

## NON, NONNA, NONNITA: CONFUSIONS OF GENDER IN BRYTHONIC HAGIONYMY

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### *Abstract*

According to tradition the name of the mother of St David is *Nonn*, in Latin *Nonna*, but the name appears first in the *Vita Sancti David* by Rhygyfarch ap Sulien (1056/7-1099) as *Nonnita*. It is generally supposed that this is to be derived from the shorter form of the name, though this has so far not been explained. It has been suggested from time to time (1) that *Nonn* should be considered not as the origin of *Nonnita* but as an abbreviation of it, (2) that *Nonn* is not a female but a male name and designates not David's mother but a companion of his, (3) that the name itself derives from a misunderstanding of a place-name. It is proposed to call all three of these suppositions in question, and in particular to demonstrate that *Nonn/Nonna* is a credible early Welsh personal name, and further to suggest how *Nonnita* may be derived from it. Though there is no conclusive proof that *Nonn* was the name of David's mother, the claim that it could not have been is erroneous.

That the mother of David, patron saint of Wales, was called *Non(n)*<sup>1</sup> is still commonly accepted. Hardly less well known is the bizarre story of his conception as a result of rape apparently instigated by divine providence, as related in the late eleventh-century Latin life by Rhygyfarch ap Sulien and in its later Welsh translation.<sup>2</sup> In the vernacular tradition, whether in the Welsh life or in place-names, in Cornwall and Brittany as well as Wales,<sup>3</sup> her name is indeed *Non*. But in the Latin, and in the late mediaeval Breton mystery play about her life, which

- 1 *Nonn* is the mediaeval, *Non* the modern spelling. For convenience and at the cost of some historical precision I use the latter.
- 2 See Richard Sharpe and John Reuben Davies, 'Rhygyfarch's *Life* of St David', in *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, ed. by J. Wyn Evans and Jonathan M. Wooding (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 107–55; *Buched Dewi o lawysgrif Llanstephan 27*, ed. by D. Simon Evans (Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1959).
- 3 The relevant names are *Altarnun* or *Altarnon*, Cornwall; *Dirinon*, Nord-Finistère; *Llan-non*, twice in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. A third *Llan-non* in Pembrokeshire has no church now attached to it; but one may formerly have existed. In the case of *Altarnun*, the unparalleled first element may suggest that what was supposed to be the saint's portable altar was once venerated there and that this was the main centre of her cult (so Doble, see n. 15 below); alternatively, Oliver J. Padel, 'Local Saints and Place-Names in Cornwall', in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Medieval West*, ed. by Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 303–60, at 315–16, suggests a prominent altar-shrine of the type discussed by John Crook, 'The Enshrinement of Local Saints in Francia and England', *ibid.*, pp. 190–224, at 196–210, cf. illustrations at 204–05.

relies heavily on Rhygyfarch's *Vita*, it is always *Nonnita*, and it has hitherto been tacitly assumed that this name is derived from the shorter form. However, in a recent study of her cult, which is also a critical survey of past scholarship, Dr Andrew Breeze has proposed<sup>4</sup> that, on the contrary, *Nonnita* is the original saint's name and that *Non* is 'best taken as a clipping or abbreviated form of *Nonnita* in late Latin sources, and thus hardly predating the eleventh century', and that where the shorter form appears in place-names it is 'an accretion due to Rhygyfarch or sources known to Rhygyfarch'.

Breeze's claim is questionable, for at least three reasons. In the first place, *Non* as an abbreviation of *Nonnita* is hard to accept in a mediaeval Welsh context. Early hypocoristic forms of Brythonic names are commonly, though not invariably, formed with an honorific prefix which in Welsh appears as *ty-*, or much less frequently *my-*<sup>5</sup> (corresponding to the equivalent Irish prefixes *to-*/*do-*, *mo-*, where conversely the latter predominates) added to a shortened or modified form of the name which may then be followed by a diminutive suffix, usually *-au* or *-auc* (modern Welsh *-o*, *-og*): thus Welsh *Teilo*, earlier *Teiliau*, from *Eliud*, *Tysilio* from *Silian* or *Suliau*; likewise Cornish *Tewennoc*, Breton *Tevennec* from *Winwaloe*, and so on.<sup>6</sup> In the later Middle Ages, saints' names go out of use as given names – Sulien, father of Rhygyfarch, seems a unique exception, and it is notable that *Dafydd* (presumably after the king) is found to the exclusion of *Dewi* – and the only evidence for hypocoristic forms depends on secular names, but, for what that is worth, the prefixes no longer appear, and abbreviation combined with a diminutive suffix becomes the rule; so, for example, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we find *Iolo* for *Iorwerth*, *Guto* for *Gruffudd*. The simple reduction of a name to its first syllable appears by contrast to be a modern phenomenon, under English influence, and not much in evidence before the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> English formations of this type indeed occur from the thirteenth century on;<sup>8</sup> these Middle English examples, however, are applied only to lower-class persons and thus carry disparaging overtones, so that, even on the unlikely assumption that the Welsh translator was influenced

4 Andrew Breeze, 'St David and the Cult of St Non', *Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 49 (2013), 5–15, at 7.

5 Often spelt, less correctly, with an *e*. In composition, they may appear in their mutated forms *-dy-*, *-fy-*, the vowel being sometimes elided.

6 See Rudolf Thurneysen, 'Zum Namentypus abret. *To-Woedoc*, air. *Do-Dimoc*', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 19 (1933), 354–67, Henry Lewis, 'The Honorific Prefixes *To-* and *Mo-*', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 20 (1936), 138–43, Gwynedd O. Pierce, *The Place-Names of Dinas Powis Hundred* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1968), pp. 111–15, Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd Owen, 'The Welsh Marginalia in the Lichfield Gospels. Part II: The 'Surexit' Memorandum', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 7 (Summer 1984), 91–120, at 107; Oliver J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, 56–57 (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1985), pp. 218–19.

7 Names such as *Twm* or *Ned* are clearly adopted directly from English rather than newly formed within Wales. It is unlikely that originally Welsh names were abbreviated in this way much before the end of the nineteenth century, when the growth of national consciousness made such names popular again after a long period of disuse.

