

Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte

Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris

(Institut historique allemand)

Band 49 (2022)

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DOI: 10.11588/fr.2022.1.102263

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JAMES DRYSDALE MILLER

SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG

Rewriting the »Vita Melanii« in Eleventh-Century Rennes¹

»Sing unto the Lord a new song, His praise in the congregation of the saints«: the anonymous author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« announces thus his intention in the prologue to his rewriting of the »Vita prima Melanii«². Despite past dismissal of rewritten *vitae* as repetitive »praise«, scholarly interest in hagiographical rewriting has flourished in recent decades³. The understanding that the production of hagiography was not just a pious reflex but often caused by specific needs of the saint's cult and historical circumstances has led to a fruitful reassessment of its value as a source not for the saint's own life but for the author's times. Within this reassessment, rewritten *vitae* are particularly valuable. For while later Lives which draw heavily on earlier surviving texts rarely contribute to our knowledge of the saint themselves, the survival of the earlier *vita* (the »hypotext«) on which the later author based their work (the »hypertext«) enables a detailed analysis to identify the changes made and even to posit explanations for them. Depending on the rewritten Life and the perceived deficiencies of the older work, these changes could take on a multitude of forms⁴. Some authors entirely reworked their source material while others limited themselves to the insertion of occasional sentences; some lengthened or shortened their hypotext, revised the facts of the saint's biography, or expressed the same information in verse⁵. From these alterations it is possible to understand better why an author felt it neces-

1 My thanks go to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding the research behind this paper, to Julia Smith, Ben Guy, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Ali Bonner, Catherine Cubitt and Brigid Ehrmantraut for reading drafts of it, and to Caroline Brett and Rosalind Love, without whom it would not exist. Needless to say, any errors or shortcomings are exclusively my own.

2 *Vita secunda Melanii*, Prologue, *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum antiquorum saeculo XVI qui asservantur in Bibliotheca nationali Parisiensi*, vol. 2, Brussels 1890, p. 531–541, at p. 531, quoting Ps. 149:1: *Cantate Domino canticum novum, laus ejus in contione sanctorum*. Cited hereafter as »Vita secunda«. All translations are my own. The following abbreviation is applied: BHL = *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, 2 vol., Brussels 1898–1901.

3 In particular, Monique GOULLET, *Écriture et réécriture hagiographiques. Essai sur les réécritures de Vies de saints dans l'Occident latin médiéval (VIII^e–XIII^e s.)*, Turnhout 2005 (Hagiologia, 4); and her and Martin HEINZELMANN's edited volumes: *La réécriture hagiographique dans l'Occident médiéval: transformations formelles et idéologiques*, Ostfildern 2003 (Beihefte der Francia, 58); and *Miracles, Vies et réécritures dans l'Occident médiéval*, Ostfildern 2006 (Beihefte der Francia, 65).

4 For a typology of rewriting, see GOULLET, *Écriture et réécriture* (as in n. 3), p. 91–101.

5 For example, Richard SOWERBY, *The Lives of St Samson: Rewriting the Ambitions of an Early Medieval Cult*, in: *Francia* 38 (2011), p. 1–31; A. Joseph McMULLEN, *Rewriting the ecclesiastical landscape of early medieval Northumbria in the Lives of Cuthbert*, in: *Anglo-Saxon England* 43

sary to sing a *canticum novum* and how they sought to shape the past to reflect the ideals of their own time and to use its authority to justify or criticise current political circumstances.

A study of the hagiographical refashioning of Melanius of Rennes is a valuable exercise because, through a comparison of the »Vita secunda Melanii« to its source material, the »Vita prima Melanii«, conclusions can be drawn about what the »Vita secunda« author felt was lacking in his source material and why it was deemed necessary to rewrite and reframe Melanius's history. At first glance, the rewriter appears to have changed relatively little. Although the »Vita secunda« is nearly twice as long as the »Vita prima«, there is little narrative change: only one new miracle is introduced, no narrative is cut, and the chapter order is left unchanged. Instead, this increased length comes largely from a more verbose and florid prose style which draws heavily upon the phrasing of the ninth-century Breton »Vita Maglorii«⁶. In Melanius's *vitae* his biography remains fundamentally the same. Born to noble parents in the Vannetais and following a pious childhood, he becomes bishop of Rennes. Having advised Clovis on good kingship and (ahistorically) presided over the First Council of Orléans, Melanius proceeds to work miracles for his flock, culminating in his healing of a local ruler, Eusebius, and his daughter⁷. Both *vitae* conclude with an account of Melanius's death and burial, though many manuscript witnesses also include a posthumous miracle extracted from Gregory of Tour's »Liber in gloria confessorum« in which Melanius saves a building next to his tomb from a fire⁸. Though this model of sanctity – a Merovingian bishop of a Roman *civitas* with a monastery dedicated to him outside the city walls – was common in Northern Francia, it is not one frequently found in the interrelated works of Breton hagiography, the saints of which, modelled on Samson of Dol, tended to be eremitic abbots and bishops with Brittonic names who had migrated to the peninsula from Britain during the sixth-century »Age of Saints«⁹.

Melanius's position reflects the history of his primary cult centre, Rennes, balanced between Brittany and Francia. Although in Melanius's own time the city had been under Frankish control, the expansion of Brittany under Nominoë and his successors meant that after the Battle of Jengland in 851 Rennes came under Breton rule¹⁰. During the political anarchy of the tenth century the counts of Rennes were,

(2014), p. 57–98; Ingrid REMBOLD, Rewriting the founder: Werden on the Ruhr and the uses of hagiography, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 41 (2015), p. 363–387.

- 6 Joseph-Claude POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne du haut Moyen Âge: Répertoire raisonné, Paris 2009, p. 258–259. In GOULLET's terms, rewriting by expansion with slight amplification. Écriture et réécriture (as in n. 3), p. 92–94.
- 7 For the historical Melanius, see Anna RUDELTE, Action et mémoire de l'évêque et saint Melaine de Rennes, unpubl. Mémoire de Master 2, Université de Brest 2018.
- 8 POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 237–240.
- 9 Thomas HEAD, Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orléans, 800–1200, Cambridge 1990 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th Series, 14); Joseph-Claude POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne avant l'an mil, in: Michèle GAILLARD, Monique GOULLET (ed.), Hagiographies. Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550, Turnhout 2020, p. 189–242.
- 10 Julia M. H. SMITH, Province and Empire: Brittany and the Carolingians, Cambridge 1992 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th Series, 18), p. 86–115.

alongside the counts of Nantes, the main contenders for the duchy of Brittany and by the early eleventh century they had triumphed. As such, Rennes became the *de facto* capital of the duchy of Brittany, a principality incorporating both Breton and French speakers¹¹. From at least the ninth century Rennes had two main religious establishments, both involved in Melanius's veneration: the cathedral of which he had been bishop and the monastery of Saint-Melaine, established around his tomb outside the city walls. Tracing their history through the turmoil of the mid-tenth century is not possible, but whatever difficulties they may have faced, both still existed around 1000. Between about 990 and 1096 the see was dominated by one family, five members of which were bishop of Rennes. During the first half of the eleventh century this episcopal family also controlled the abbey of Saint-Melaine, two of the bishops serving as its abbots, but in the 1050s monastic reform from Saint-Florent de Saumur ended this dynastic connection¹².

Here, the »Vita secunda Melanii« is considered within the scholarly framework of rewriting in order to understand how the cult of Melanius was used for political purposes in eleventh-century Rennes. After proposing a dating of the »Vita secunda Melanii« to the first half of the eleventh century, this paper argues that the Life's anonymous author sought to justify the close relationship of his own day between Rennes cathedral and the monastery of Saint-Melaine by projecting this connection back to both communities' saintly patron. Similarly, it explores how the author attempted to reinvigorate the cult of Melanius, depicting him as a powerful heavenly intercessor at a time when Brittany experienced an influx of new saintly competition. In doing so, it seeks to combine a discussion of the stylistic aspects of rewriting with that of the narrative changes made to the Life of Melanius to demonstrate how the cult of a Merovingian saint could be used in the eleventh century for political ends. However, it is first necessary to establish the dates, locations of composition, and relationships of the Lives of Melanius.

The »Vitae Melanii«

The »Vita prima Melanii« survives in two recensions. The first recension [BHL 5887, »Vita prima I«] is only found in one manuscript while the second recension [BHL 5888, »Vita prima II«] has a considerably richer manuscript tradition, although Lefort has demonstrated that this is primarily due to the Life's inclusion in such collections as the Cistercian legendary »Liber de Natalitiis«¹³. Poulin believes that the first

11 André CHÉDEVILLE, Noël-Yves TONNERRE, *La Bretagne féodale (XI^e-XIII^e siècle)*, Rennes 1987, p. 23–58.

12 Julien BACHELIER, *L'abbaye Saint-Melaine de Rennes: présentation historique (VI^e-début XIV^e siècle)*, in: Chantal REYDELLET, Monique CHAUVIN-LECHAPTOIS, Julien BACHELIER (ed.), *Cartulaire de Saint-Melaine de Rennes, suivi de 51 chartes originales*, Rennes 2015 (Sources médiévales de l'histoire de Bretagne, 6), p. 27–37; CHÉDEVILLE, TONNERRE, *La Bretagne féodale* (as in n. 11), p. 240–243; Cyprien HENRY, *Les évêques de Rennes à travers leurs actes (XI^e-première moitié du XII^e siècle)*, in: *Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société Archéologique et Historique d'Ille-et-Vilaine* 117 (2013), p. 37–59.

