on the holy names, for example, as to when, in the mass, the names were to be recited. As the Franks became increasingly devoted to the sanctorum nominum festivitas there was a need for legislation concerning its use. By 817 Louis the Pious, with the assistance of Witiza-Benedict, had established legislation for the daily recitation of sacred names. However, there was an unexpected obstacle to the spread of the Martyrology of Jerome: in the 820s Rome lifted the relic embargo and Roman relics became widely available. This diminished the importance of the Martyrology and name-centred devotion.

The Name of the Saint is thoroughly researched using a wide range of sources and events; legal, political, liturgical, ecclesiastical and palaeographical. Lifshitz reveals interesting details about the use of the manuscripts. For example, a friend of an unknown Susanna added her name so as to be close to a saint name, only to have it erased by an enemy’s red squiggle. This alteration was in turn erased and the name of a known monk, Ethelwald, was added. Space close to the saintly names was at a premium. In The Name of the Saint, Europe of the eighth and ninth century unfolds – from the unknowns, like Susanna, to the political power of the Carolingian court and the Papacy. The depth of this study makes it of interest and value to any early medieval scholar.

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O’Connor, Anne, The Blessed and the Damned: Sinful Women and Unbaptised Children in Irish Folklore

Bern: Peter Lang, 2005, paperback; 260 pages; RRP 69 Swiss Francs; ISBN 3039105418

Anne O’Connor’s latest book is, like her earlier ones, about folklore, a topic which is generally firmly rooted in the early modern and modern periods and might therefore seem an unusual subject for review in an early medieval journal. However, with an increasing interest in what scholars of medievalism refer to as ‘the afterlife’ of the early medieval – the reuse and reinvention in later periods of themes, motifs and artefacts from the early medieval – it seemed to be potentially of considerable interest. Particularly in Ireland, there are many possible points of departure: early medieval Christian sites which later became burial grounds for unbaptised infants; the specific treatment in early Irish legal texts of female transgressors; and the recurring motif of the disposal of unwanted infants in early Irish literature, for example.

As O’Connor makes clear in her introduction, her material has the potential to be of broad chronological relevance, her contextualising references ranging from Harry Potter (17) to medieval Roman Catholic commentaries (15). The early medievalist’s interest is caught as the
discussion in Chapter 1 of unbaptised children refers to a triad in Irish (38); however, as it does not appear in Meyer’s collection of Triads, the citation is to the Irish Folklore Collection, and O’Connor gives the text in modern Irish, one must assume that the triad is of more recent date. A similar disappointment comes in Chapter 3, where a discussion of burial places for unbaptised babies refers to these *cillíní* as frequently being ‘old, disused churchyards’, but does not touch on the really interesting fact that they are frequently early medieval Christian sites, which have not been used as churches in the modern period. Such sites are generally associated with a local saint and often have surviving cross-marked stones, which might add an interesting dimension to consideration of the attitudes underlying the practice of infant burial.

Beyond these two instances, there is virtually nothing in *The Blessed and the Damned* that is even tangential to the study of early medieval Ireland. Nonetheless, it is a fascinating book, and presents a quantity of material which is of interest to anyone who, like O’Connor, seeks to explore the religious and social ‘worldview’ of the Irish. There is plenty to reward an early medievalist with an interest in the later development of the society we study, but if there are links between O’Connor’s work and ours, we must identify them for ourselves. From this perspective, one of the chief attractions of the book is the thorough discussion of regional variations in the folklore, which would be very useful for mapping against regional variations in early Irish literature or material culture. Another useful feature is that much of the folklore is recorded, and presented here, in the Irish language, which would enable investigation of historical developments of specific terminology.

O’Connor is interested in comparison of Irish folklore with that of other European regions, and that is another strength of the book. In particular, comparisons to material recorded elsewhere in the British Isles and in Scandinavia bring to light interesting relationships which, for those interested in long histories, could fruitfully be compared to relationships in early medieval literary and artistic material.

This book is engagingly and clearly written, and features extensive transcripts of folk tales which make for very interesting reading. The bibliography is extensive, and includes a scattering of names familiar to the early medieval scholar: John Carey, Proinsias MacCana, Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Michael Richter and Jonathan Wooding are amongst them. The index is heavily weighted towards folklore scholarship, with extensive references to particular motifs, but unfortunately there are very few listings for such useful things as the Irish towns, counties or regions mentioned in the text. When one looks for ‘Kerry’, the county of origin of many of the tales and practices discussed, one is rewarded only with ‘Kerry Babies Case’. Thus the book is probably at its most useful if read in its entirety, or
at least in whole chapters, which is not hard to do. However, tracking down that elusive reference for use in one’s own writing ranges from frustrating to downright impossible.

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O’Neill, Pamela, ‘A pillar curiously engraven; with some inscription upon it’: What is the Ruthwell Cross?
Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, British Series 397, 2005, softback; 208 pages; RRP £36 (AUD$90); ISBN 1 84171 867 X

I was fortunate enough to read Pamela O’Neill’s, then unpublished, doctoral thesis a few years ago and, upon returning to the published version of that dissertation, ‘A pillar curiously engraven; with some inscription upon it’: What is the Ruthwell Cross? I find that I have benefited from the reading of it once again. O’Neill’s 1999 thesis has been published in the British Series of the British Archaeological Reports largely unchanged from its original state and remains essential reading for students of early medieval Insular archaeology and history.

O’Neill’s book begins with a close examination of the monument itself, divided into three chapters. Chapter 2, ‘What is the Ruthwell Cross?’, surveys the appearance of the object both as it stands now and as it has been represented historically in photographs, drawings and in the writings of early observers. From the outset, O’Neill reminds her audience that the ‘monument now known as the Ruthwell Cross was created in the nineteenth century’ (17) and this chapter’s final caveat — that what remains of the monument ‘is a badly damaged, much mutilated remnant of a highly complex sculpture of which we can have very little knowledge’ (26) — prepares us for the narrative difficulties that lie ahead. O’Neill then proceeds in Chapter 3, ‘Where is the Ruthwell Cross?’, to locate the object both geographically — within the Northumbrian ecclesiastical and political orbits — and temporally — having been constructed no later than 750 CE.

The next five chapters consist of a more detailed analysis of the monument, beginning with a literature review in chapter four. O’Neill then dedicates a chapter to each of the four major features of the Ruthwell Cross, beginning with the vinescroll ornament before proceeding to the examples of figural sculpture and from there to the Latin and Runic inscriptions. It is in these chapters that the controversial nature of O’Neill’s thesis begins to be expounded.

O’Neill argues that the vinescroll ornament not only reveals ‘significant differences’ between the Ruthwell Cross and ‘other sculptured objects from the British Isles in the early medieval period’, but also ‘casts doubt on the unity’ of the object as it appears today (43). O’Neill also asserts that the figural carving indicates links between the monument at