand and another behind his hand what would be in his hand would be dry, by reason of the greatness of his heat; and when the cold was hardest on his comrades, that would be to them kindling to light a fire.' (p.107)

Cold-hearted and grim Kei may be, as his behaviour at the arrival of Culhwch suggests, but he is loyal to Arthur. After a year Culhwch is still without his boon and threatens to leave Arthur's court and thus destroy its honour. It is Kei who intervenes, promising that he and Culhwch will not be separated until Olwen is found or shown not to exist. Bedwyr never shrinks from an adventure on which Kei is bound so that he accompanies them, and Arthur nominates Cynddylig the Guide, Gwrhyr Interpreter of Tongues and Gwalchmei and Menw to go with them. Kei has to take the lead, as Gwrhyr has sworn to go only as far as Kei does, a challenge to which Kei immediately responds. His courage and a certain grim humour emerge when the giant Custennin's wife runs out to embrace them. Kei quickly thrusts a log into her arms which she twists out of shape. 'Quoth Cei; "Woman, had it been I thou didst squeeze in this wise, there were no

need for another to love me ever. An ill love that!" (p.110). Cei again takes the lead in the attack on the fortress of Wnach, gaining entry with his craft as a sword-furbisher, arranging the entry of Bedwyr and then taking his chance to slay Wnach. Kei and Gwrhwr ride on the salmon to find out where the prison of Mabon is and then Kei and Bedwyr return to the fortress on the shoulders of the fish to launch a rear-attack while Arthur attacks from the front. Kei breaks through the wall and rescues Mabon on his back and still fights off the enemy. Kei and Bedwyr perform yet another of the tasks laid on Culhwch, for it is they who discover Dillus, and Kei who works out how to capture him alive so that his beard can be plucked to make the leash needed for Drudwyn the whelp of Greid. As Dillus is 'the mightiest warrior that ever fled from Arthur' (p.127), this is no easy task, but Kei accomplishes it and hands the lead to Arthur. Suddenly events turn sour, for Arthur sings an englyn;

Cei made a leash
From Dillus' beard, son of Eurei.
Were he alive, thy death he'd be. (p.128).

Kei is so angry that the other warriors have difficulty in making peace between him and Arthur but thereafter Kei has nothing to do with Arthur whatever his need. He disappears from the rest of *Culhwch and Olwen* as does Bedwyr.

Arthur comes badly out of this little scene. A misplaced sense of humour or gross tactlessness causes him to estrange a warrior who has performed marvels in his service and without whose aid Culhwch would certainly have left Arthur's court with his boon ungranted and the court thereby dishonoured. Whether or not this scene is the basis for the feud in French romance between Kei and Arthur, as Bromwich suggests,¹⁰ Arthur is to blame here and the author makes no attempt to disguise it. Kei is shown as the injured party, which makes it perhaps less probable that this scene is the source of the tradition in the French romance where Kei is so clearly the villainous aggressor and Arthur the long-suffering victim. Despite their quarrel Arthur avenges Kei when he is killed by Gwyddawg, son of Menestyr, suggesting that the ill-feeling was largely on the side of Kei. Arthur kills Gwyddawg and his brothers (p.104) but this is included only as an aside in the catalogue of names and again too much importance should not be attached to it.

In spite of this qualification Kei emerges from *Culhwch* and *Olwen* as a more formidable warrior and hero than Arthur himself. He still has supernatural properties and although he is a grim, cold-hearted person, he is courageous, faithful and can inspire others. There can be no denying the closeness of this picture to that of the Black Book of Carmarthen.

In the triads, which are probably of a later date, although they contain very ancient material,¹¹ there is relatively little evidence about Kei. He appears in 21, 26, 42 and 46a.¹² The last two are concerned with his horses, but in 21 he is described as *taleithyavc*, which seems to mean a man who wore a mark of distinction in battle, as a leading champion, perhaps to attract the attention of the enemy.¹³ He is linked with two other important early Arthurian figures, Drystan son of Tallwch and Hueil son of Caw, while a fourth is added, Bedwyr son of Bedrawc, indicating perhaps the difficulty of separating Kei and Bedwyr in Welsh tradition. They are also linked in triad 26 where they join Arthur and March in attempting vainly to cheat Drystan who is guarding the pigs while the swineherd goes to Essyllt with a message.