13 POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 240–245; Élodie LEFORT, *Le rayonnement de saint Melaine à travers l'étude de son dossier hagiographique: l'exemple de la *vita prima**, in: *Britannia Monastica* 18 (2016), p. 93–107, at p. 102–103.

recension is closer to the »Vita prima« author's original composition because it preserves quotations from other texts more accurately¹⁴. The »Vita secunda« [BHL 5891] rewrites the »Vita prima«. All commentators, with the exception of Aupest-Conduché, have accepted that the »Vita secunda« relies on the »Vita prima« and not vice versa¹⁵. There are two reasons for this: first, that direct quotations from other texts in the »Vita prima« are rephrased in the »Vita secunda« and, second, although the »Vita secunda« author is mostly reliant on the »Vita prima«, he included material from a different source (*fertur*) of which he is less certain. There also survives a »Vita interpolata Melanii« [BHL 5889–5890], probably from between the ninth and eleventh centuries, which inserts new material into the »Vita prima« while also preserving most of its hypotext's original wording¹⁶. According to Poulin, the »Vita interpolata« reveals no contact with the »Vita secunda«¹⁷. In turn, it is considerably more likely that the »Vita secunda« draws upon the »Vita prima« than on the »Vita interpolata«. The »Vita secunda« author remains very close to his source material throughout and it is thus difficult to envisage him deliberately excluding details only found in the »Vita interpolata«, such as the name of the bishop of Rennes, Amandus, who chose Melanius as his successor, or excising a single miracle in which Melanius posthumously heals a blind woman¹⁸. Even if, as Bachelier suggests, the »Vita secunda« postdates the »Vita interpolata«, the »Vita secunda« author appears to have either not known it or deliberately ignored it.¹⁹ There are, then, two versions of the »Vita prima«, plus two independent reworkings of it.

Exhaustive comparison of the »Vita secunda« and »Vita prima« is impossible under current conditions as there is no complete critical edition of the »Vita prima«. Nevertheless, it is possible to establish that the »Vita secunda« author made use of a version of the »Vita prima« closer to the first recension than the second. The only chapters where a close comparison of the two recensions and the »Vita secunda« is possible are »Vita prima Melanii« 17 and »Vita secunda Melanii« 15–16, since this is the only section where a critical edition of the »Vita prima II« exists, the recensions diverge enough to be distinct, and the »Vita secunda« author follows his source material closely²⁰. The »Vita secunda« states that Melanius came »with certain monks«, which follows the reading of the »Vita prima I« (»with a few from his monks«) but

14 POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 240.

15 Dominique AUPEST-CONDUCHÉ, *Deux formes divergentes de la sainteté épiscopale au VI^e siècle. Saint Félix de Nantes et saint Melaine de Rennes*, in: *La piété populaire au Moyen Âge: Actes du 99^e Congrès national des Sociétés savantes, Besançon 1974. Section de philologie et d'histoire jusqu'à 1610*, Paris 1977, p. 117–128, at p. 118; POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 249; Bruno KRUSCH, *MGH SS rer. Merov.*, vol. 3, Hannover 1896, p. 370–376, at p. 370; *Vita secunda*, 18, p. 540: »it is said.«

16 POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 251–257; *Vita interpolata Melanii*, ed. Jean BOL- LAND, *AA SS*, Jan. I, Antwerp 1643, p. 328–333.

17 POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 255.

18 *Vita interpolata Melanii* (as in n. 10), 4, 34, p. 328, 332.

19 BACHELIER, *L'abbaye Saint-Melaine* (as in n. 12), p. 28.

20 What is one chapter in the »Vita prima Melanii« is split into two in the »Vita secunda«. Though the Bollandists edited »Vita prima Melanii II« completely and uncritically, the only edition of »Vita prima Melanii I« and the only critical edition of the »Vita prima Melanii II« is Krusch's partial critical edition of chapters 1–4 and 17–19. KRUSCH, *MGH SS rer. Merov.*, vol. 3 (as in n. 15). Unfortunately, only editing chapters which interested him was a standard practice of

contrasts with the »Vita prima II's« »with his clerics and certain followers«²¹. In addition, when Melanius casts a demon out of Haspasia the logic for his actions in the »Vita secunda« (»where you certainly will not have opportunity of opposing anyone«) aligns better with the »Vita prima I« (»so that you might have the power to torture no man«) than the »Vita prima II« (»where the dwelling of men is not«)²². This is corroborated by phrasal similarities in the rest of the *vitae* (for example, in the same miracle »Vita prima I« and »Vita secunda« have »without anyone offering help«, whereas »Vita prima II« has »with the Lord offering help«²³) and by character names (one bishop is called *Launus* in »Vita prima I« and »Vita secunda«, but *Lautonus* in »Vita prima II«²⁴). It thus makes sense to conclude that the »Vita secunda« author used a version of the »Vita prima« closer to that of the first recension than the second. Analysis of the »Vita prima« will therefore be taken from the first recension and, unless otherwise specified, »Vita prima« refers to the first recension rather than the second. Since the »Vita prima I« is unedited, quotations from it are taken from the only surviving manuscript, using the Bollandists' chapter divisions but with the manuscript folios given.

As with much early medieval hagiography, establishing dates for the »Vita Melanii« is not easy since neither the prologues nor the subject matter provide any indication of when they were written. For the »Vita prima« Poulin's argument for range of 800 to 850, based upon a quotation in the »Vita prima« from Alcuin's »Vita Vedastis« and a late-ninth-century witness to an interpolated version of the »Vita prima«, is thorough and convincing²⁵. For the »Vita secunda« Poulin suggests a range of mid-ninth to mid-eleventh century, based on it post-dating the »Vita prima« and pre-dating the first, late-eleventh-century witness²⁶. This range is plausible and fits with Merdrignac's belief that the »Vita secunda« includes tenth-century-or-later terminology²⁷.

Krusch. James Trevor PALMER, *Early Medieval Hagiography*, Leeds 2018, p. 70. See p. 57 for the approach taken in this article.

- 21 *Vita secunda*, 15: *cum quibusdam monachis*; *Vita prima Melanii I* (as in n. 15), 17, p. 374: *cum paucis de suis monachis*; *Vita prima Melanii II* (as in n. 15), 17, p. 374: *cum suis clericis et quibusdam discipulis*.
- 22 *Vita secunda*, 16: *ubi prorsus non habeas facultatem quippiam officendi*; *Vita prima Melanii I* (as in n. 15), 17, p. 374: *ut non habeas potestatem hominem torquere*; *Vita prima Melanii II* (as in n. 15), 17, p. 374: *ubi habitatio hominum non est*.
- 23 *Vita prima Melanii I*, 12, Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. Perg. 84 (s. X²-s. XI, Reichenau?), f. 165^r-169^v, at f. 167^{va}: *nemine opem ferente*. Consultable online: <https://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/content/pageview/174415> (28.02.2022). Cited hereafter as *Vita prima*; *Vita prima Melanii II*, 12, ed. Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum antiquorum saeculo XVI qui asservantur in Bibliotheca nationali Parisiensi, vol. 1, Brussels 1889, p. 71-77, at p. 74: *Domino opem ferente*; *Vita secunda*, 10: *ferente opem nemine*.
- 24 *Vita prima Melanii I*, 15, 19; *Vita prima Melanii II* (as in n. 23), 15, 19, p. 75, 77; *Vita secunda*, 13, 18.
- 25 POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 243-245.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 249-251; Rouen Bibl. mun. 1400 (s. XI², Fécamp).
- 27 Bernard MERDRIGNAC, *L'évolution d'un cliché hagiographique: Saint-Melaine, Saint-Mars et l'éulogie métamorphosée en serpent*, in: *Annales de Bretagne* 87 (1980), p. 589-605, at p. 590. Anne Lunven's ingenious argument for a tenth-century date based on the boundaries of the diocese of Rennes could equally apply in the eleventh. Anne LUNVEN, *Du diocèse à la paroisse: Évêchés de Rennes, Dol et Alet/Saint-Malo (V^e-XIII^e siècle)*, Rennes 2014, p. 166, n. 168. André

It is possible, however, to refine this date range, and propose that this text was written in the first half of the eleventh century. There are two routes to this conclusion: changes made to the final chapter of the »Vita prima« when rewriting the »Vita secunda«, and attention to external historical knowledge of Rennes. In the »Vita prima«, Melanius's translation to and burial in Rennes after his death is described as follows:

»The man of God, Melanius, came with great joy with his already mentioned friends to the place where he is now revered, and he was buried by his followers with great honour in the place next to the aforementioned city in which he now rests, where by his merits and prayers many benefits are presented to men up until the present day. For many miracles have been shown by his merits, which divine strength allows to come to the eyes and ears of the living to the glory of his name at the grave of the aforementioned holy bishop. In that place the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is worshiped and splendidly praised by all²⁸.«

In the »Vita secunda« this becomes:

»The venerable bishops, carrying away the frail body of the saint, placed it next to the chapel of the blessed John, where previously he had been made a monk, not without the work of the virtue of miracles. For there many people, previously deprived of the benefit of their eyes, received sight; the lame, lacking utterly the functions of the feet, the ability to walk; the mute gained a share in conversations; demons were thrown out with a repulsive grunt; lepers, granted health, were given cause to rejoice in their former complexion; and they, labouring with diverse diseases, obtained perpetual health. Also, a church survives there, constructed in his honour where our Lord Jesus Christ is worshiped and honoured by faithful people²⁹.«

Chédeville's later date of around 1080 does not stand up to scrutiny since it relies upon the unsupported assumptions that the monks of Saint-Melaine would only have wished to present Melanius as monastic following later-eleventh-century reform and that »Vita Maglorii« had a limited circulation. André CHÉDEVILLE, *Un évêque »martinien« au temps de Clovis*, in: *Mémoires de la Société archéologique de Touraine* 63 (1997), p. 229–240, at p. 232–233.