8 See Elizabeth G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

by English onomastic practice, such an abbreviated form would have been wholly inappropriate to a saint. Secondly, the attestation of *Altrenune* about 1100<sup>9</sup> demonstrates that the form must have been in wide circulation well before Rhygyfarch was writing, and if the dedications in Cornwall and Brittany are really a product of a Latin source anterior to Rhygyfarch, they would be expected to embody the Latin form of the name, in practice some vernacular reflex of it,<sup>10</sup> rather than that represented only in the Welsh version, a text unlikely to have circulated or to have been understood outside Wales. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, Breeze's imprudently categorical claim that 'the vernacular form [*Non*] [...] cannot be ancient' appears unsustainable in the light of epigraphic evidence.

Holder gives instances of both *Nonnitos*, *-a* (with short *i*) and *Nonnos*, *-a*, classifying the former as diminutives.<sup>11</sup> He evidently regards the names as (in a broad sense) Gaulish, though the name NONNOΣ occurs frequently in the eastern Mediterranean in late antiquity<sup>12</sup> and thus may be thought of as Roman in a more general sense, even if its distribution appears discontinuous and we may have to do with two distinct formations. *Nonnus*, beside its widely dispersed occurrences in north-western continental Europe, is recorded three times in inscriptions from Roman Britain,<sup>13</sup> the most notable of them around the year 100, and though these are clearly far too early to provide positive corroboration for the existence of the name in the sixth century, when David is supposed to have lived, it could have persisted as a personal name *Nonnus* into the sub-Roman period; if so, it could easily have generated a feminine form *Nonna*, as it demonstrably did in continental Europe, even though not recorded in Britain. Vernacular *Non* thus appears possible in the sixth century as both a male and a female name. In favour of taking

- 9 See Eilert Ekwall, *Concise Dictionary of English Place-names*, 4th edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), s.n. Altarnun.
- 10 See below, p. 24, on a possible instance in *Pelynt*, Cornwall, where, however, as will be seen, the eponym is more probably a male *Nonnitus*.
- 11 Alfred Holder, *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1896–1904), pp. 758–59.
- 12 The instances may be found in Peter M. Fraser, Elaine Matthews *et al.*, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1987–2013); see also Wilhelm Pape, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, 3rd edn (Braunschweig: Vieweg und Sohn, 1911), 1015–16. They at least may be connected with *nónnoc* 'senior monk'; it is not clear that the same is true of the Celtic instances, whose etymology is otherwise uncertain; Holder connects *Nonna* with Welsh *nain* 'grandmother', explained by *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v., as <Br[y]th[onic] \**nani*, a children's word, cf. Greek *ναυνα* 'aunt', Sanskrit *nana* 'mother'. I am assured by Professor Jan Joosten (private communication) that, despite the superficial similarity of the name to that of Nun father of Joshua, *Novvoσ* is most unlikely to be Semitic.
- 13 See *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, i, ed. by Robin G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) p. 301<sup>b</sup>, no. 932 (Old Penrith, Cumberland); ii, fasc. 3, ed. by S.S. Frere and R.S.O. Tomlin (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1991), p. 11, no. 2421.46 (Kent); R.S.O. Tomlin and M.W.C. Hassall, 'Roman Britain in 2002. II. Inscriptions', *Britannia*, 34 (2003), 361–82, at 378, no. 39 (Vindolanda, Northumberland). Of the first and most important of these, Dr Tomlin, to whom I also owe the references in notes 23 and 25, writes, 'the boy's name [M. COCCEIVS NONNVS] means he is the son of a man enfranchised in the reign of Nerva (96–98); in Old Penrith most likely a discharged veteran of the local garrison, presumably the Second Cohort of Gauls. This would suggest he was himself a Gaul, unless actually recruited in Britain'.

it as female in this case is that this would account for the unusual motif of the conception of David as the result of rape: *Nonna* could easily have been equated with *nonna* ‘nun’, recorded in insular Latin from about 1000, current perhaps somewhat earlier, which would suggest rape as the only circumstance in which the saint could become pregnant while retaining her virtue and thus her potential for sanctity.<sup>14</sup> On this hypothesis the motif of rape would indeed be a late element in the construction of the legend, presumably a development in some earlier eleventh-century Latin material on which Rhygyfarch must have been drawing; but that is hardly a problem, since there is no independent evidence for it and so no reason to suppose it to be early. There is no reason, indeed, to suppose that David’s parents were not married.

If, on the other hand, as was suggested by Canon G. H. Doble,<sup>15</sup> now followed by Breeze, *Non* was originally a man, a companion of David rather than his mother,<sup>16</sup> we would need to assume an intermediate stage in the tradition, whereby at some point he came to be regarded as a woman. Confusions of sex are not unknown in hagiography, and there are other mother-son pairs, for example Augustine and Monica, or indeed Ciricus and Julitta, to whom the Cornish churches of Luxulyan and St Veep are now dedicated, which might have provided a model for the supposed reinterpretation of the name. But there is no obvious reason why this should have occurred in the case of David and Non, and the simpler development should probably be preferred.

Doble’s chief reason for supposing *Non* to have been originally male rather than female is the existence of the cult of a *St Nonna* at Penmarc’h, Sud-Finistère, who is indisputably male despite the feminine appearance of his name, and is indeed represented as a bishop, and the fact that this saint’s parish feast, like that of Altarnun, falls on 15 June. As has been argued, *Non* can also be a man’s name, and it is quite possible that this saint is in origin an exclusively Breton figure of that name, with no connexion to the mother of St David; but in that case it is strange that a name which had lost its original masculine termination should have been re-