What evidence there is from the triads then, confirms the closeness of the link between Kei and Bedwyr on the one hand and Kei and Arthur on the other. Kei's importance as a leading military hero is also suggested, and there is nothing to his discredit.

The same can be said, rather more surprisingly, of the saints' lives in which he appears and which, although written in Latin, do reflect the precontinental Arthurian traditions. These stories reflect a different view of Arthur who does not appear as the great warrior and hero of Welsh court poetry and prose. Rather he is 'a foreign, lowland enemy, cruel, lascivious and fearful',¹⁴ and this is the view of the church which clearly had no great love for warlords. There may also be a social element in this decrying of Arthur. 'The stories of the detestable Arthur, the national enemy reflect the outlook of humbler folk, who had no love for kings and lords, warriors and rulers. They are preserved only in the Saints' Lives, for the early monastic leaders also quarrelled with kings, and many of the monks themselves came from humble homes, in later centuries as in the 6th century ... The monastic tradition picked up and perpetuated a viewpoint that it found in the world around it, a plebeian tradition of deep-rooted local resentment against the suzerainty that Arthur powerfully and successfully asserted over the peoples of the highlands of Britain.'¹⁵

Whether or not one subscribes to all the ideas quoted above, it is clear that the church fostered and continued a tradition that was critical of Arthur, but what is surprising is that the disfavour with which Arthur is viewed does not necessarily fall upon his followers such as Kei, who appears in the *Vita Cadoci* by Lifric of Llancarvan and possibly in the *Vita Carantoci*. Both *Vitae* date from the late eleventh century. The aim of Lifric is to glorify St Cadoc at the expense of Arthur who is first shown gambling with Kei and Bedwyr on a hill-top when Gwynlliw, the saint's father, passes, eloping with the daughter of the King of Brecon. Arthur is overcome with lust for the princess but Kei and Bedwyr protest, reminding him of their duty to succour the weak and he gives way.¹⁶ Later Kei and Bedwyr drive the cattle which the saint has enchanted to meet Arthur's terms for settling a blood feud. As the cows reach the far bank of a ford, they turn into bunches of fern and Arthur's pride is humbled. Kei's role is very minor in all this but there is no criticism of him and with Bedwyr he is shown to have a much nicer nature than Arthur. Even if the prologue in which this episode occurs is a later addition, as Chambers hints,¹⁷ it still shows that the favourable tradition for Kei was alive in south Wales.

Arthur's relations with St Carannog were not nearly so tense as with St Cadoc and in this *Vita* he is linked with Cato as the joint rulers of Dindraithov which is probably in Dumnonia. Cato may be the Latin for Kei (although Caius from which the name may be derived would be more usual¹⁸) but the name could also refer to Cadwy the son of Gereint.¹⁹ Whichever it is, he has a very subordinate role in the story, which is primarily concerned with the success of the saint in controlling a heaven-sent serpent in return for which Arthur restores to him his altar. There is no conflict between the secular and the religious in this *Vita*, although the superiority of the saint is clearly established, and Cato is presented as a passive and neutral figure.

Rather later than the lives of the saints is *Rhonabwy's Dream*,²⁰ which is probably early thirteenth century, although the material on which its writer draws is presumably older. In it the heroic tradition is as strong as ever. Kei's first appearance is as an unnamed warrior '... coming with mail upon him and his horse, and its rings as white as the whitest water lily and its rivets red as the reddest blood ...' (p.144). Rhonabwy naively asks if the host of Arthur is fleeing before him and is sharply told that the host of Arthur never fled, but that the chaos is caused by the excitement at the arrival of Kei. 'The