- 28 Vita prima, 19, f. 169^{vb}: *Peruenit uir Dei, Melanius, cum magna iocunditate cum sociis suis iam dictis usque in locum, ubi nunc est adoratus, sepultusque est cum magno honore a discipulis suis in loco iuxta praedictam urbem, in qua modo requiescit, ubi eius meritis et orationibus multa praestantur beneficia hominibus usque in presentem diem. Sunt namque eius meritis multa ostensa miracula, quae ad gloriam nominis sui diuina uirtus ad tumulum praedicti sancti pontificis ad oculos et aures uiuentium uenire permisit. Quo in loco ab omnibus colitur et magnifice laudatur nomen domini Iesu Christi.*
- 29 Vita secunda, 20: *Sancti uero reverendi pontifices deferentes corpusculum, juxta beati Iohannis oratorium, ubi monachus dudum effectus fuerat, posuerunt, non sine uirtutum opere miraculorum. Nam ibi multi prius oculorum prosperitate privati receperunt visum, claudi pedum omnino officio carentes ambulandi usum, muti communionem locutionum, daemones cum obsceno gemitu ejecti sunt, leprosi cum indulta incolumitate pristino colore laetati sunt, diuersisque morbis laborantes salutem perpetuam meruerunt. Ibi etiam in honore ipsius constructa superest ecclesia, ubi Dominus noster Iesus Christus a fidelibus populis adoratur et colitur.*

In the »Vita prima«, the place where Melanius was buried in Rennes clearly continues to have the relics of Melanius, something which the author is determined to emphasise. Not only is the text's audience told that »he is now revered there«, but also that this is the place »in which he now rests« and that Melanius continues to work miracles there »up until the present day«. The presence of the relics of Melanius and their possible use to establish a date for the »Vita prima« has been noted, but the loss of this present-day focus in the »Vita secunda« has so far passed unnoticed³⁰. Despite generally following the »Vita prima« closely, here the »Vita secunda« author made an active choice to change his hypotext. The most obvious reason for this surprising reluctance to mention that Melanius continued to rest at the monastery of Saint-Melaine in Rennes – which otherwise the »Vita secunda« shows great interest in connecting to Melanius – is that the relics of Melanius were no longer in Rennes at the time of rewriting and the ending of the »Vita prima« no longer applicable. It is therefore possible to use this to date the »Vita secunda« more precisely, since it must have been written when Melanius's relics were absent from Rennes. During the time of Abbot Even (1058–1076), Gervasius, archbishop of Rheims, returned some of Melanius's relics, along with a letter (datable to 1058–1060) recording their recent miracles, to Saint-Melaine since the community was lacking his relics³¹. A lack of mention of Melanius's relics excludes the »Vita secunda« from having been written to celebrate their return and the active removal of references to their presence found in the »Vita prima« implies that the »Vita secunda« was written before then. A *terminus ante quem* is thus established, demonstrating that the »Vita secunda« was written before Even's reform of Saint-Melaine. The date for the relics leaving Rennes is more difficult, but, following Bachelier, c. 920 seems a reasonable supposition, and they had certainly left by the mid-tenth century, when they were under the care of Gervasius's great-grandmother Rorans³².

Further possible evidence for the date of the »Vita secunda« comes from chapter 18, in which the assembled bishops settle a dispute between the people of Vannes and Rennes over Melanius's body by placing it on a boat which, without human assistance, sails up the Vilaine to Rennes. This narrative is one of only two passages not found in the »Vita prima«. Though there are no directly borrowed phrases, it is similar to the account found in Theodrich of Fleury's »Illatio Benedicti« [BHL 1122] of how a boat carrying Benedict's body sailed from Orléans to Fleury to decide a dispute between Saint-Aignan and Fleury and to the description in Vitalis's »Vita Gildae« [BHL 3541] of how the resting place of Gildas was determined by an un-

30 POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 245; AUPEST-CONDUCHÉ, Deux formes divergentes (as in n. 15), p. 118.

31 Gervasius de Château-du-Loir, *Alia miracula*, ed. BOLLAND AA SS Jan. I (as in n. 16), p. 333. Dolbeau dates this letter to 1055–1067, when Gervais was archbishop, but a reference to Henry I of France means it probably predates his death in 1060. François DOLBEAU, *Fragments métriques consacrés à s. Melaine de Rennes*, in: *Analecta Bollandiana* 93 (1975), p. 115–125, at p. 119.

32 BACHELIER, *L'abbaye Saint-Melaine* (as in n. 12), p. 28; John S. OTT, *Bishops, Authority and Community in Northwestern Europe, c.1050–1150*, Cambridge 2015 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th Series, 102), p. 170. As of 2020, Melanius's relics appear to be once again on the move. Touraine: à Preuilley-sur-Claise, les reliques de saint Melaine ont disparu, in: *La Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest*, 24th June 2020, <https://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/tours/preuilley-sur-claise-les-reliques-de-saint-melaine-ont-disparu> (28.02.2022).

guided boat³³. This connection is of particular interest since Andrew of Fleury records that Gauzlin, abbot of Fleury (1004–1030), sent Felix to reform Saint-Gildas de Rhuys and Tuedo to reform a *Rodonicense coenobium*, which Bautier and Labroy identify as Saint-Melaine, providing a possible connection for these similar narratives³⁴. The »Illatio Benedicti« was composed between 1008 and 1018, so if the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« drew on the »Illatio« it would provide a *terminus post quem* of 1008³⁵. The inclusion of this shared motif in these three texts produced in communities joined by reform from Fleury may indicate the existence of an eleventh-century »hagiographical zone« in which the »Vita secunda« was written³⁶. Moreover, it is unclear what, if any, community might have existed at Saint-Melaine in the tenth century to produce such a Life, especially if they had had cause to flee with the relics of Melanius and an eleventh-century composition aligns with the dates of other Breton *vitae*³⁷. It thus seems possible to refine Poulin's range of 850–1050 as the balance of probability indicates that the »Vita secunda Melanii« was written in the first half of the eleventh century.

In addition to dating the »Vita Melanii« it is also important to establish where in Rennes, Melanius's only known cult centre, the *vitae* may have been composed, since determining where the Lives were written may help identify the institutional concerns of the authors. As Chédeville and Poulin have convincingly argued, the »Vita prima« appears to have been written for a non-monastic community – almost certainly, therefore, the cathedral of Rennes³⁸. Revealing an entirely clerical focus, the »Vita prima« author requests that his audience prays to Melanius for »bishops, priests, the clergy and for all of us«³⁹. The monasticism in the »Vita secunda« has led to its universal attribution to a monk and the insertion of the »the monastery of St John the Baptist, situated not far from the city of Rennes« (taken as synonymous with Saint-Melaine) indicates that the Life was probably written there⁴⁰. However,

33 Theodrich of Fleury, *Illatio Benedicti*, VII–VIII, ed. Jean DU BOIS, *Floriacensis vetus Bibliotheca Benedictina*, Lyon 1606, p. 226–228; *Vitalis of Rhuys, Vita Gildae*, 30–31, ed. Theodor MOMMSEN, *MGH Auct. ant.*, vol. 13, Berlin 1898, p. 101. My thanks go to Caroline Brett for bringing this episode in the »Vita Gildae« to my attention.

34 Andrew of Fleury, *Vita Gauzlini*, 24, ed. Robert-Henri BAUTIER, Gillette LABROY, André de Fleury: *Vie de Gauzlin, Abbé de Fleury*, Paris 1969 (*Sources d'histoire médiévale*, 2), p. 64–67.

35 Anselme DAVRIL, Annie DUFOR, Gillette LABROY, *Les miracles de saint Benoît. Miracula sancti Benedicti*, Paris 2019 (*Sources d'histoire médiévale*, 45), p. 34.

36 For hagiographical zones see Caroline BRETT, *St Kenelm, St Melor and Anglo-Breton contact from the tenth to the twelfth centuries*, in: *Anglo-Saxon England* 47 (2018), p. 247–273 and Caroline BRETT with Fiona EDMONDS and Paul RUSSELL, *Brittany and the Atlantic Archipelago, 450–1200: Contact, Myth and History*, Cambridge 2021.

37 For potentially late-tenth-century architectural work see Dominique ALLIOS, *Contre l'art roman Breton: l'église de Saint-Melaine de Rennes*, in: Rosa ALCOY PEDRÓS (ed.), *Le plaisir de l'art du Moyen Âge. Commande, production et réception de l'œuvre d'art. Mélanges en hommage à Xavier Barral i Altet*, Paris 2012, p. 434–440. Julia M. H. SMITH, *Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany*, c. 850–1250, in: *Speculum* 65 (1990), p. 309–343, at p. 313 n. 17.

38 CHÉDEVILLE, *Un évêque »martinien«* (as in n. 27), p. 231; POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 242.

39 *Vita prima*, 18, f. 169^{va}: *sacerdotibus, ministris, clero, nobisque omnibus*. This is only found in »Vita prima I«.

40 POULIN, *L'hagiographie bretonne* (as in n. 6), p. 250; *Vita secunda*, 2, 20: *coenobium sancti Johannis Baptistae haud procul sito a Redonensi urbe*.

since in the first half of the eleventh century the bishops of Rennes and the abbots of Saint-Melaine were closely connected, the »Vita secunda« might not only exhibit the interests of Saint-Melaine, and the possibility that it reflects the joint nature of the abbey and bishopric is considered below.