- 14 See Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 622, for detailed discussion of the point and its complex theological ramifications. Professor Charles-Edwards notes (private communication) his earlier acceptance (*ibid.*) of the derivation of *Non* from *nonna*.
- 15 Gilbert H. Doble, *Saint Nonna, Patron of Altarnon and Pelynt* (Liskeard: Philip & Sons, 1928); reprinted, not very accurately, in *The Saints of Cornwall. Part Six: Saints of North Cornwall* (Felinfach: Llanerch Press, 1997), pp. 9–15. Charles Henderson, in an appendix to this pamphlet (p. 11; not in the reprint) is rather lukewarm in his commendation, writing that ‘there is much to be said for [Doble’s] contention’.
- 16 Dedications to the two occur in close proximity in Wales, where *Llanddewi Aberarth* is close to *Llan-non*, Cardiganshire; in Cornwall, where the parishes of *Davidstow* (the English name must have replaced an original Cornish one) and *Altarnun* are for a short distance contiguous; and in Brittany, where *Landivy* and *Dirinon* lie respectively north and south of Landerneau. Since there is no good reason to suppose (*pace* Rhygyfarch, §§ 13, 44–8) that either saint ever travelled outside Wales or indeed outside the south-western portion of it, the paired dedications in Cornwall and Brittany must indicate that their cults were transmitted in association; the same may be true of the Cardiganshire pairing, even though David’s origins were in that area. The existence of a chapel of St Non near St David’s is perhaps due to the influence of Rhygyfarch’s *Vita*, but an anterior tradition cannot be entirely ruled out.

formed with an apparently feminine one. A possible explanation is that the name is the result of a misdivision of some toponym incorporating that of the male St Onna, attested patron of the church of Logonna-Daoulas, Nord-Finistère,<sup>17</sup> or that these two originally distinct names were confused and conflated over time. The coincidence of feast-days could be the consequence of such confusion rather than proof of the original identity of the two saints; in any case, as Orme points out, the June date for the Altarnun feast is modern practice: ‘the earlier history of this date at Altarnun [...] is not clear’.<sup>18</sup>

The question of the gender of *Non* and *Nonnita* has been needlessly complicated by the well-known presence of the long form of the name on a mid- or late sixth-century inscribed stone built into the outer wall of Cuby church, Tregony, Cornwall. This inscription reads ‘NONNITA | ERCILIVI | RICATI TRIS FILI | ERCILINGI’, ‘[grave, monument, memory] of Nonnita, Ercilivus, Ricatus, three children of Ercilingus’.<sup>19</sup> Whoever was responsible for the wording evidently knew that names in *-us* conventionally terminate in *-i* in funerary inscriptions, where the genitive must originally have depended on some noun to be understood,<sup>20</sup> but there is no need to suppose him to have known that these were genitives, or indeed to have known what a genitive was, and the fact that *Nonnita*, like *tris filii*, appears in the nominative rather than as the formally correct *Nonnite*, is thus of no consequence. The suggestion that *Nonnita* is a highly archaic genitive of an Irish *t*-stem<sup>21</sup> is not credible. It has often been argued that *Nonnita* is a man’s name, on the mistaken assumption that *fili* must mean exclusively ‘sons’, and to take this as further evidence that Non too was a man; but, though many well-known masculine Latin *cognomina* belong to the first declension,<sup>22</sup> it does not follow that this particular name is masculine, and plural *fili* can and often does comprehend both male and female offspring.<sup>23</sup> More to the point, perhaps, is the objection that a female name would not be expected to come first of three when the others are male; against this it may be argued that the unusual co-occurrence of three names suggests that all three perished in quick succession, perhaps as a result of some such calamity as a

17 See Bernard Tanguy, ‘Les Cultes de Sainte Nonne et de Saint Divi en Bretagne’, in *Buez Santes Nonne. Vie de sainte Nonne. Mystère Breton*, ed. by Yves Le Berre, Bernard Tanguy and Yves-Pascal Castel (n.p. 1999), 10–31, trans. by Karen Jankulak as ‘The Cults of SS. Nonne and Divi in Brittany’ in *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, pp. 207–19, at 209–12. It must be conceded that Tanguy is sceptical of the proposed explanation.

18 Nicholas Orme, *The Saints of Cornwall* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 305<sup>b</sup>.

19 See Elizabeth Okasha, *Corpus of Early Christian Inscribed Stones of South-West Britain* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), pp. 299–301; Charles Thomas, *And Shall These Mute Stones Speak? Post-Roman Inscriptions in Western Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), pp. 283–84.

20 But not in all cases subsequently: the convention evidently became fossilised as case-inflexions became obsolete. For full discussion, see Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 97–112.

21 So Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, 4 vols (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1907–13), iv, p. 22 n. 1, cited without enthusiasm by Patrick Sims-Williams, *The Celtic Inscriptions of Britain: Phonology and Chronology, c. 400–1200* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 37, n. 92.

22 Breeze, p. 10a.

23 See, for example, *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, i, no. 188 (Dorchester, Dorset) ‘RVFINVS ET |[C]JARINA ET |AQVITA FILI EIVS’, and note 25, below.

plague,<sup>24</sup> and that *Nonnita* is mentioned first as having been the eldest, or the first to die.<sup>25</sup> There is no compelling reason to question the supposition that *Nonnita*, whether with short or long *i*, is in general a female name, whatever the relevance or otherwise of Holder's instances in the present context; even if it were male in the Cuby inscription, that would not rule it out as a female name elsewhere.

Further confusion arises from a related form underlying the name of the parish of Pelynt in South-Eastern Cornwall. This is recorded as *Plvnent* in 1086, in the notoriously garbled spelling of Domesday, while the eponym appears as *Sancti Nunit* in a document of 1442.<sup>26</sup> On the basis of these forms *Pelynt* can be understood as *\*Plu Nunit* or *\*Plu Nenit* 'parish of Nunnid', a Cornish reflex of *Nonnitus*. The same name occurs in place-names in Wales: *Eglwys Nynnid* 'church of Nynnid' in Margam, Glamorgan, *Hendre Nynnid* 'permanent settlement of Nynnid' in Llansannan, Denbighshire, and *Llanddewi Ystradenni*, Radnorshire, where the second element was formerly *Ystrad Nynnid* 'open valley of Nynnid'. The *i* in the final syllable confirms the long *i* in *Nonnitus*, since a short vowel would have given the more retracted vowel spelt *y*, conventionally called 'clear *y*'.<sup>27</sup> Since *Nonnita* presumably also had a long *i*, it would have the same reflexes as the masculine name.<sup>28</sup> But, as Melville Richards has shown, *Nynnid* appears always to be a man's name in Wales;<sup>29</sup> the Welsh instances should therefore be derived from *Nonnitus*. As to the eponym of Pelynt, William Worcestre notes about 1478–80<sup>30</sup> that one *Sanctus Juncus* lies in Pelynt church; this seemingly garbled name could be a misreading of *\*ninitus*,<sup>31</sup> a possible re-Latinisation of the Cornish reflex, with the loss of one minim and with minuscule short *t* misread as *c*, and if this were acceptable as evidence for the sex of the saint, it would rule

24 Such may be the implication of Charles Thomas's *obiter dictum* (*op. cit.*, p. 284) 'a poignant witness to some tragedy late in the sixth century'.