rider thou seest yonder is Cei. The fairest man who rides in Arthur's court is Cei. And the man on the flank of the host is hurrying back to the centre to look on Cei riding and the man in the centre is fleeing to the flank lest he be hurt by the horse' (p.144). Kei has no real role in this tale where the main focus of interest is the game between Arthur and Owein but right at the end of the dream, when a truce is arranged between Arthur and Osla Big-Knife, Kei gives Arthur's followers their orders. 'And then Cei arose and said, "Whoever wishes to follow Arthur, let him be with him tonight in Cornwall; and as for him who does not wish that, let him come to meet with Arthur by the end of the truce"' (p.152). The impression created by these brief references is that Kei was the outstanding warrior in Arthur's following and, moreover, had a position of authority in it. As part of the purpose of the author of the *Dream* is to contrast the weakness and ineffectual nature of Rhonabwy and his contemporaries with the heroes of the past (the glorification of Kei makes clear that he is a very splendid and mighty figure indeed), 'God prosper thee,' said Arthur. 'Where, Iddawg, didst thou find those little fellows?' 'I found them, lord, away up on the road.' The emperor smiled wryly. 'Lord,' said Iddawg, 'at what art thou laughing?' 'Iddawg,' said Arthur, 'I am not laughing; but rather how sad I feel that men as mean as these keep this Island, after men as fine as those that kept it of yore.' (p.141).

The Welsh influence is still strong in the *Historia Regum Britanniae* of Geoffrey of Monmouth written about 1140 or slightly earlier. The main change is that Kei is now clearly losing prestige to Arthur. As Geoffrey is concerned to magnify the role of the king at the expense of his lords, Arthur is shown as a dominant leader, unchallenged in both war and peace as the central figure in a powerful court, who can be overthrown only by treachery. In such circumstances it is inevitable that Kei and Bedwyr are diminished in comparison, although it is clear that they are still Arthur's chosen companions and two of the great warriors of his court.²¹ They are the knights Arthur chooses to accompany him when he goes secretly to fight the giant who has abducted the niece of Hoel of Brittany. Although they play no active part in the fight, at Arthur's express command, this is a mark of honour and shows that in Geoffrey's eyes they were still close to him. It is in Geoffrey that Kei first becomes the seneschal of Arthur's court, the office which he will hold henceforth, while Bedwyr is the butler. Kei is rewarded with Anjou when Gaul has been conquered and has, of course, a prominent role in

the ceremonies at the coronation but all this is purely formal. The feature of Kei which is most obvious in Geoffrey is his devotion to Bedwyr, shown in the battle at Soissie where Kei is fatally wounded rescuing the corpse of Bedwyr from the enemy. Despite his wounds Kei routs the Medes, thus avenging the death of Bedwyr, and escapes from the King of Libya, who leads the next wave of the enemy attack. He dies in his own city of Chinon and, although Geoffrey devotes relatively little attention to him and never attempts to bring him to life, it is clear that for Geoffrey his reputation is quite unsullied. He is still a great warrior and a respected if secondary member of the Arthurian circle.

Geoffrey's translator, Wace, adds his own touches to Kei which bring out both the closeness of Kei to Arthur and the great mutual affection between Kei and Bedwyr. To Wace Kei is '*un chevalier preu et leial*' (1611-12),²² which are conventional enough epithets but there was no need to insert them unless the poet wished to make the point that Kei was a worthy knight. The close links between Kei and Bedwyr on the one hand and Arthur on the other are brought out a few lines later, '*Cil dui erent molt si feoil. / Et savoient tot son conseil*' (1619-20). Whereas in Geoffrey they shared the command of a squadron, in Wace each leads his own squadron, and Wace emphasises their effectiveness as warriors. '*Quel seneschal quel botellier ... Molt orent fet et plus feissent ...*' (4033-36). They fight without heed for the danger and their very strength and courage are their undoing. They advance too far and are exposed to the Medes who kill Bedwyr. Inspired by his love for Bedwyr Kei defends his body fiercely, driving the Medes from the field, but is then in turn attacked and fatally wounded by the King of Libya. In spite of this Kei is able to carry both Bedwyr's corpse and Arthur's Dragon standard from the field leaving the task of vengeance to Bedwyr's nephew Hiresgas. As in Geoffrey Kei dies at Chinon, his reputation intact, indeed strengthened in Wace's poem, for Wace has created a picture of moving friendship between the two Celtic heroes, now transformed into twelfth-century knights. Kei remains in the second rank of Arthurian figures, but he is faithful, fierce and wholly exempt from any hint of criticism or disparagement.²³