Monastic Identities

Having established a date and location for the composition of the »Vita secunda Melanii« it is possible to investigate how the rewriter sought to refocus it on different aspects of Melanius's identity and in doing so to understand how he sought to fashion a text more suitable for his community's current needs and a changing hagiographical landscape. Yet while the survival of the »Vita prima« enables the identification of the changes which he made to his hypotext, establishing the motives for these changes is more difficult, and literary, as well as historic, reasons must be considered.

A particular concern of the rewriter was the coherence of the Life and he modifies the »Vita prima« in a variety of ways to create a less ambiguous and more easily understood text. One way in which the author clarifies the »Vita prima« is through the introduction of more information about the miracles to provide context. For example, the »Vita secunda« explains that a *frater* was possessed by a demon because he forgot to make the sign of cross before drawing water from a well, names the dioceses of the bishops who celebrate communion with Melanius in Angers, and expands the »Vita prima's« introduction of *Eusebius rex* to include that he ruled over the *nationes Britanniarum*⁴¹. While de La Lande de Calan argued that this last introduction is a reference to Alan I's restoration of the kingdom of Brittany, it is more probable that the author wished to introduce such a character fully, just as Clovis is introduced as »invincible king of the Franks«⁴².

Similarly, the apparent introduction of the miracle discussed above where Melanius's body is translated to Rennes by boat may also stem from a desire for more coherence⁴³. Although at first this appears to be an entirely new introduction, it is actually an expansion of an ambiguous line in the »Vita prima« which states that these holy individuals guarded the body and sailed to Rennes, without any context as to why⁴⁴. Poulin believes, based on the »Vita secunda« author's use of *fertur* (»it is said«), that here he is making use of an independent tradition, but since he does not do so elsewhere this introduction remains significant, especially as he appears uncertain of the veracity of this tradition, closing the chapter saying »but in no way have we undertaken to confirm this thing claimed by opinion more than by any firm reasoning, although nothing seems incredible to us«⁴⁵. Based on the similarity to the »Illatio Benedicti«, the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« appears to have resorted

41 Vita prima, 6, 15, 17, f. 166^r, 167^{vb}, 168^{vb}; Vita secunda, 6, 13, 15; POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 250.

42 Charles DE LA LANDE DE CALAN, Mélanges historiques. II – Saint Melaine, in: Revue de Bretagne 49 (1913), p. 31–41, at p. 35; Vita secunda, 4: *Francorum rex invictissimus*.

43 Vita secunda, 18.

44 Vita prima, 19, f. 169^v.

45 POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 248; Vita secunda, 18: *sed opinione magis quam*

to the common medieval practice of the transferability of miracles between saints in order to explain an ambiguous remark in the »Vita prima«⁴⁶.

These attempts to introduce cohesion into the »Vita secunda Melanii« are especially important to consider when evaluating its depiction of monasticism. The greater monastic emphasis of the »Vita secunda« has long been noted⁴⁷. However, the increased references to monks in the »Vita secunda« must be considered alongside the nature of the rewriting as a whole. Although the »Vita prima« never explicitly depicts Melanius as a monastic founder or as leading a monastic life, monks are often found accompanying him or referred to as »his«⁴⁸. Chédeville suggested that the »Vita prima« author worked from a Life with considerably more monasticism in it which he had poorly removed⁴⁹. Regardless of the existence of a »*Vita primigenia Melanii«, this lack of consistency about Melanius's monastic companions is obvious to any reader of the »Vita prima«⁵⁰.

The author's reason for including at least some of the mentions of monks in the »Vita secunda« may therefore not be his greater interest in monasticism but his desire to make the Life more internally coherent. When chapter 14 of the »Vita prima« is expanded from »for he was in Platz, next to the river Vilaine« to, in chapter 12 of the »Vita secunda«,

»the blessed man was staying in the territory of Platz above the river Vilaine, where he had built a certain monastery with his own hands, in which he had also founded there an enormous troop of monks under the strict governance of canonical decrees who were going to do battle there on behalf of God and His saints«,

the obvious initial response is to assume that the »Vita secunda« author is deliberately introducing new material in order to make the Life appear more monastic⁵¹. But though the description of Melanius's monks as an »enormous troop of monks under the strict governance of canonical decrees« is the invention of the author (and consistent with his usual grandiloquence), the presence of the monks and the detail that Melanius built the site with his own hands are found in chapter 17 of the »Vita prima«.

aliqua ratione firma agnitum nullo modo, licet nihil incredibile nobis videatur, affirmare praesumimus.

46 HEAD, Hagiography and the Cult of Saints (as in n. 9), p. 69.

47 François PLAINE, Étude comparative des trois anciennes Vies latines de saint Melaine, évêque de Rennes, in: *Revue historique de l'Ouest* 8 (1892), p. 74–88, at p. 83–84; CHÉDEVILLE, Un évêque »martinien« (as in n. 27), p. 232; POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 247.

48 For example, Vita prima, 6, 17, f. 166^{ra}, 169^{ra}.

49 CHÉDEVILLE, Un évêque »martinien« (as in n. 27), p. 231.

50 The »Vita prima II« solves this in the opposite direction, replacing *monachi* with *clerici* or the like (see above).

51 Vita prima, 14, f. 167^{vb}: *erat enim in Palatio, iuxta fluvium Uincenonia; Vita secunda, 12: beatus vir moraretur in territorio Placii supra fluvium Vicononiae, ubi ipse propriis manibus aedificaverat quoddam coenobium, in quo etiam enorme agmen instituerat monachorum sub districto regularium moderamine decretorum Deo sanctisque ejus inibi militaturum.* This place name is difficult as scribal errors seem to have regularly caused *c/t* confusion, and sometimes even »correction« to *palatium*.

Rather than introducing new material, the author is moving information from later in the »Vita prima« to an earlier mention of Platz to aid his audience in understanding the setting of the miracle. The monastic description of Platz is a result of the author's desire to make the Life more internally consistent, not more monastic.

Although some of the references to monasticism stem from explaining Melanius's monastic followers, the introduction of Melanius's association with the *coenobium sancti Johannis Baptistae* cannot be so. From its location just outside Rennes and his later burial there this monastery is almost certainly the same as Saint-Melaine⁵². In chapters 2 and 3 of the »Vita secunda«, Melanius retires there to avoid the frequent vexations of the people of Rennes. This addition is especially notable since, unlike the other monastic changes, these two chapters serve to introduce new material not found in the »Vita prima«. Indeed, this and Melanius's miraculous translation by boat to Rennes are the only points in the *vita* where the author includes new narrative about Melanius's life. Furthermore, the monastery of John the Baptist, unlike Platz, does not feature in the »Vita prima«, but in the »Vita secunda« it serves to frame the miracles of Melanius: chapters 2–3 recount his joining the monastery, 4–16 the miracles and good deeds done by him, and 17–20 his death and burial there⁵³. Due to the deviation from the author's usual means of rewriting it is necessary to consider the effect of this change and possible reasons for it.

The principal way in which this insertion adjusts the focus of the *vita* is to give Melanius a considerably more monastic appearance, especially when taken in conjunction with the author's standardisation of the references to monks found in the »Vita prima«. In the closing chapter of the »Vita secunda« we are reminded of Melanius's connection to the monastery »where he had previously been made a monk«, which he had joined at the start of the Life⁵⁴. Moreover, the introduction of the monastery of John the Baptist demonstrates that the increased monastic focus is deliberate, since unlike the other mentions of monasticism, this cannot be attributed to the author attempting to make the Life more coherent by synchronising already present information.

However, though scholarship has long acknowledged this increase, it has sometimes been taken too far. Chédeville argued that the »Vita secunda« author sought to downplay the episcopal nature of Melanius as a saint, based on such evidence as that the phrase »with a prayer in the manner of a bishop« is removed in the »Vita secunda«⁵⁵. Yet, although the »Vita secunda« never calls Melanius *episcopus*, episcopal synonyms are frequently used. In the »Vita prima«, Melanius is referred to as bishop (*antistes*, *episcopus*, *pontifex*, *sacerdos*) eighteen times, whereas in the »Vita secunda« he is called bishop (*antistes*, *praesul*, *pontifex*) seventeen times. Similarly, the »Vita secunda« author addresses the saint directly as »O most blessed bishop Mela-

52 POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 250; AUPEST-CONDUCHÉ, Deux formes divergentes (as in n. 15), p. 119.

53 CHÉDEVILLE, Un évêque »martinien« (as in n. 27), p. 232.

54 Vita secunda, 20: *ubi monachus dudum effectus fuerat*.

55 CHÉDEVILLE, Un évêque »martinien« (as in n. 27), p. 232; Vita prima, 8, f. 166^{vb}: *cum oratione more sacerdotali*; Vita secunda, 7. The Vita prima author uses *sacerdos* as a synonym for *episcopus*. See Robert GODDING, *Prêtres en Gaule mérovingienne*, Bruxelles 2001 (Subsidia hagiographica, 82), p. 171–201.

nius«, which is both a new addition and indicates how he personally conceptualised the saint⁵⁶. These changes in terminology provide no reason to believe that the »Vita secunda Melanii« seeks to make Melanius any less an episcopal saint, only more a monastic one.