25 See *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin: Königlich-Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1861–), vi, 25894 'FILII EIVS SATRIA NICE ET SATRIUS PREPO', and viii, 3300, where a wife aged 40, a daughter aged 10 and a son aged 8 are named in that order. Neither of these inscriptions, it should be said, is British, but Dr Tomlin questions the existence of any convention that required the listing of male siblings before female.

26 Orme, p. 207<sup>a</sup>.

27 See John Morris-Jones, *A Welsh Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), §§6, 72; Henry Lewis, *Yr Elfen Ladin yn yr Iaith Gymraeg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1943), §§18, 35; Kenneth Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953) (= *LHEB*), §7(1). It follows either that Holder's instances represent a different formation, or that he has misidentified the quantity of the penultimate vowel.

28 A short *i*, as assumed by Holder, would have become *e* before following *a* by the process known as penultimate *a*-affection: see J. Morris Jones, *A Welsh Grammar*, §68.

29 Melville Richards, 'Nynnid', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 118 (1969), 144–5. NI(n)ID, in Victor H. Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1950), p. 71, no. 46, is not relevant here, even if it is the correct reading, since the final letter must stand for *δ*.

30 William Worcestre, *Itineraries*, ed. by John H. Harvey, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 106.

31 Dr Oliver Padel (private communication) suggests *\*Nintus*, which would fit with the form *Pelynt*, and adds that William Worcestre 'may have misread either a note he was given, or his own notes later'.

out *Nonnita* as eponym there as well.<sup>32</sup> Conversely, the patron saint of Pelynt is now supposed to be our *Nonna*, but this identification does not go back beyond the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> It seems, in fact, that *Nonnita* on the Cuby inscription, of whose existence Rhygyfarch could not have known, has no surviving vernacular reflex and is relevant to the patron of Pelynt only to the extent of suggesting a masculine equivalent from which his name can be derived, nor has she (or, if we so wish, he) anything to do with the *Nonnita* of Rhygyfarch, apart from confirming that such a name existed long before his time.

The existence of *Nonna* as a real name somewhat undermines the supposition that Non as mother of St David must be a purely fabricated figure, even if the sceptical historian may be disinclined to believe anything Rhygyfarch or any hagiographer says. According to Pádraig Ó Riain, ‘*Non* shows signs of having been invented with a view to fleshing out the story of Dewi’s birth and youth in Ceredigion’;<sup>34</sup> he suggests that the invention (as he sees it) of the name may have been influenced by the presence locally of a church named *Llan-non*, supposedly ‘church of Non’, which he views as a misinterpretation of \**Llan-onn* ‘church by the ash-trees’. This, however, appears implausible. Though there are many *llan*-names which incorporate a topographical element rather than a saint’s name (for example a river-name as in *Llan-dâf*, *Llanelwy*, *Llangefnî*, or a geographical feature as in *Llanrhaeadr* ‘church by the waterfall’), it is doubtful whether any other *llan*-name incorporates the name of a tree.<sup>35</sup> Ash-trees are so universal a feature of the Welsh landscape as to be a very unlikely determining element in a *llan*-name. It is much more likely that *Llan-non* conforms to the predominant pattern and contains a personal name, that of someone regarded as a saint, whether or not she was the mother of St David.

The traditions regarding Non’s parentage, first recorded in the fourteenth century though probably current earlier, are admittedly equivocal. In the pedigree of David copied in NLW MS Peniarth 12, f. 25<sup>r</sup> she is said to be the daughter

32 Breeze, p. 8<sup>a</sup>, recognises *Juncus* as a corruption of the saint’s name, but does not explain how that corruption occurred. His further speculations (10–13) on the identity or identities of this saint may be considered on their merits, but this is not the place to do so.

33 Orme, p. 206<sup>b</sup>.

34 Pádraig Ó Riain, ‘The Church in Cardiganshire in the Early Middle Ages’, in *Cardiganshire County History. Volume I: From the Earliest Times to the Coming of the Normans*, ed. by J.L. Davies and D.P. Kirby (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994), pp. 378–96.

35 Iwan Wmffre, *The Place-Names of Cardiganshire*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series, 379 (2004), p. 729, observes that ‘the three *Llanon* toponyms in existence would otherwise seem to be the only Welsh *llan* names qualified by the specific[ity] of the surrounding vegetation, except, perhaps, *Llansbyddaid* “church of the hawthorn-trees” (Brecknockshire); and the latter name is itself interpreted as incorporating a personal name by Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2007) (= *DPNW*), s.vv. *Llanspyddid*, *Llansbyddydd*. The presence of a saint’s name disqualifies *Llandeilo Graban* ‘St Teilo’s church of the corn-marigolds’ and *Llanfihangel Helygen* ‘St Michael’s church of the willow’ (both Radnorshire) or *Llanfihangel-y-fedw* ‘St Michael’s church of the birch-trees’ (Monmouthshire) as parallels, though Wmffre might also have cited *Llanrug* (Caernarfonshire), perhaps ‘church in the heather’. Professor Michael Herren, in the discussion of this paper, cited a clear Irish instance in *Kildare* (*Cill Dara*, earlier *Cell Dara*, *Cell Daro*), but Welsh and Cornish parallels remain elusive.

of Kenyr (≡Cynyr) of Caer Gawch,<sup>36</sup> as D. Simon Evans observes,<sup>37</sup> this may represent Irish *Conaire*, which is historically plausible as being consistent with the extensive Irish settlement in South-Western Wales at the time. On the other hand it is also claimed in NLW MS Mostyn 117. 6. that her mother was Anna daughter of Uthr Pendragon,<sup>38</sup> which would make her the niece of the legendary Arthur, and this must arouse suspicion. There is indeed some slender evidence for a legendary tradition of Uthr independent of Geoffrey of Monmouth,<sup>39</sup> but it is only in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in his capacity as father of Arthur, that he attains any importance, and, as with so many of Geoffrey's characters, there is no guarantee that such a person ever existed. Moreover, it is only in the *Historia* that his supposed daughter Anna first makes an appearance.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore likely that the account of Non's mother is a post-Galfridian fabrication designed to provide her with a more distinguished ancestry than she would otherwise have had, and perhaps, given that the grandmother of Jesus Christ was also named Anna, to enhance the account of David himself by association.<sup>41</sup> This need not invalidate the identification of Non's father, which may still be a genuine old tradition, but it is a salutary reminder that the most common purpose of genealogies is to give an account of descent through