It is not surprising that the English priest Layamon should continue this favourable treatment of Kei as he translates Wace's text, although adding to it much that is his own and drawing on folk-tales that were presumably circulating in the Welsh Marches where he

lived. Where Kei is concerned, he makes one significant addition to Wace. Kei is not only the king's steward, he is also his relation (*maei*), which further increases Kei's status. Once more he and Bedwyr are linked following Walwain, Angel, Loth, Urien and Ywain in Arthur's host against Frolle (11887).²⁴ He is given Anjou for his good deeds (12056) and is one of the twelve earls ruling France who come to Arthur's coronation. He is a very important person 'pe stiward com steppen. Pe Kaey wes ihaten. / haext cnichton londe. under pan kinge.' (12269-70) (... then came stepping the steward, who was named Kay, highest knight in the land under the king ...). His kinship with the king is mentioned twice during the expedition against the giant and once again he is in command of one of the squadrons in the great battle against the Romans. Unlike Wace where the battle is even at the moment when Kei and Bedwyr intervene, Layamon makes his heroes stem the rout of the Britons but again they advance too far and Bedwyr is slain. The close affection between Kei and Bedwyr is not mentioned at this point, but perhaps Layamon felt that it went without saying, as Kei recovers the corpse of his friend before being fatally wounded by Sator of Libya. His knights carried Kei from the battle and the poet comments 'Wa wes Ardure kinge. for pa tigingē.' (13771) (Woe was to Arthur the king for the tiding). Kei and Bedwyr are the first named on Arthur's roll-call of the dead, and Layamon shifts Kei's burial to Caen, the town which he says is named after him. His confusion about the names of distant French towns, probably unfamiliar to him, is easy to understand.

In Layamon's lengthy poem Kei has a relatively small role, but it is quite a distinguished one. He is the steward of Arthur, his trusted follower and a member of his kindred. He ranks among the leaders of the army and his loss is seen as a grievous blow to the King. Despite the fact that he was writing some years after Chrétien had introduced a new interpretation of Kei's role in the Arthurian legend, Layamon remains true to the heroic interpretation of the Celts even though the role of the hero is considerably reduced. With Layamon the heroic tradition in non-Celtic languages comes to an end, since Kei will appear as hero only occasionally in romances which are nevertheless part of the mainstream continental tradition.

The bardic tradition in Wales continues to present Kei in a favourable light.²⁵ Drawing on their poetic predecessors they refer to Kei's wisdom and his might in battle. This, however, seems to be the last flicker of the oldest tradition, although there is a poetic fragment

surviving in two late manuscripts which contains a discussion between Gwenhwyfar and Melvas and a third speaker who may be Arthur or Kei. The material is much older, perhaps eleventh century,²⁶ and in it Gwenhwyfar boasts of Kei's valour as opposed to Melwas', but the fragment is too obscure to be very helpful. It seems, however, to be another shred of evidence for the heroic role of Kei in Welsh literature, which, as has been shown, survived in Romance and English literature in a diminished form, until the continental interpretation swept away into oblivion the Celtic champion and replaced him by the seneschal.

NOTES

¹ R. Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, Cardiff 1961, p.304.

² R. Barber, *The Figure of Arthur*, London 1972, pp.69-71. The translation is by Rachel Bromwich. Gwyn Jones, *Kings, Beasts and Heroes*, London 1972, pp.95-6, gives a very similar translation.

³ Bromwich, p.486.

⁴ Barber, p.72.

⁵ Barber, p.69, 'c.1080-1100'.

⁶ All references are to the translation by G. Jones and T. Jones, *The Mabinogion*, London 1966, pp.95-136.

⁷ R.S. Loomis, *Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes*, New York 1949, pp.154-55. Note, however, that J.D. Bruce, *The Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, Baltimore 1928, I. p.49 discusses the character of Kay in *Culhwch and Olwen* and does not see churlishness in it.

⁸ I.L. Foster, 'Culhwch and Olwen in Rhonabwy's Dream' in *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* edited by R.S. Loomis, Oxford 1959, p.34. (Henceforth ALMA). See also Gwyn Jones, p.96. 'Sir Kay the Seneschal is a boor and a buffoon, very much the discourteous fool. It is his role to give a rude welcome, muddle a quest, attack beyond his strength, and be knocked flat for his pains. He acts like some pallid and enfeebled understudy of Bricriu, Cúroi or northern Loki. But the earlier Cei is a towering, formidable figure, unconquerable by man or beast.'