Furthermore, building on the extensive borrowings identified by Poulin, Chédeville suggested that the »Vita secunda« author may have used the »Vita Maglorii« as an example of a Life of a bishop turned monastic saint on which to model his own rewriting⁵⁷. This certainly appears to have been part of how the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« used the »Vita Maglorii« – the manner of Melanius’s monastic life is, for example, taken from the »Vita Maglorii« almost verbatim – but this use of the »Vita Maglorii« presents further questions⁵⁸. While Maglorius and Melanius face the same problem – votive gifts impeding their spiritual wellbeing (the »Vita secunda Melanii« uses phrases directly borrowed from the »Vita Maglorii«) – and while they both retire to monasteries in order to solve this problem, Maglorius resigns his bishopric before doing so, while Melanius does not⁵⁹. Not only is this the case, but the author presents Melanius as continuing to fulfil his episcopal duties while a monk, and even elaborates on the »Vita prima« by providing reasons for the journeys of Melanius, describing him as »being an ever-watchful guard over the fold of the Lord’s flock entrusted [to him] while he was patrolling his diocese with diligent scrutiny«⁶⁰. In doing so, a monastic impression very different to that of Maglorius is created. Whereas Maglorius resigns the archbishopric of Dol to live as a hermit and primarily works miracles for those who seek him out, Melanius remains bishop and continues to traverse his diocese attending to his flock⁶¹. While the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« may have been constrained by his adherence to the structure and miracles of the »Vita prima«, this expanded description of Melanius still acting as bishop confirms the episcopal focus was nevertheless intentional. The author describes Melanius primarily as a bishop, only once calling him *monachus*, yet also introduces chapters on his joining the monastery of John the Baptist; as a bishop carrying out his duties, yet also accompanied by monks. Rather than dividing the »Vita secunda’s« depiction of Melanius into either monastic or episcopal, Melanius is presented as a monastic bishop, carrying out his episcopal duties from within a monastery.

This portrayal of Melanius as both monk and bishop has parallels with the historical situation in Rennes in the first half of the eleventh century, during which the

56 Vita secunda, 3: *beatissime praesul Melani*.

57 Joseph-Claude POULIN, Sources hagiographiques de la Gaule (SGH) III: les dossiers des saints Melaine, Conwoion et Mervé (Province de Bretagne), in: Martin HEINZELMANN (ed.), Manuscrits hagiographiques et travail des hagiographes, Sigmaringen 1992 (Beihefte der Francia, 24), p. 119–160; CHÉDEVILLE, Un évêque »martinien« (as in n. 27), p. 232.

58 POULIN, L’hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 259; Vita Maglorii, 13, ed. Joseph VAN HECKE, AA SS Oct. X, Paris, Rome 1869, p. 785; Vita secunda, 3.

59 POULIN, L’hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 259; Vita Maglorii (as in n. 58), 8, p. 784; Vita secunda, 2.

60 Vita secunda, 6: *pervigil custos existens super caulas dominici ovili [sic] commissas, dum diocesim suam diligenti examinatione perlustraret*.

61 Vita Maglorii (as in n. 58), 6–11, p. 783–785; Vita secunda, 4, 15–16 involve Melanius visiting kings, 5, 13 attending assemblies of bishops and 14 converting pagans.

same family which monopolised the bishopric between about 990 and 1093/1096 also controlled the abbey of Saint-Melaine⁶². However, despite Chédeville and Tonnerre's description of it as an exploitation of the abbey and unfavourable twelfth-century accounts of this time, the contemporary opinion of the dynasty was not completely negative⁶³. An eleventh-century account of a miracle over which Triscandus, abbot of Saint-Melaine (abbot c. 1032–c. 1047, bishop c. 1037–c. 1047), presided portrays him positively and Du Paz reports that Garinus (bishop 1013/1019–c. 1037) was recorded in the cathedral's martyrology⁶⁴. Similarly, Henry has recently argued that, although dynastic, the eleventh-century bishops of Rennes strengthened the bishopric's structures⁶⁵.

The first parallel which can be observed between this material newly introduced into the »Vita secunda« and historical events of the eleventh century is that of Melaninus leaving Rennes to live in Saint-Melaine. Perhaps to control better the succession to the bishopric, during the eleventh century the bishops of Rennes appear to have regularly retired from the bishopric before their death in order to enable their sons to succeed them as bishop, with at least Tetbaldus (bishop c. 990–c. 1000, abbot c. 1000–c. 1020) then becoming abbot of Saint-Melaine. The »Genealogia episcoporum Redonensis«, a brief text which recounts the family relationships between members of this dynastic episcopal family, records that »after this Tetbaldus grew old, he made himself abbot of Saint-Melaine, and his son Galterius he made bishop« and that then in turn »this Galterius made his son bishop in his life«⁶⁶. This evidence is then cor-

62 CHÉDEVILLE, TONNERRE, *La Bretagne féodale* (as in n. 11), p. 239–246; LUNVEN, *Du diocèse à la paroisse* (as in n. 27), p. 186–193. For a general survey of the Gregorian reform in Brittany see Guy DEVAILLY, *Une enquête en cours: l'application de la réforme grégorienne en Bretagne*, in: *Annales de Bretagne* 75 (1968), p. 293–316; Hubert GUILLOT, *Bretagne et papauté au XI^e siècle*, in: Rolf GROSSE (ed.), *L'Église de France et la papauté (X^e–XIII^e siècle) / Die französische Kirche und das Papsttum (10.–13. Jahrhundert)*, Bonn 1993 (*Études et documents pour servir à une Gallia Pontificia*, 1), p. 265–286; and for Saint-Melaine's reform see Jean-Pierre BRUNTERC'H, Geoffroy Martel, Conan II et les comtes bretons Eudes et Hoël de 1055 à 1060, in: Catherine LAURENT, Bernard MERDRIGNAC, Daniel PICHOT (ed.), *Mondes de l'Ouest et villes du monde. Regards sur les sociétés médiévales. Mélanges en l'honneur d'André Chédeville*, Rennes 1998, p. 321–323.

63 CHÉDEVILLE, TONNERRE, *La Bretagne féodale* (as in n. 11), p. 225; *Instauratio monasterii sancti Melanii in suburbio Redonensi circa medium saeculum XI*, 2, in: *Analecta Bollandiana* 9 (1890), p. 437–444, at p. 439. For contemporary ideas over monastic bishops, see Odilo ENGELS, *Der Reichsbischof in ottonischer und frühsalischer Zeit*, in: Irene CRUSIUS (ed.), *Beiträge zu Geschichte und Struktur der mittelalterlichen Germania Sacra*, Göttingen 1989, p. 135–175.

64 *Aliud miraculum Melanii*, ed. BOLLAND AA SS Jan. I (as in n. 16), p. 334; André CHÉDEVILLE, *Un miracle à Rennes au XI^e siècle*, in: Didier BOISSEUIL, Pierre CHASTANG, Laurent FELLER, Joseph MORSEL (ed.), *Écritures de l'espace social: Mélanges d'histoire médiévale offerts à Monique Bourin*, Paris 2010, p. 55–64; Augustin DU PAZ, *Histoire généalogique de plusieurs maisons illustres de Bretagne*, Paris 1619, p. 48b.

65 HENRY, *Les évêques de Rennes* (as in n. 12). The dates given for the bishops of Rennes, derived from incomplete charter evidence, are inherently approximate.

66 *Genealogia episcoporum Redonensis*, ed. DU PAZ, *Histoire généalogique* (as in n. 64), p. 47b: *postquam consenuit iste Tetbaldus, fecit se Abbatem sancti Melanii, & suum filium Galterium fecit Episcopum [...] iste Galterius filium suum in vita sua fecit Episcopum*. HENRY uses independent charter evidence to prove the »Genealogia's« reliability. *Les évêques de Rennes* (as in n. 12), p. 39. The absence of Sylvester, the last of the family to become bishop, suggests a date of c. 1050 to 1075.

roborated by a charter of Galterius (bishop c. 1000–1013/1019) in favour of Saint-Florent, which both Galterius and his son Garinus attest as *episcopus*, giving an indication as to the mechanism by which the bishopric was inherited⁶⁷. That the »Vita secunda« shows Melanius appropriating a nearby monastery rather than founding his own, as is more usual in Breton hagiography, correlates with Tetbaldus's own acquisition of Saint-Melaine following his time as bishop of Rennes, though it is not possible to say whether on that occasion »the grateful and cheerful brothers freely placed themselves under his authority«⁶⁸.

The second parallel is that of Melanius acting as bishop with his *commoratio* in the monastery of Saint-Melaine⁶⁹. Although *commoratio* does not necessarily imply an episcopal dwelling (and indeed, its classical and primary meaning is a stay), from the context this appears to be the author's intended meaning of the word, and in doing so he would have had the example of such usages as Acts 1:20, where *commoratio* and *episcopatus* are joined. For not only did the bishops of Rennes sometimes retire to the abbey, but under Triscandus, first abbot and then bishop of Rennes, the two positions were held by the same individual. Although unfortunately Triscandus left no archival records as bishop, during this period the bishopric of Rennes and abbacy of Saint-Melaine were held by the same individual, as depicted in the »Vita secunda«⁷⁰. While the fusion of abbeys and bishoprics would be later condemned by Gregorian reformers, this depiction of Melanius as monk and bishop corresponds to the relationship between the bishops of Rennes and the abbey of Saint-Melaine in the first half of the eleventh century. As the only chapters in the »Vita secunda« not found in the »Vita prima«, this development should be read as a deliberate attempt to legitimise this relationship in an era of changing monastic principles by presenting it as a reflection of the situation under the saintly predecessor Melanius⁷¹.

In his presentation of Melanius as monk and bishop, the »Vita secunda« author rewrote the »Vita prima« to justify and reflect the situation of his own era. As well as legitimising the close relationship between the bishops of Rennes and Saint-Melaine, the introduction of Melanius's connection to Saint-Melaine served to legitimise the monastery's position in the ecclesiastical landscape of Rennes. After an obscure tenth century and the loss of the relics of Melanius, the inclusion of Melanius's time as a monk at Saint-Melaine served both to reiterate the monastery's importance to the cult of Rennes's most famous saint and to historicise the connection between the monastery and the cathedral. Through the introduction of new material in the »Vita secunda«, the rewriter reframed Melanius's history into one more useful for his own community.

