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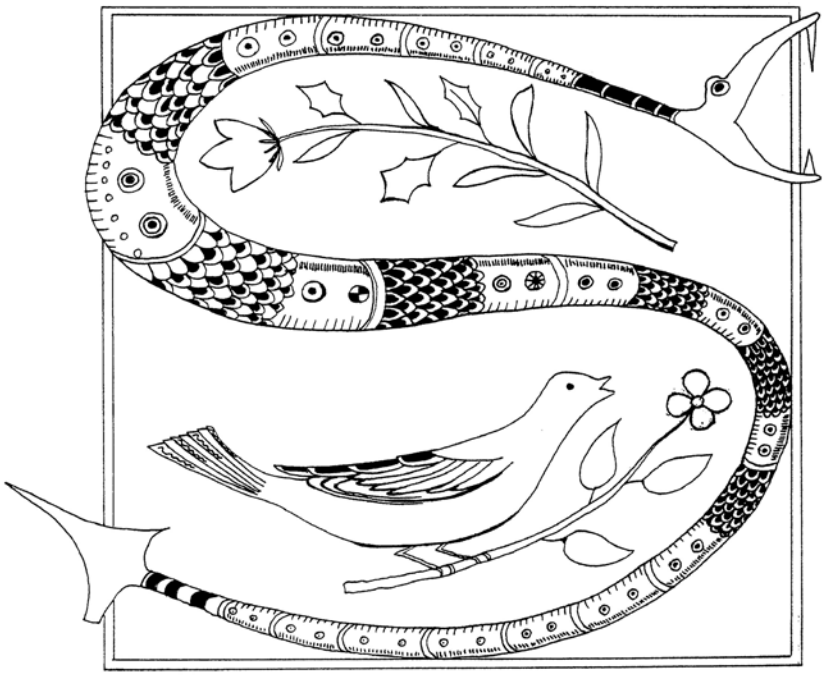
Journal of the Spanish Society for Mediaeval English Language and Literature
Revista de la Sociedad Española de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa Medieval



Edited by - Dirigida por
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Nº 14
Oviedo, 2007

Universidad de Oviedo &
*Sociedad Española de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa Medieval*
Oviedo – Murcia 2008

# *HEREBARDE* IN *ANCRENE RIWLE*

*HEREBARDE* is a *hapax legomenon* in *Ancrene Riwle*, occurring as an addition in London, British Library, MD Nero A.xiv.[1] The author, describing custody of the senses, compares sin to disease. He comments that, for a sick person, blood is let not from the distempered part but from one that his healthy. In the same way, Christ, who was sinless, shed blood for sinful humanity. 'But in all the fevered [Nero hee adds "vel o herebarde"] world there was not found any healthy part, among all mankind, which might be let blood, except only the body of God, which was let blood on the cross, and not merely in the arm, but in five places, in order to heal mankind of the disease to which the five senses had given rise.'[2]

In the Nero manuscript the relevant passage may be read "auh in al þe worlde þet was oþe fefre, vel oþe herebarde, nes among al moncun on hol solw ifunden þet muhte beon ilete blod bute godes bodi one". Zettersten, in his fundamental study of the AB language's lexis, notes how Nero's "vel oþe herebarde" enlarges on "on oþe fefre" 'on the fever, in fever; in diseased condition; in the state of sin'. Yet the sense and etymology of "herebarde" have been obscure, although Zettersten thinks the first element is from Old English "here" '(enemy) army'. He cites E.J. Dobson for a possible sense 'camp-fever', armies having at all times been wonderful ways of transmitting disease.[3] However, that offers no complete derivation.

[1] *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle*, ed. Mabel Day, EETS o.s. 225(1952), 49; *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. J.R.R. Tolkien, EETS o.s. 249 (1962), 61.

[2] *The Ancrene Riwle*, tr. Mary Salu (London, 1955), 50.

[3] Arne Zettersten, *Studies in the Dialect and Vocabulary of 'The Ancrene Riwle'* (Lund, 1965), 76.

ISSN: 1132–631X

Another explanation may thus be more cogent. *Ancrene Wisse* and related texts, posing many problems of vocabulary, are known for loans from Welsh, like "cader" `cradle' and "baban" 'baby'. [4] Hence "herebarde" may contain another such loan, from Welsh "bardd" 'bard, poet', so that "herebarde" would mean 'army-poet'. Since "bard" is a familiar English borrowing from Welsh, this might seem compelling. Does it suit the contexts of Welsh poetry and the text?

On the first we may say that, if "herebarde" means 'army-poetry', it translates closely the Welsh technical phrase "bardd teulu" 'bard of the warband, poet of the bodygard'. His rights and duties, appearing in legal codices from North and South Wales alike, went far back. If he declaims poetry with the royal bodyguard at the taking of booty, he receives the best animal. If they are preparing for battle, he may sing the poem 'The Chieftainship of Britain'. (This work is lost but was presumably bracing in its effects, like Gaelic poems of 1745 that spurred Highlanders to fight for Charles Stuart.) When the bard of the warband took office, he received a harp from the king and a gold ring from the queen. At table he sat by the chief of the bodyguard.[5] So the "bardd teulu", whose trade was literature at its most pugnacious, was an animating presence in the Welsh society. Celticists have often noted him. Citing the phrase 'The bards of the world judge men of valour' of the seventh-century poet Aneirin, they comment on how the "bardd teulu" conferred deathless praise for courage in battle, and lasting contempt for its opposite. Naturally,

[4] R.W. Dance, 'Some Notes on Words', in *A Book of 'Ancrene Wisse'*, ed. Yoko Wada (Osaka, 2002), 7-36, and his 'The AB Language', in *A Companion to 'Ancrene Wisse'*, ed. Yoko Wada (Cambridge 2003), 57-82.