- 36 See Peter C. Bartrum, ed., *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966) (= *EWGT*), pp. 54–55.
- 37 D. Simon Evans, *The Welsh Life of St David* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), p. 21.
- 38 Bartrum, *EWGT*, p. 39.
- 39 See the poem 'Pa wr yw'r porthor?' ed. Brynley F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd cyfwynedig i Syr Idris Foster*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich and R. Brinley Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 281–325, at 300–02, lines 13–14, where there is no suggestion that he was Arthur's father; and two other poems, the fragmentary *Mad[awc] Drut*, ed. by Marged Haycock, in *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 2007), pp. 461–62, and *Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr*, ed. by Marged Haycock, *Blodeugerdd Barddas o Ganu Crefyddol Cynnar* (Llandybïe: Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, 1994), pp. 297–312, stanzas 6–9, which together identify Arthur's nephew as Uthr's grandson. These allusions are briefly discussed by Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 33–71, at 53–54; see also Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, 4th edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 61, 512–13, and A.O.H. Jarman in *Llên Cymru*, 2 (1952–53), 127–28. But the supposition that these references represent an independent native tradition which identified Uthr as Arthur's father is questioned by Oliver J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 49, 92–93, on the grounds that the relevant texts are of uncertain date (and, by implication, may postdate Geoffrey).
- 40 See *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth. I: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS.568*, ed. by Neil Wright (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), cap. 157, *ad fin.* Confusingly, Geoffrey asserts (*ibid.*, cap. 138 *ad fin.*) that David was Arthur's uncle rather than the great-nephew suggested by the genealogies. Since there is no reason to think that he was either, this is no cause for concern in the present context, but it is hard to see how these contradictory accounts could have arisen, and this demands further investigation.
- 41 Similarly, David N. Dumville, *Saint David of Wales*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lectures in Mediaeval Welsh History, 1 (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2001), p. 25, has drawn attention to the Herodian parallel of the local tyrant of §6 and his plans to kill the infant David as presenting a threat to his power. The peculiar circumstances of David's birth, as if a nun were to be regarded as in some way equivalent to a virgin, might be thought to provide a further parallel, but this is less convincing.



the male line, and that incidental details such as maternal ancestry may be less reliable than the substantive pedigree.<sup>42</sup>

It remains to be explained how the name *Nonnita* arose. It is natural to connect the formation with the diminutive or hypocoristic suffixes *-ittu[s]*, *-itta*, which were popular in Western Romance,<sup>43</sup> *Julitta* being the most familiar in a British context, where she appears, with or without her son *Ciricus*, in a number of Cornish church dedications, though not necessarily as the original patroness in any of them and thus not necessarily early. In Western Europe these suffixes developed by normal phonetic processes, for example into the French diminutives in *-et*, *-ette*,<sup>44</sup> while a variant with lengthened *i* generated the still highly productive suffixes *-ito*, *-ita* in the Iberian peninsula.<sup>45</sup> Many such names are listed by Bengt Hasselrot in his monograph on Romance diminutives,<sup>46</sup> whether, as he supposes, the suffix is Celtic in origin is not clear, since he offers no etymology<sup>47</sup> even if their geographical distribution favours his conclusion. One *Nonnitus* indeed appears in the list as the name of a Merovingian moneyer.<sup>48</sup> British material, as represented by vernacular reflexes, is very thin on the ground: the best evidence is the name *Bryvyth*, Latin *Briveta*, for the patroness of Lanlivery, Cornwall, if those forms, which are very late, are genuine.<sup>49</sup> These names may suggest an anterior *\*Bryveth* or *\*Bryweth*, which would be a normal late sixth-century development of *\*Brivetta*, and that in turn of *\*Brivitta*.<sup>50</sup> In order to account for *Nonnita* (and the *Nonnitus* who appears in Welsh as *Nynnid* and whose name underlies *Plvnet*, *Pelynt*) we need only suppose that the simplification of geminated *t* in these suffixes typical of Spanish and Portuguese<sup>51</sup> had occurred (probably quite independently), together with the

42 They are not necessarily unimportant, however; see Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 172–75, where matrilineal ancestry may be important in determining or reinforcing status, as seen (pp. 220–04) in the case of Gruffudd ap Cynan, whose formal ineligibility to have regal status in Gwynedd is presumptively overridden by his Irish and Norse royal ancestry on his mother's side. This would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, in the case under discussion, even if, as argued above, the details may be fabricated.

43 See Walter D. Elcock, *The Romance Languages* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), p. 159 n.

44 Kristoffer Nyrop, *Grammaire historique de la langue française*, 6 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1904–30), §§ 131, 153, 252.

45 David Pharies, *Diccionario etimológico de los sufijos españoles* (Madrid: Gredos, 2002), p. 366, who suggests that the long vowel may have arisen under the influence of that in *-inus*, *-ina*. It may be added that analogical influence from the isolated (and etymologically masculine) *Margarita* seems unlikely.

46 Bengt Hasselrot, *Études sur la formation diminutive dans les langues romanes*, Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 11 (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1957).

47 As remarked by Pharies, *op. cit.*

48 Hasselrot, p. 38.

49 Orme, p. 76. The hypothesis that a diminutive or hypocoristic *\*An(n)ita* may be assumed in order to explain the name *Enid* (first proposed by Mary Williams, 'More about Bleddri', *Études Celtiques*, 2 [1937], 219–45, at 240), has not found general acceptance; for a more likely explanation, see Rachel Bromwich, 'Enit, Enide', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 17 (1956–58), 181–82, and her comments in the first edition of *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), p. 348.

50 See Jackson, *LHEB*, §§ 146–47, 152–54.

51 In this context cf. *Nonnitus* as bishop of Girona in 621 and the same name in Oviedo in 887 (Hasselrot, p. 36).

lengthening of the vowel, as a variant in Britain. The Cuby inscription demonstrates that this must have happened by the middle of the sixth century, the case of *Bryvyth* suggests that the change was not universal.