67 HENRY, Les évêques de Rennes (as in n. 12), p. 40; Pierre-Hyacinthe MORICE, Mémoires pour servir de preuves à l'histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Bretagne, vol. 1, Paris 1742, col. 382.

68 Vita secunda, 3: *fratres gratulabundi et alacres, libenter dominio ipsius se subdiderunt.*

69 Vita secunda, 2.

70 HENRY, Les évêques de Rennes (as in n. 12), p. 41.

71 Regan EBY, Aristocratic Sociability and Monastic Patronage in Eleventh- and Early-Twelfth-Century Brittany, unpubl. PhD dissertation, Boston College 2015, p. 16.

Influence of other Saints' Cults

As well as changing depictions of monasticism, the »Vita secunda Melanii« responds to saints' cults promoted by other religious institutions, even if not as clearly as some other Breton Lives. The lack of introduction of new miracles precludes such clear examples of interaction with other monasteries and cathedrals as Sowerby found in the »Vita secunda Samsonis«, but in the insertion and removal of certain phrases and the refocusing of the prologue, it may be possible to see the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« adjusting the »Vita prima Melanii« to make it more suitable for an eleventh-century audience⁷².

One change which occurs between the »Vita prima Melanii« and the »Vita secunda Melanii« is the removal of a mention of the cult of Martin of Tours. In the »Vita prima«, Melanius resurrects a strangled boy through his prayers to God, in which he invokes the example of »my brother, the lord Martin, bishop of Tours«, who raised three men from the dead⁷³. However, although the miracle is still found with the same details in the »Vita secunda« and although Melanius still implores God at length, there is no mention of Martin⁷⁴. This is the only mention of Martin in the *vitae*, and – except for the bishops Melanius meets at Angers, who are presented as his earthly equals – the only mention of another saint, but it is possible to suggest some reasons why the »Vita secunda« author chose to remove a reference which the »Vita prima« author felt was appropriate. Partially this change may simply be a desire to remove the inferiority of Melanius implied by comparison to Martin. Not only does it present Melanius as desiring to be like Martin, it also draws an immediate comparison between Martin's miracle-working ability, which raised three people from death, and Melanius's, which in both *vitae* raises only one.

Nevertheless, other factors may have influenced his decision. One potential cause is that in the eleventh century, Marmoutier Abbey, a monastery in Tours dedicated to and founded by Martin, was rapidly expanding its landholdings in Brittany. As well as receiving ducal patronage from Alan III (1008–1040) to refound the monastery at Gahard and establish a priory there, Marmoutier received widespread episcopal and aristocratic patronage, and by 1060 had established eight or nine priories in Brittany, largely in the area around Rennes⁷⁵. This picture of competition between the already-established abbeys of Brittany and the ducally-favoured priories of the Loire valley is especially heightened in the context of the foundation of the priory at Châteaubriant⁷⁶. Around 1030 Brient and his mother Innoguent invited first Redon and then Saint-Melaine to found a priory on their estates, but after both abbeys

72 SOWERBY, *The Lives of St Samson* (as in n. 5).

73 Vita prima, 16, f. 168^{va}: *fratrem meum, domnum Martinum, Turonorum episcopum*.

74 Vita secunda, 14.

75 Daniel PICHOT, *Les prieurés bretons de Marmoutier (XI^e–XII^e siècle)*, in: *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 119 (2012), p. 153–174, at p. 156; *Actes des ducs de Bretagne* 19, 10, ed. Hubert GUILLOT, *Actes des ducs de Bretagne (944–1148)*, Rennes 2014 (*Sources médiévales de l'histoire de Bretagne*, 3), p. 201–203, 174–175; EBY, *Aristocratic Sociability* (as in n. 71), p. 14.

76 Daniel PICHOT, *Prieurés et société dans l'Ouest, 11^e–13^e siècle: éléments d'historiographie et premier bilan d'une enquête*, in: *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 113 (2006), p. 9–32, at p. 16.

failed, they then turned to Marmoutier, which was successful⁷⁷. In this context of direct competition for patronage with Marmoutier, it is hardly surprising that a reference to Martin's superiority to Melanius would be omitted from the »Vita secunda«.

An ecclesiastical factor may also have influenced this decision. From the 860s onwards the diocese of Dol had claimed archbishopric status and authority over the bishops of Brittany, at the expense of the Archbishop of Tours⁷⁸. This dispute continued into the eleventh century and given Rennes' connections to Dol – a member of the episcopal family of Dol, Mainus, became bishop of Rennes from c. 1047 to 1076 – it may no longer have seemed suitable to depict a bishop of Rennes referring to Martin as *frater* and *domnus*⁷⁹. Despite uncertainty about which of these factors was most important to the removal of the reference to Martin in the »Vita secunda«, it is still possible to see the »Vita secunda Melanii« endeavouring to reflect better the place of the cult of Martin in its own time.

In addition to the expansion of the Loire valley abbeys into Eastern Brittany, the institutional landscape of Rennes also changed in the early eleventh century due to the foundation of the Abbey of Saint-Georges de Rennes. Between 1024 and 1034 Alan III and his sister Adela established the nunnery, which rapidly grew from aristocratic patronage and ducal attention⁸⁰. After a donation from Alan III of their own, the community of Saint-Melaine may have hoped to become the primary monastery of the dukes of Brittany in Rennes, and this development could hardly have passed unnoticed, since the nunnery was situated between Saint-Melaine and the city walls, the boundaries of the estate defined in the foundation charter as »from the east, from the estate of St Melanius«⁸¹. Saint-Georges also received early support from the episcopal family of Rennes and Garinus's mother and sister were among the initial nuns⁸². The nuns were also willing to use their ducal patrons to dominate the geographical area around Saint-Melaine, acquiring soon after the church of Saint-Pierre-du-Marché

77 PICHOT, Les prieurés bretons (as in n. 75), p. 159; Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Redon, Appendix 60, ed. Aurélien DE COURSON, Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Redon en Bretagne, Paris 1863, p. 380–383; Cf. Jean-Pierre BRUNTERC'H, Puissances temporelle et pouvoir diocésain des évêques de Nantes entre 939 et 1049, in: Mémoires de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Bretagne 61 (1984), p. 29–82; André CHÉDEVILLE, Construction d'églises en pierre au XI^e siècle dans le diocèse de Rennes, in: Xavier BARRAL I ALTET *et al* (ed.), Artistes, artisans et production artistique en Bretagne au Moyen Âge, Rennes 1983, p. 107–109, and Hubert GUILLOTEL, La place de Châteaubriant dans l'essor des châtellerie bretonnes, XI^e–XII^e siècles, in: Mémoires de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Bretagne 66 (1989), p. 5–46.

78 Julia M. H. SMITH, The »archbishopric« of Dol and the ecclesiastical politics of ninth-century Brittany, in: Studies in Church History 18 (1982), p. 59–70.

79 Paula DE FOUGEROLLES, Pope Gregory VII, the Archbishopric of Dol and the Normans, in: Anglo-Norman Studies 21 (1998), p. 47–66; HENRY, Les évêques de Rennes (as in n. 12), p. 44.

80 Étienne MATHIEU, La naissance des prieurés de l'abbaye féminine Saint-Georges de Rennes (1024–1047), in: Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest 113 (2006), p. 93–104, at p. 96; Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Georges de Rennes, 2a, 3a, 6–27, ed. Paul DE LA BIGNE VILLENEUVE, in: Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société Archéologique de Département d'Ille-et-Vilaine 9 (1875), p. 127–312, at p. 226, 228, 230–257; EBY, Aristocratic Sociability (as in n. 71), p. 80.

81 Cartulaire de Saint-Melaine de Rennes, 1, ed. Chantal REYDELLET *et al.*, Cartulaire de Saint-Melaine de Rennes (as in n. 11), p. 57; Actes des ducs de Bretagne (as in n. 75), 28, p. 230: *ab oriente sancti Melanii fundo*.

82 Actes des ducs de Bretagne (as in n. 75), 28, p. 230.

at the eastern city gate of Rennes⁸³. It would therefore not be surprising to find a reflection of this influence in the »Vita secunda«.

Two additions of the »Vita secunda« may reflect the establishment of Saint-Georges and developments to the cult of the saints more broadly in eleventh-century Brittany. The first is emphasis on martyrdom. As well as claiming that »if the attacker were not hiding at this time, he [Melanius] would have eagerly undergone the torment of a martyr«, the prologue of the »Vita secunda« also describes the saints as »desiring to yield neither to threats nor lashes of persecutors, subjecting their sweet souls to any torment«⁸⁴. While a fairly standard sentiment for hagiography, it is a curious one to find in a *vita* of Melanius⁸⁵. Not only does Melanius not suffer threats, lashes or torments, but Brittany had no native martyr cults and, with the exception of Pope Marcellinus at Redon, there is little evidence for the veneration of non-Biblical martyrs in Brittany until the eleventh century⁸⁶. While common in Latin hagiography, such comparisons to the martyrs are atypical for Brittany, with only a few Breton Lives mentioning the martyrs in their prefaces at all⁸⁷.