⁹ Bromwich, p.304. 'Thus the combination *Cei mab Cynyr* "Path son of Way" corresponds with similar pairs in CO, in which name and patronymic are synonyms or near-synonyms, exx. *Drem vab Dremibidydd* "Sight son of Vision", *Nerth mab Cadarn* "Strength son of Strong", etc. Both names would represent borrowings from Irish and R.M. Jones compares with the Welsh *Cei* the name of the legendary

Irish lawgiver *Cai C  inbrethach* "Cai of fair judgement".

¹⁰ Bromwich, p.305. 'Yet another of the facets of the story of Cei which is developed fully in the Continental romances, but of which the germ is already found in CO is that of a feud between him and Arthur. This is indicated in the Welsh tale by Cei's response to the satirical *englyn* which Arthur is said to have composed on the occasion of Cei's slaughter of Dillus Varvawg.'

¹¹ R. Bromwich, 'The Welsh Triads' in *ALMA*, p.44.

¹² All references are to Bromwich.

¹³ Bromwich, p.37.

¹⁴ J. Morris, *The Age of Arthur*, London 1973, p.120.

¹⁵ Morris, p.123. An alternative interpretation is that the degrading of Arthur, who is forced to submit to the saints, was an attempt to increase the status of the saints - which would suggest that Arthur's reputation must have been high to make the attempt worthwhile. There would be no need to degrade his followers who are not essential to the process. I am grateful to my colleague Ian Lovecy for this suggestion.

¹⁶ E.K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, London 1966, p.243.

¹⁷ Chambers, p.81.

¹⁸ Bromwich, p.303.

¹⁹ Chambers, p.83. 'Cato is less likely to be Kei than Cadwy, son of Gereint.'

²⁰ See note 6. *Rhonabwy's Dream* is found at pp.137-52. Foster in *ALMA*, p.39.

²¹ R.H. Fletcher, *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, Boston 1906, revised by R.S. Loomis, New York 1966, pp.90-91. 'Arthur as hero has taken the place formerly occupied by more early-famed Kei and Bedwyr, who are here retrained in subordinate roles and are still represented as principals in the similar affair with Dillus Varvawg in the tale of *Kulhwch and Olwen*.' See also p.111 where Fletcher describes the Normanisation of Kei and Bedwyr.

²² Wace, *La Partie arthurienne du Roman de Brut de Wace*, edited by I. Arnold and M. Pelan, Paris 1962. All references are to his edition.

²³ G. Paris, *Histoire litt  raire de la France*, xxx, Paris 1888, p.51. 'Dans Gaufrei de Monmouth Caius est nomm   plusieurs fois avec   loge, et Wace en reproduisant ces passages y ajoute de nouvelles louanges qui prouvent qu'il ignorait la l  gende d  favorable bient  t form  e autour du s  n  chal.'

²⁴ Layamon, *Brut*, edited by G.L. Brook and R.F. Leslie, London 1963 and 1978, 2 volumes, Early English Texts Society 250 and 277. All references are to volume II of this edition. The translations are from

Wace and Layamon, *Arthurian Chronicles*, trans. E. Mason, introduction by G. Jones, London 1966.

²⁵ Bromwich, p.306.

²⁶ Barber, p.66. Mary Williams, 'An Early Ritual Poem in Welsh', *Speculum*, 13, 1938, 38-51 gives the text and a translation of this poem. She interpreted the poem as a ritual in which Melwas was the candidate seeking initiation into a mystery with Gwenhwyvar as the goddess and Cai as the hierophant or initiator. K.H. Jackson, 'Early Welsh Verse' in *ALMA*, p.18. 'The context is clearly the abduction of Gwenhwyfar by Melwas as told in Caradoc's *Vita Gildae* (before 1136) ... We may propose that in the Welsh poem Melwas comes to Arthur's court and seats himself below the salt; Arthur inquires who he is; he replies that he is Melwas from "Ynys Wydrin" ... Arthur says that he does not pour wine for a man who will not fight. There follows a dialogue, perhaps between Melwas and Gwenhwyfar, the latter speaking on behalf of Cai, or perhaps between Melwas and Cai with interventions by Gwenhwyfar, in which Melwas is pitted against Cai in a contest of boasting. Gwenhwyfar only partly recognises Melwas but thinks she has seen him before at his court in Devon ... this suggests that in the original story Arthur and Gwenhwyfar had visited Melwas's lands and he fell in love with her there. The poem ends with a challenge and fight between Melwas and Cai.'