To sum up: it appears that *Nonna* is the original British or Roman name, of which *Non* is the Welsh form, and that *Nonnita* is a derivative, whether diminutive, as Holder suggests, or hypocoristic. The two names may have been perceived as alternatives from the very beginning, when they are first recorded in inscriptions, so that anyone called *Nonna* could at any time as a matter of course be called *Nonnita*.<sup>52</sup> Such may be the case with our saint, while the use of the hypocoristic or diminutive *Nonnita* on the Cuby inscription may seem particularly apposite if, as suggested, the inscription commemorates the death in quick succession of three children. Equally, so long as the suffix was current in this function, the hypocoristic form of the name could have re-emerged independently at more or less any time. Once applied to the supposed mother of St David, the doublet could have persisted in oral tradition down to the eleventh century, when Rhygyfarch, for whatever reason, will have opted for the more elaborate form of the name. It is even possible that the name was re-invented by Rhygyfarch himself, but, since there is no other evidence that *-ita* was a productive Latin suffix in eleventh-century Wales, that is unlikely.

Why, then, should Rhygyfarch have chosen to use the longer form of the name, given that he must have been familiar with the vernacular *Non* current in Ceredigion and the rest of Wales in his time? It is possible that he simply wished to avoid the ambiguity of *nonna* as a common noun meaning ‘nun’. This confusion, as already suggested, had probably generated a significant detail in the tradition, that of the monstrous *felix culpa* whereby David was conceived through a providential rape: a misinterpretation which Rhygyfarch himself clearly did not recognise as such, and which cannot have arisen much more than a hundred years before his time, for it is not until the early years of the eleventh century, in the work of the English homilist and polymath Ælfric, that the word is first recorded in Britain.<sup>53</sup> Again, as a careful stylist, Rhygyfarch may simply have preferred the rhythmic effect of a trisyllabic name. His stylistic concerns are already evident in that, in the body of the *Vita*, David is not only called thus rather than the vernacular *Dewi* (though that form is mentioned in the prologue), but his name is commonly extended to become *Davidagius*: this show of learning, while suggesting a knowledge of Greek which Rhygyfarch is most unlikely to have possessed, is not untypical of the frequent pretentiousness of insular Latin.<sup>54</sup> It certainly adds dignity, if only a factitious dignity, to his account of St David, and he may similarly have felt the need to enhance the significance of David’s mother by employing the more elaborate of the two Latin forms of her name available to him. If so, then a mere stylistic quirk

52 By way of an English parallel, the much less obvious equivalence of *Dick* and *Richard* has persisted unbroken for eight hundred years; see Withycombe, *Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, s.n..

53 See *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1975–2013), fasc. vii, prepared by D.R. Howlett, p. 1428, s.v. *nonna*.

54 *Agios* ‘holy’ would of course have been familiar to Rhygyfarch from its use in the Good Friday liturgy.

on the part of an eleventh-century hagiographer may have sent a succession of scholars off on a notable wild goose chase. And, all in all, whereas there can be no incontrovertible proof that David's mother was called Non, neither is there any good reason to argue that Non could not have been her name.<sup>55</sup>

### *Appendix: Sant*

The pedigree prefaced to the Welsh life of St David<sup>56</sup> begins as follows: 'Dewi uab Sant vab Keredic vab Kuneda', translating that appended to Rhygyfarch's *Vita* of about 1090: 'David fuit filius Sant. Sant filius Cheritic. Ceretic filius Cuneda', which, on the assumption that it is an integral part of Rhygyfarch's work,<sup>57</sup> is the earliest surviving pedigree of the saint. Most other sources follow this tradition in making Sant the father of David: so the *Progenies Keredic* in London, BL, MS Cotton Vespasian A xiv, f. 11<sup>v</sup>, and *Bonedd y Saint* in a number of manuscripts from the thirteenth century onwards, together with the reference in *De Situ Brycheiniac* 12.8 to 'Meleri filia Brachan, uxor Keredic, et mater sant. Sant autem pater fuit sancti Dauid', which corresponds to Oxford, Jesus College, MS 20. 33 '[M]eleri verch Vrachan, gwreic Keredic, ma[m] Sant, tat Dewi'. Some of the manuscripts of *Bonedd y Saint* have the additional name *Kedic* between those of *Keredic* and *Sant*; on the basis of other references to *Kedic Draws m. Keredic* this appears to represent a genuine alternative tradition rather than a mere dittography. Another alternative tradition may be represented by the *Cognatio Brychan* in London, BL, MS Cotton Domitian A I, f. 158<sup>r</sup>, where Meleri is described as 'uxor Keretici patris sancti Dauit';<sup>58</sup> here Bartrum assumes a scribal error and emends by adding *Sant patris* after *patris*. Such an error would be easily explained as the result of eye-skip; more easily still if the lost words were *Sancti patris*. But the statement of Nicholas Roscarrock to the effect that David's mother was really called Melaria suggests a variant tradition whereby Ceredig was indeed his father.<sup>59</sup> The consensus among the early genealogies

55 Mention should perhaps be made here of a tradition reported by the sixteenth-century Cornish recusant and antiquarian Nicholas Roscarrock (and supported by the Breton *Buhez Santes Nonn*) to the effect that the real name of Non was *Melaria*, who is clearly to be equated with Meleri, supposed daughter of Brychan Brycheiniog; see Nicholas Orme, ed., 'Nicholas Roscarrock's Lives of the Saints of Cornwall and Devon', *Devon and Cornwall Record Society*, n.s. 35 (1992), 97f, 162f. On Meleri, see Bartrum, *EWGT*, pp. 15, 18, 43. Roscarrock gives no source for this tradition, nor is any known, but since Meleri is recorded in these pedigrees as the wife of Ceredig mab Cunedda Wledig, and since in one of them (and in the Breton life) Ceredig rather than Sant (as in the other two and in Rhygyfarch's *Vita*) is named as David's father, an alternative tradition may be assumed to have existed according to which Meleri would have been his mother. On Sant, see Appendix, below.

56 *Buched Dewi*, ed. by D. Simon Evans, p. 1.