The second is an extensive use of military language, especially in the prologue. Although Dolbeau considers the prologue to the »Vita secunda« a standard example of turning a prologue focused only on the saint into one focused on both the saint and the author's unworthiness, the situation is more complicated⁸⁸. In rewriting the prologue, the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« relies heavily on the prologue of the »Vita Maglorii«, borrowing from it four times, but when describing Christ's saints as »sacred soldiers bearing the sign of the heavenly King« and wearing the Pauline »breastplate of faith«, these phrases come neither from the »Vita prima Melanii« nor the »Vita Maglorii«⁸⁹. Indeed, the »Vita Maglorii« makes almost no use of military language, and as a result, this choice by the »Vita secunda« author cannot be seen as a result of Melanius being modelled on Maglorius, as elsewhere⁹⁰. Such military language, although again generally common and drawing from the Pauline

83 Ibid., 34, p. 244–245; DE LA BIGNE VILLENEUVE, Cartulaire (as in n. 80), p. 158–159; EBY, Aristocratic Sociability (as in n. 71), p. 23.

84 Vita secunda, 3, Prol.: *affectanter subiret martyrii tormentum, si percussor hac tempestate non lateret; nec minis nec flagris persequentium cedere affectantes, verum dulces animas cuilibet tormento subicientes.*

85 POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 249.

86 SMITH, Oral and Written (as in n. 37), p. 314; BRETT, St Kenelm, St Melor and Anglo-Breton contact (as in n. 36).

87 Of »Vita prima« and »secunda Samsonis«, »Vita Maglorii«, »Vita Brioci«, »Vita prima« and »secunda Pauli Aureliani«, »Vita prima, secunda« and »tertia Tutguali«, »Vita brevior Turiavi«, »Vita Merovei«, »Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium«, »Bili's Vita Machutis«, »Vita brevior« and »longior Machutis« and »Vita longior Winwaloei«, only »Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium« and »Vita secunda Tutguali« mention the martyrs in their prologues, and even those are formulaic pairings with the confessors.

88 François DOLBEAU, Transformations des prologues hagiographiques, dues aux réécritures, in: Monique GOULLET, Martin HEINZELMANN, Christiane VEYRARD-COSME (ed.), L'hagiographie mérovingienne à travers ses réécritures, Paris 2010, p. 111.

89 POULIN, L'hagiographie bretonne (as in n. 6), p. 248, 258; Vita secunda, Prol.: *militēs sacratos excelsi regis stigmata gerentes [...] lorica fidei.*

90 Military language in »Vita Maglorii« is limited to one mention of the *militia coelestis*. Vita Maglorii (as in n. 58), 27, p. 790.

»armour of God«, is distinctively uncommon in a Breton context, rarely featuring in prologues⁹¹. Consequently, although these changes are hagiographical tropes, they should still be understood to be a conscious attempt by the »Vita secunda« author to make Melanius's sanctity of a comparable nature to that of martyrs and saints more usually described with military language.

These changes are especially notable in the context of the influx of new saints into Brittany in the eleventh century and the foundation of Saint-Georges. Although unclear why the dedication to George was chosen, its foundation marked the introduction of a universal martyr cult into Brittany whose presence was previously unknown and corresponds more generally with a contemporary increase in warrior-saints⁹². In maintaining the underlying description of Melanius but giving him a more military description and appropriating the martyrs' sanctity, the »Vita secunda« author represents him as a saint as worthy of veneration as George. Although admittedly tropes, the increased focus on martyrdom and militarism are not found in the »Vita prima Melanii« and only rarely in other Breton saints' Lives and thus should be understood as deliberate changes in order to locate the already established cult of Melanius within a changing hagiographical landscape. Furthermore, new competing cults were not only supported by Saint-Melaine's patrons, the episcopal family of Rennes, but even introduced by them. While it is unclear whether he ever fulfilled his vow, Bernard of Angers records that bishop Galterius had promised to consecrate an altar to St Faith in the new basilica which he was building in Rennes, itself dedicated to St Thomas⁹³.

In light of the institutional challenges faced by Saint-Melaine from such newer communities as Marmoutier and Saint-Georges and from bishop-abbots willing to patronise other cults, the author of the »Vita secunda Melanii« appears to have sought to present Melanius as worthy of veneration by removing an inferiority-implying reference to Martin and by portraying him as equal to the martyrs. Rewriting the »Vita Melanii« presented a way for the community of Saint-Melaine to reemphasise the sanctity of Melanius, the father of the diocese, in a time of changing customs and new pressures and to renew interest in his cult in an increasingly competitive milieu.

91 Of the Lives listed above, only »Gesta Sanctorum Rotonensium« describes the saints as *milites Christi* or uses any military language in its prologue.

92 Laura MELLINGER, Prayer and Politics in Medieval Brittany: The Making of Saint-Georges, in: *Benedictine Review* 47 (1996), p. 433–444, at p. 434, n. 6; James B. MACGREGOR, Negotiating Knightly Piety: The Cult of the Warrior-Saints in the West, ca. 1070–ca. 1200, in: *Church History* 73 (2004), p. 317–345, at p. 320; Jonathan GOOD, The Cult of Saint George in Medieval England, Woodbridge 2009, p. 32. A possibly spurious eleventh-century seal matrix from Saint-Georges depicts George as a knight on horseback. Paul BANÉAT, *Ville de Rennes: Catalogue du Musée Archéologique et Ethnographique*, 3rd ed., Rennes 1909, p. 190.

93 Bernard of Angers, *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, I, [34], ed. Luca ROBERTINI, *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis. Il racconto dei prodigi da una santa bambina*, ed. Luigi RICCI, Florence 2010 (Par verba, 25), p. 218.

Melanius as Intercessor

From the very earliest beginnings of Christianity, prayer to the dead was believed to be of use to the living: in this early medieval Brittany is no exception⁹⁴. However, although the action of divine grace through miracles is found in the »Vita prima Melanii«, the »Vita secunda« author sought to adapt his hypotext in order to make it better fit his needs by accentuating Melanius's intercessory position. Through adapting the »Vita prima«, the »Vita secunda« author presents Melanius as a powerful advocate and patron, working miracles on earth and interceding for supplicants in heaven.

A notable way in which he achieves this is through making the illnesses which Melanius cures sound considerably worse than in the »Vita prima«. For while he may not introduce new supplicants nor change the nature of their afflictions, the »Vita secunda« author includes significantly more graphic detail, expanding the terse descriptions found in the »Vita prima«. When Melanius is presented with a demoniac to exorcise, the underlying details remain the same, but the level of description increases. In the »Vita prima« she is laconically described as »filled with a demon and restrained by its bonds«, which in the »Vita secunda« is expanded to »she was painfully tortured by a demon, so that thus, gnashing with her teeth, she attacked men with a bite« and that she had »her hands bound by firm ropes from behind«⁹⁵. Not only is the binding changed from a spiritual one to a protective physical one, but the vivid description of her symptoms also makes her demonic possession appear more serious. Likewise, later in the *vita*e a man called Medias presents his son to Melanius for healing. In the »Vita prima«, Medias says: »I beg you, man of God, to restore my son to me, because he is crippled in body« and in the »Vita secunda«: »O lord, I have a son whom a fever attacks, wearies, his limbs drooping, now he is already deprived of the cohesion of his limbs. Labouring under this misfortune, doubtful of the very breath of life, he begs you to grant him help«⁹⁶.

Just as with the demoniac, the »Vita secunda« provides more information as to how Medias's son is suffering, more than doubling the length of Medias's speech, and in doing so makes the illness appear far more severe. Most significantly, the audience is provided with the detail that the son is »doubtful of the very breath of life«, which is emphasised by making the fever actively attack the son, the dramatic asyndeton of *anhelat, fatigat*, and firmly grounding the son's worsening condition in the present via the use of present tense verbs and *jamjamque*. Since none of this detail is given in the »Vita prima« – indeed, it is not even stated that it is a fever causing the son's lameness – this marks a considerable increase in vividness. These changes serve to create

94 Gábor KLANICZAY, *Using Saints: Intercession, Healing, Sanctity*, in: John H. ARNOLD (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, Oxford 2014, p. 217.

95 Vita prima, 13, f. 167^{va}: *doemone plena eiusque ligaminibus constricta; Vita secunda, 11: aegre cruciabatur a daemone, ita ut, dentibus frendens, morsu appeteret homines [...] vincita manus robustis funibus a tergo.*

96 Vita prima, 14, f. 167^{vb}: *»Deprecor te, homo Dei, ut restituas mihi filium meum, quia debilitatur corpore«*; Vita secunda, 12: *»Est mihi, domine, natus, quem fatiscientibus artibus febris anhelat, fatigat, jamjamque compagine membrorum destitutum. Qui huiusmodi laborans infortunio, dubius vitalis aerae, expostulat a te opem sibi praeberi.«*

tension in the »Vita secunda« and as a result when Melanius heals the sick his dramatic intervention is more miraculous and noteworthy.

As with illness, the rewriter increases the vividness of description given to the sorrow of the individuals who wish to receive healing from Melanius. In two chapters fathers implore Melanius to help their dying sons and in both, »formulaic gestures« of grief like those identified by Bailey are heavily expanded⁹⁷. In the »Vita prima« the only evidence of Medias's grief is that, after requesting Melanius's help, »he was wailing greatly«⁹⁸. In the »Vita secunda« the author describes both how Medias makes this request »with begging and lamenting« and other manifestations of his sorrow (»and kneeling he was holding out his hands and arms«)⁹⁹. This introduction of physical signs of grief is also found in the miracle of the strangled son. Not only is the father's weeping made more explicit (the only mention in the »Vita prima« is that the father »wept greatly«, whereas in the »Vita secunda« he is described as »with no one able to sooth his mourning« and »with a voice tearful from beseeching and lamenting«), but further physical signs of the father's grief are also introduced, such as his seizing Melanius's legs and begging him repeatedly to restore his son to life¹⁰⁰. Additionally, the author makes the »Vita secunda« more emotional through altering the characters' speech. As mentioned above, the »Vita secunda« author adjusts the speech of Medias describing his son's illness, and a similar change can be found in the speech of the father of the strangled son. Whereas in the »Vita prima« the father is unsentimental, in the »Vita secunda« the father's words not only request his son to be revived, but also indicates how strongly this loss has affected him by revealing his determination¹⁰¹. These changes in the ways the »Vitae Melanii« depict emotion may be part of a trend in later hagiography to include more passionate demonstrations of grief, but, regardless, they serve to make clear how important the hope of healing and resurrection which Melanius offers is¹⁰².