[5] J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales* (London, 1911), 530; H.I. Bell, *The Development of Welsh Poetry* (Oxford, 1936), 38; *The Laws of Hywel Dda*, tr. Melville Richards (Liverpool, 1954) 38-9.

he accompanied fighting men on campaign. When they marched to the front, he did not make himself scarce.[6]

This fiery inciter to arms would be known to the English in the military zone of Herefordshire or beyond where the *Ancrene Wisse* school had its home, and even further (since the Nero scribe worked at a remove from the original author). The very name of Hereford 'army ford' reminds us of when it was part of a dangerous frontier region, liable to Welsh attack. Hence, it seems, "herebarde" 'army-bard' as a rendering of Welsh "bardd teulu" 'ward poet'. Yet there is a problem in transition from fever to poet. Can the present translation of "herebarde" really be correct?

Crucial here is "oþe" 'on the' in "auh in al þe worlde þet was oþe fefre, vel oþe herebarde". *OED's* entry for the preposition "on" 10 notes its use for state or condition, as with modern 'on the dole', 'on the look out', 'on the make'. This usage occurred for "on" in Old English. The Alfredian Orosius tells how the Romans in 211 BC executed citizens of Capua, inland from Naples, because "hie wolden Hannibale on fultume beon" 'they wanted to be an aid to Hannibal'.[7] A like sense of state or condition seems to occur in "vel oþe herebarde", 'or as a Welsh army-poetry'. If so, the Nero passage would apparently mean 'but in all the world that was in a state of fever, or that of a Celtic military bard'.

Two circumstances support that reading. The English on the Welsh Marches in the thirteenth century had no love for the bards of Welsh combat units, always ready to attack lowland settlers. They saw them as agitators and troublemakers, in rebellion against every

[6] John Lloyd-Jones, 'The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, xxxiv (1948), 167-97, at 174-5; J.E.C. Williams, 'Gildas, Maelgwn, and the Bards', in *Welsh society and Nationhood*, ed. R.R. Davies *et al.* (Cardiff, 1984), 19-34.

[7] *The Old English Orosius*, ed. Janet Bately, EETS s.s. 6 (1980), 104.

principle of order. Hence, it seems, the allusion to them in the Nero text as a symbol of sinful man in revolt against God. We may add that such a sardonic and somewhat jolting addition would be typical of the Nero text, which Dobson called the work of 'a fussy and interfering scribe, constanly archaizing the accidence, attempting to improve the syntax, word-order, and sentence construction (almost invariably with unhappy results), and padding out the phrasing.'[8] If he placed a poet in the context of bodily illness, such illogical incongruity would be of a piece with his other changes. As the manuscript, dated to the second quarter of the thirteenth century, has associations with the Worcestershire-Gloucestershire region, its scribe would not be too far from Wales to be ignorant of the place.[9]

If we are correct in taking "herebarde" as 'army-poet', the "bardd teulu" or poet of the Welsh warband, this has several implications. It provides the earliest instance of "bard" in English. It vindicates Dobson and Zettersten's translation of "here" as '(enemy) army'. If "here" translates "teulu", it is also evidence for bilingualism. It allows postcolonial interpretations of *Ancrene Riwle*, with the Welsh being seen as other and evil. It thereby reveals another defect of the Nero scribe, who had a colonizer's mentality that was both familiar with and negative towards native institutions like the bardic order. Perhaps the word's presence in Nero is due to interrogation of such bards, captured in raids. It in any case suggests the English well understood the propaganda power of the "bardd teulu", whose poems stiffened Welsh resistence. In his attitude to Celtic

[8] E.J. Dobson, 'The Affiliations of the Manuscripts of *Ancrene Wisse*', in *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. Norman Davis and C.L. Wrenn (London, 1962), 128-63, at 133.

[9] "*Temptations" from 'Ancrene Wisse'*, ed. Yoko Wada (Osaka, 1994), lii-iv.

bards, the Nero scribe would foreshadow a later period of English colonization, when Elizabethans in Ireland saw the bards there as, at worst, traitors to be exterminated like vermin. Typical of them is Thomas Smyth of Dublin, who in 1561 called Irish poets a people 'very hurtful to the commonweals, for they chafflike mayntayne the rebells; and further, they do cause them that would be true, to be rebelious theves, extorcioners, murtherers, ravners, yea and worse if it were possible.'[10] In short, "herebarde" is of interest as an apparent early English comment on Celtic poetry, both well-informed and hostile.

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[10] J.F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiastical* (New York, 1929), 30; J.E.C. Williams, 'The Court Poet in Medieval Ireland', *Proceedings of the British Academy,* lvii (1971), 85-135, at 133; Brian ó Cuív, 'Ireland's Manuscript Heritage', *Éire-Ireland*, xix/1 (1984), 87-110.

*Received* 25 Feb 2008; *revision received* 10 Mar 2008; *accepted* 31 Mar 2008