57 See John Reuben Davies, 'Some observations on the "Nero", "Digby" and "Vespasian" reconstructions of *Vita S. David*', in *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation*, pp. 156–60, *ad fin.*

58 For all these pedigrees see Bartrum, *EWGT*.

59 As is the case in the Breton *Buez Santes Nonn*; see note 17, above.

remains, however, that Sant or Sanctus is to be identified as David's father and Ceredig as his grandfather.

Yet, even if we discount the incongruity of one, *meritis et nomine Sanctus*,<sup>60</sup> who allegedly belies his sanctity by raping a nun (a story which, I have suggested above,<sup>61</sup> proceeds from a late misunderstanding of the name *Nonna*), the name *Sanctus* may seem odd. Pádraig Ó Riain, for instance, is unequivocally dismissive: 'the names of [David's] parents, Sanctus ("saint") – as unlikely a king of Ceredigion as ever existed – and Nonnita (from *nonna* "nun") are clearly fabricated',<sup>62</sup> and even D. Simon Evans, while claiming that *Sanctus* occurs commonly enough as a personal name<sup>63</sup> concedes that he is unlikely to be a historical character. That may be true, but the strangeness of the name should not be automatically taken to support the proposition. The question remains open.

It is indeed regrettable that Evans does not give his evidence for the existence of other persons named *Sanctus*; in fact no one else of that name appears anywhere in Bartrum's genealogies, in the inscriptions analysed by Sims-Williams and by Okasha, or in the Triads.<sup>64</sup> Conversely, however, the fact that no such person appears in the royal genealogy of Ceredigion<sup>65</sup> proves only that Rhygyfarch's claim that he was king there is untrue, not that he was not the son or grandson of Ceredig or indeed that he never existed at all. If there were independent evidence of *Sanctus* as a real personal name, it would not be hard to accept that a prince of the lineage of Ceredig could have borne that name.

It is not, after all, as unlikely a name as might at first appear. Such names as *Benedictus* or *Benignus* afford a parallel of sorts, as do *Restitutus*, supposed eponym of Llanrhystud, Ceredigion, or *Justus*, eponym in Cornwall of St Just in Penwith and St Just in Roseland, perhaps also of Laneast.<sup>66</sup> *Sanctus* itself may lie concealed in the place-name *Tre-saith*, originally *Traeth Saith*,<sup>67</sup> also in Ceredigion; the relevant sound-change<sup>68</sup> is dated by Jackson 'late sixth to early seventh century',<sup>69</sup> thus late enough to affect a fifth- or sixth-century *Sanctus*. It is notable that the form occurs in Ceredigion, where, if anywhere, a

60 Rhygyfarch, *Vita*, §2.

61 p. 28.

62 See note 34, above, at p. 378.

63 *Buched Dewi*, p. 25, 'yn ddigon cyffredin fel enw personol'. The claim is omitted, perhaps significantly, in his later English version *The Welsh Life of St David* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988).

64 See notes 21, 19 and 39, above.

65 Bartrum, *EWGT*, p. 12, no. 26.

66 These need not even refer to one and the same person.

67 So Owen and Morgan, *DPNW*, s.n., who, however, regard the second element as a river-name, as it was certainly considered to be as early as the 17c (*Aber Sayth* 1604), generating a number of place-names later recorded along its length. It is not clear whether this river-name is original or, as here suggested, a back-formation (see on *Aber-mad*, *Abermeurig*, Ceredigion, *ibid.*) from a toponym incorporating the personal name here postulated, and in consequence the independent evidence for *Sanctus* is not wholly secure. For *traeth* defined by a personal name cf. *Traeth Maelgwn*, Ceredigion.

68 *Seith* (modern *saith*) < a spoken variant \**Sactus* with *i*-affection; cf *pwyth*, Latin *punctus*; see Jackson, *LHEB* §§ 59–60; Lewis, *Yr Efen Ladin yn yr Iaith Gymraeg*, § 83.

69 *LHEB*, p. 696.

supposed prince of that name might be expected to appear in a toponym. There is, admittedly, no prospect of demonstrating that the two names refer to the same person, though the place-name, if the derivation is correct, would go back to before about 600, after which the alternative, perhaps semi-learned form *Sant* would be expected.<sup>70</sup>

The latter form certainly appears in the Cornish place-name *Lezant*, earlier *Lansant*.<sup>71</sup> The interpretation of this name as ‘church of the saint’<sup>72</sup> rather than as incorporating a personal name is unsatisfactory. Though not all Cornish church-names with *lan-* do so,<sup>73</sup> and, where they do, not all such names are necessarily those of saints,<sup>74</sup> enough of them do (or at least were thought to) commemorate saints as to render ‘church of the saint’ a pointless appellation. It seems very likely that one *Sanctus* or *Sant* is indeed commemorated here, though, as commonly in Cornish names with *lan*, less so but still sporadically in their Welsh counterparts, the eponym is not the patron.<sup>75</sup> Though *Lezant* is not far as the crow flies from Altarnun and Davidstow, parishes dedicated to Non and David respectively and for a short distance contiguous (though not with *Lezant*), there is no need to suppose that this \**Sanctus* or *Sant* was identified with the supposed father of David.<sup>76</sup>

The only historical records, or at least what purport to be such, of David consist of the obits in the Irish annals, where he is recorded variously as having died in 588 or 589, and in *Annales Cambriae*, where the date is given as 610;<sup>77</sup> the discrepancy