The »Vita secunda« not only presents Melanius as a heavenly intercessor working miracles on earth but also as an advocate at the final judgement, developing a concept which, although present since Late Antiquity, is barely found in the »Vita prima«¹⁰³. The first chapter of the »Vita prima« presents saints not as heavenly intercessors, but as an »example of faithful ones« which inspires Christians »and calls them to this

97 Anne E. BAILEY, Lamentation Motifs in Medieval Hagiography, in: *Gender and History* 25 (2013), p. 529–544, at p. 529.

98 Vita prima, 14, f. 167^{vb}: *fremebat ualde*.

99 Vita secunda, 12: *implorando et gemendo [...] supplexque manus et brachia tenderet*.

100 Vita prima, 16, f. 168^{tb}: *fleuit multum*; Vita secunda, 14: *nemineque ejus maerorem sedare valente [...] lugubri voce efflagitando et conquerendo lugubri voce efflagitando et conquerendo*.

101 Vita prima, 16, f. 168^{va}: »*Credo, uir Dei, ut etiam a morte per te possit resurgere*.« »I believe, man of God, that through you he might even be able to rise from death«; Vita secunda, 14: »*Sancte Melani, redde mihi natum meum, quem abstulit crudelis hostis, invidus tuis gestis. Certe noveris quia nullatenus a te recedam, nisi restitueris filium*.« »O holy Melanius, return to me my son, whom a cruel enemy, hostile to your deeds, stole away. Surely you know that in no way will I leave you unless you return my son.«

102 BAILEY, Lamentation Motifs (as in n. 97), p. 531.

103 Robert BARTLETT, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation*, Princeton 2013, p. 103–106.

good example¹⁰⁴. Only once is Melanius explicitly described as a heavenly intercessor, »situated by the heavenly throne until the day of the Lord«¹⁰⁵. Though the »Vita prima« author clearly conceptualizes Melanius acting in this way, he does not emphasise it. In contrast, the »Vita secunda« repeatedly does so. In addition to individuals in the *vita* declaring Melanius's intercessory position, such as the thieves who cry that Melanius's »»excellent merits and marks of honour are able to obtain from Christ whatsoever they seek«, the author himself also includes explicit statements to this effect¹⁰⁶. In the prologue the author describes the saints as those to whom the faithful pray so that, defended »from the onslaught of illicit pleasure« they may have »the hope of the eternal resurrection«, and in chapter 9 he again describes God as saving those who beseech the saints with their prayers¹⁰⁷. But this idea of Melanius as saintly intercessor is clearest in the »Vita secunda's« description of the heavenly court to which Melanius ascends on his death. What in the »Vita prima« is left tersely as »the heavenly throne« is elaborated into a lengthy description of over a hundred words in the »Vita secunda«. Now Melanius's soul, »united with the choirs of the armies of angels and all the saints«, enjoys the company of God in the *sancta civitas* of the heavenly Jerusalem, and is »still concerned« for supplicants¹⁰⁸. Although the »Vita prima« author clearly conceives of the saints acting as heavenly intercessors, it is only in the »Vita secunda« that this is developed and expanded upon to present a detailed image of Melanius assisting those who pray to him not only through miracles but also by advocating for their salvation at the final judgement.

Throughout the »Vita secunda« Melanius's position as a powerful advocate in heaven is emphasised. Although the author does not choose to include new or posthumous miracles, this does not prevent him developing the depictions of illness and emotion already found in the »Vita prima« in order to make the miracles more impressive, nor does it hinder him in describing how Melanius intercedes with God in both this life and the next. The »Vita secunda« author was not the only individual at Saint-Melaine during the eleventh century with a desire to present Melanius thus. A monastic office for Melanius from Saint-Melaine survives in a late-eleventh-century manuscript and can be attributed to the same intellectual milieu as it draws its description of Melanius's miracles from the »Vita secunda«¹⁰⁹. Requesting Melanius to »»always deign to

104 Vita prima, 1, f. 165^{ra}: *exemplum fidelium [...] eosque ad exemplum prouocat bonum.*

105 Vita prima, 18, f. 169^{va}: *throno caelesti usque in diem Domini collocatus.*

106 Vita secunda, 19: *»merita praeclara atque insignia a Christo quaecumque petierint obtinere queunt.«*

107 Vita secunda, Prol.: *ab inlicitae incursum voluptatis [...] resurrectionis aeternae spem.*

108 Vita secunda, 17: *[angelorum] agminum sanctorumque omnium choris sociata; Vita secunda, 17: adhuc sollicitus.*

109 Office for Melanius, Vatican BAV, Reg. lat. 486, f. 67^v–68^r; According to André WILMART the Office is an eleventh-century addition: *Bibliotheca Vaticana. Codices Regimenses Latini*, vol. 2, Vatican 1945, p. 675; Michel HUGLO, *La domaine de la notation bretonne*, in: *Acta Musicologica* 35 (1963), p. 54–84, at p. 62. It is unknown to François DUINE, *Inventaire liturgique de l'hagiographie bretonne*, Paris 1922. It describes the cast-out devil in Vita prima, 6, f. 166^r and Vita secunda, 6 as *feda relinquentem uestigia* (»leaving behind filthy traces«), a detail only found in »Vita secunda« and describes Melanius retiring to the monastery with the same maritime language as »Vita secunda«. The author however is presumably not the same as »Vita secunda«, since it also includes details about Melanius not found in »Vita secunda«. MS consultable online: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.486 (28.02.2022).

beg Christ for us!« and »intercede for us before the Lord Jesus Christ!«, this text emphasises Melanius's intercessory position and demonstrates that the monks of Saint-Melaine were focusing their prayers on him¹¹⁰. Although the concept of saintly intercession is present in both *vitae*, it is accentuated in the »Vita secunda« through both the description of miracles and clarification of the saints' role in heaven. In this way the author presents Melanius as a saint worthy of veneration, a member of the *sanctorum omnium chorus*, and a fitting patron for the monastery of Saint-Melaine.

Conclusions

In the eleventh century the monastic community of Saint-Melaine, with its links to the bishopric of Rennes, was a community under pressure. Brittany, increasingly connected to France, was no longer a peripheral society and ecclesiastical norms were turning against the tradition of dynastic bishop-abbots that Tetbaldus's family represented¹¹¹. In 1078 Sylvester, the last of his family to hold the bishopric, was suspended at the council of Poitiers for a range of offences including having been consecrated as bishop without having been first ordained, and homicide¹¹². With these changes came not only wider hagiographical horizons but also increasing competition, both from incoming Loire valley abbeys such as Marmoutier and from new Breton foundations such as Saint-Georges. In this context the choice to rewrite the »Vita prima Melanii«, emphasising Melanius's position as a powerful intercessor, was not a neutral decision but a deliberate attempt to update a text to better suit the needs of the eleventh century. Melanius's depiction as a heavenly advocate cannot be separated from the historical circumstances in which the *vita* was produced, but rather was a response to it.

By singing a new song, the »Vita secunda« author hoped to revitalise the veneration of Rennes's great early saint and represent Melanius as a would-have-been-martyr monk-bishop worthy of serving as a focus of both the monastery and cathedral's identity. Ultimately, in this he failed. Reformers appointed from outside – first Even to Saint-Melaine, then Marbod to the cathedral – irrevocably changed the situation of the first half of the eleventh century and the »Vita secunda«, though inspiring the Office discussed above, failed to replace the »Vita prima« in popularity, only surviving in two medieval witnesses. When in the twelfth century a dossier of hagiographical material concerning Melanius was compiled at Saint-Melaine, it was the interpolated version of the »Vita prima«, rather than the »Vita secunda«, which was included¹¹³. But the failure of the rewriter does not make his efforts less interesting

110 Office for Melanius (as in n. 109), f. 67^r, 68^r: *pro nobis Christum semper dignare precari [...] intercede pro nobis ad Dominum Hiesum Christum.*

111 SMITH, *Province and Empire* (as in n. 10), p. 203.

112 HENRY, *Les évêques de Rennes* (as in n. 12), p. 45; KRISTON R. RENNIE, *The Council of Poitiers (1078) and Some Legal Considerations*, in: *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 27 (2007), p. 1–20, at p. 3; Hugh of Die, *Epistolae et Privilegia*, VII, ed. MIGNE PL, vol. 157, col. 510. Beate SCHILLING (ed.), *Gallia Pontificia*, vol. 3/3: *Province ecclésiastique de Vienne: Diocèses de Die et de Viviers*, Göttingen 2018, p. 161 no. *48.

113 This manuscript probably burnt in the 1665 fire at Saint-Melaine, but its contents are known from early modern transcripts. DOLBEAU, *Fragments métriques* (as n. 31), p. 115–119.

for showing what concerns he held and how, without fundamentally changing the narrative, a *vita* could be updated to fulfil a community's changing requirements. Although they may shed no further light on the lifetime of the saint, rewritten saints' Lives can be informative for the time of their composition, even when the rewriter's changes appear minor. Through a close comparison of the »Vita secunda Melanii« to the author's hypotext, the »Vita prima Melanii«, it is possible to glimpse a response to the institutional challenges faced in eleventh-century Rennes and begin to answer why someone felt a *canticum novum* was necessary.