- 70 Aside from its appearance in Rhygyfarch’s genealogy as the equivalent of *Sanctus*, it is well exemplified in such names as *Llanddeusant*, *Llantrisant* as well as, with more complicated phonology (see *LHEB*, p. 498), *Llansanffraid*.
- 71 Dr Oliver Padel (private communication) draws my attention to *Lan sent* in the Cartulary of Landévennec with reference to two separate places in Brittany; the mutated vowel in *sent* appears to indicate a plural. By contrast, I suggest, *Llan-saint* in Carmarthenshire should not be taken as a parallel: it is first recorded (see Owen and Morgan, *DPNW*, s. n.) in the twelfth century as *Ecclesia(m) omnium sanctorum* and in 1280 as *Halwencherche*, its Middle English equivalent. *Llann y saint* is recorded only c. 1500, and the name looks like a late adaptation of the English name or of a lost Norman-French counterpart.
- 72 Ekwall, *Concise Dictionary of English Place-names*, s.n.
- 73 E.g. *Lanivet* ‘church by the sacred wood’, *Landreath* ‘church by the shore’, an old name for St Blazey.
- 74 See Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, p. 144.
- 75 See Padel, *ibid.*; the present dedication is to St Michael, not St Breock, as shown by Charles Henderson, *The Cornish Church Guide* (repr. Truro: D. Bradford Barton, 1964), p. 119. Whether there was ever an original Celtic dedication is unknown.
- 76 That Roscarrock (see note 53, above) spells the name of David’s father *Zantus* suggests that he may have thought so, but this has no evidential value, nor has Roscarrock any entry for him in his catalogue of saints. Pace Dumville, *Saint David of Wales*, p. 27, there seems to be no evidence that he was ever regarded as a saint (‘Sant sant’), churlish though it may seem to spoil the joke.
- 77 D. Simon Evans, *Buched Dewi*, p. xii. According to Dumville, pp. 3–4, the Irish annals are all derived from a lost 10c source, the so-called ‘Chronicle of Clonmacnoise’ (911x954); the tradition cannot for now be traced further back than that, though it is hard to see why an Irish annalist should have invented this piece of information.

awaits explanation,<sup>78</sup> but the latter date appears to have been generally considered too late. We are told by Rhygyfarch (§§59, 62–63) that he died on Tuesday 1 March, and since 1 March fell on a Tuesday in 589, that year, as given by the Annals of Inisfallen, is probably to be taken as representing the Irish tradition. David is thus unlikely to have been born much before 520, if as early as that, or indeed 540 if the Welsh annal is correct. It is of no importance that this is incompatible with the traditional date c. 400 for the migration from the Old North to Wales of David's supposed great-grandfather (or great-great-grandfather) Cunedda Wledig and his sons and the consequent expulsion of the Irish from western Wales, since there is abundant evidence of an Irish presence long after that date, so that the account of their expulsion must be fabricated,<sup>79</sup> and the whole story of the migration is perhaps suspect.<sup>80</sup> If Cunedda existed at all, whatever his origins, there is accordingly no reason to date him earlier than 450. Given that the 'sons' of Cunedda, the reality of at least some of whom seems confirmed by existing names of territories, may well have been mere associates of his,<sup>81</sup> we may not necessarily assume a full generation before Ceredig, but a *floruit* for the latter somewhere in the third quarter of the fifth century would seem plausible. Depending on how early we put Ceredig and how late we put David, there is space for one or two generations before the birth of the latter, and, unless we share Pádraig Ó Riain's scepticism as to whether he existed at all, there is no compelling reason to claim that Sant, whether the son of Ceredig himself or of Cedig his son, could not have been David's father.<sup>82</sup>

The curious style *Davidagius* by which Rhygyfarch commonly refers to the saint<sup>83</sup> may suggest that the particular sanctity attributed to David may already have been marked with an appropriate epithet by the time Rhygyfarch was writing, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he was already known, as he is to this day, as *Dewi Sant*. But that someone so called should also have a father called Sant may seem odd, and given that, in the pedigree appended to Rhygyfarch's *Vita*, the ancestor Padarn Peisrudd appears as *Patern filius Peisrud*, it might be argued that in an earlier version of the pedigree something like *Dewi Sant uab Keredic* was miscopied or misconstrued as *Dewi uab Sant uab Keredic* and put into Latin as

78 So also Molly Miller, 'Date-Guessing and Dyfed', *Studia Celtica*, 12–13 (1977–78), 33–61, at 48; she continues, 'the local information must be regarded as of superior authority.' Her claim, at 59, that Ceredig had nothing to do with Cunedda may of course be true; her further view, that he came from the Gloucester area to found the eponymous kingdom in the aftermath of the battle of Dyrham in 577, would, if correct, rule him out, and *a fortiori* his son or grandson, as David's father.

79 See Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350–1064*, pp. 179–81, 328–29.

80 So, evidently, David N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History*, n.s. 62 (1977), 173–92, at 181–83; though, while what lies behind the traditional account may indeed be irrecoverable, it is not necessarily nonsense in every detail.

81 So John E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, 1911), p. 119, 'whether the men who gave their names to the districts lying between the Teifi and the Dee were really the sons of Cunedda and not rather his followers or lieutenants is open to doubt.' Few would now disagree.

82 For an attempt to reconcile the Irish obit of David with Rhygyfarch's account of his birth thirty years after Patrick's departure for Ireland, see James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1974), pp. 324–46.

83 See note 54, above.

*David fuit filius Sant, Sant filius Cheritic*, as in Rhygyfarch's pedigree. Yet, given that *Dewi Sant* was himself the subject of the pedigree, such an error seems beyond the stupidity of even the most incompetent copyist. More likely, perhaps, is the converse, as tentatively suggested to me by Dr Padel:<sup>84</sup> that *Dewi Sant* may have been current in general or semi-popular use in the sense 'Dewi son of Sant', and subsequently misconstrued or reinterpreted as 'Dewi the holy'. This in turn could have provided a model for the later more generalised use of *sant* as a postfixed epithet, as recorded in 1346 in the case of *Beuno Sant*,<sup>85</sup> in contrast to its prefixed use as in *Llansanffraid*. None of this proves that Sant was David's father; that may still be fabricated, as most of the narrative details in Rhygyfarch's *Vita*, as in saints' lives in general, almost certainly are. But if a fiction, it is at worst a coherent fiction; it may, as in the case of his supposed mother Non, actually be true, and if the coincidence of the two names may seem after all too good to be true, that is still not an entirely conclusive argument against either.<sup>86</sup>

84 Private communications.

85 See *The Elucidarium and other tracts in Welsh from Llyvyr Agkyr Llandewivrevi*, ed. by J. Morris Jones and John Rhŷs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 120.9.

86 A version of this paper was read at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Medieval Latin Congress (Medialatinitas 2017) at the University of Vienna, 18 September 2017. I am grateful to Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards, Dr Oliver Padel and Dr Roger Tomlin for their help, whether in the form of comments, corrections or additional references; my debt to them will be obvious throughout. Their patience has been exemplary, and they should not be blamed for any remaining errors or infelicities.