
Flying a kite with the children of Hiberno-Norse Dublin: a tentative social exploration

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Introduction

The modest aim of this contribution is to reflect upon the younger members of Hiberno-Norse society. An excavation of High Street (Dublin) bore the skeletal remains of a twelve-year-old girl, dated to the eleventh century, and although as Hadley cautions that in general ‘one cannot identify an individual Scandinavian... on the basis of height, foot size, skull circumference, blood group or genetic characteristic’,¹ the social historian is left to ponder the girl’s position within her community, her up-bringing and environment, and indeed, her cultural milieu and ethnicity.² Archaeological and documentary evidence relating to medieval Dublin has provided in-depth knowledge on a multitude of areas such as urban layout and development, building types, art styles, economic enterprise and much more-- a wealth of information very much evident and readily accessible in H.B. Clarke’s spectacularly detailed *Irish Historic Towns Atlas, Dublin* and in the National Museum of Ireland/Royal Irish Academy’s archaeological publication series. To attempt to perceive the social imprint of a child within Viking-Age Dublin, however, is to face a particular challenge as the corpus of suitable documentary evidence which would facilitate a thorough exploration is somewhat lacking. Common sense prevails regarding the presence of the child within the *longphort*, *dún* and *civitas*. As Simpson comments in her engaging discussion on the possible composition and location of the *longphort*, ‘finally, and most importantly, there must have been a not inconsiderable resident population or ‘support team’, the men and women (and children) who were not directly involved in raiding but who were responsible for the day-to-day domestics, feeding, sheltering the inhabitants, be they warrior or slave’.³ But how far can the historian proceed in attempting to un-bracket ‘(the children)’?

It is generally accepted that the Vikings quickly adapted to their Irish Sea surroundings and were culturally integrated into native Irish society by the

¹ D.M. Hadley, ‘Viking and native: re-thinking identity in the Danelaw’, *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), 69.

² G.F. Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment in Early* (Dublin, 1987), p. 23.

³ L. Simpson, ‘Viking warrior burials in Dublin : is this the *longphort*?’ in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin VI* (Dublin, 2005), p. 15.

tenth and eleventh centuries.⁴ As Woolf remarks, the process of ‘nativization’ however, ‘by which the Gaill became Gael is not well understood’.⁵ The adoption of Christianity, in all probability, facilitated the process of integration in how the peoples of Dublin and surrounding land forged one identity whilst becoming part of another.⁶ In the post-revisionist approach to the overall impact of the Vikings on Ireland, which has witnessed a move away from the dichotomy of good and bad, to a recognition of a more fluid and complex cross-cultural process,⁷ questions are raised in relation to the social mechanisms that facilitated the ultimate acceptance and absorption of the peoples from the North into Irish society. One small piece of the social jigsaw constitutes the younger members of this society.

For the study of medieval Irish society, we are fortunate to possess a detailed corpus of legal writings, the largest extant for pre-1200 Europe, which includes discourse centred on the position of the child and the practice of child-rearing.⁸ However, in the absence of a legal code or a body of legal commentary specifically relating to the inhabitants of *Dyflinnarskéri* pre-1200, we need to cast our net somewhat wider. Our catch is made up of the closely related legal writings which emanated from medieval Norway and Iceland (a written redaction of the former, dating to the early twelfth century,⁹ and the written codification of an early stratum within Icelandic tradition, dating to the second decade of the twelfth century).¹⁰ This comparative exploration of legal texts is not without methodological concerns which need to be addressed.

⁴ A. Woolf, ‘Amlaíb Cuarán and the Gael, 941-81’ in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin III* (Dublin, 2002), p. 34; M. Valente, ‘Dublin’s economic relations with hinterland and periphery in the later Viking age’ in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin I* (Dublin, 2000), p. 68; J. Bradley, ‘The interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement in Ireland’ in J. Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 61.

⁵ Woolf, ‘Amlaíb Cuarán’, p. 34.

⁶ S. Harrison, ‘Viking Graves and Grave-goods in Ireland’ in A-C Larsen (ed.), *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), p. 74. See L. Abrams, ‘Conversion and Assimilation’ in D.M. Hadley and J.D. Richards (eds), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Turnhout, 2000), p. 137.

⁷ H.B. Clarke, ‘Proto-Towns and Towns in Ireland and Britain’ in H.B. Clarke, M. Ní Mhaonaigh and R. Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 331-2; C. Doherty, ‘The Vikings in Ireland: A Review’ in Clarke et al., *Ireland and Scandinavia*, pp 288-330.

⁸ For the vernacular texts, see D.A. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* I-VI (Dublin, 1978). Hereafter, *CIH*. For discourse on this source, see F. Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988).

⁹ For text see, L.M. Larson, *The Earliest Norwegian Laws* (Columbia, 1935). Hereafter, *ENL*. P. Norseng, ‘Law Codes as a source for Nordic History in the Early Middle Ages’, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 16 (1991), 145.

¹⁰ A. Dennis, P. Foote, and R. Perkins, *Laws of Early Iceland* Vols. I & II (Manitoba, 2000), p. 10. Hereafter, *LEI*.

First, in relation to the primary sources it must be acknowledged that a retrospective lens is being applied to the material as it stands in the Norwegian and Icelandic texts and therefore caution is necessary.¹¹ It would be difficult to deny, however, that the expression of medieval law in written form often has longstanding practice and custom embedded within it. Second, in relation to the nature of medieval law, it must be acknowledged that legal traditions are not static entities, especially so in the context of migrations, settlement and interaction between peoples. Without a textual source penned by the *Finn-Gaill*, however, the closest textual relation to work with is from medieval Norway, and Iceland by extension. In the application of this comparative approach, much that can be noted is therefore speculative or suggestive, but it does provide one manner of discourse in order to investigate societies at play.

Legal & social correspondence

To have access to, and rights within, a particular legal system could either indicate inclusion and acceptance, or exclusion and differentiation between individuals and/or groups. In general, legal sources are of particular value as they formed part of the expression of group identity and social order. On the whole, the societies depicted within the legal writings from Ireland, Iceland and Norway, reveal numerous familiar traits.¹² On a macro-level, we read similarities in the importance of individual honour and position within the community; the role of the kin; the nature of protection; the possibility of being placed socially and legally outside of the law; the stratification within society; and the nature of consent and that of personal right (in concept and in the flesh).¹³ Within legal procedure itself, a selection of common features include the presence of oath-helpers; the possibility of restitution with kindred payments; and the role and importance of public declarations of situations, incidents and/or outcomes.¹⁴ On this last point, the presence of the Thingmount in Dublin (at the junction of Church Lane and Suffolk Street) for administrative and legal matters, which was ‘a standard feature of major Scandinavian settlements’,¹⁵ acts as a clear reminder of the predominantly oral nature of society at this time and also to the active role played by the community in the maintenance of social order. This is further evidenced in both Irish and Norse traditions, where criminal acts which were committed in

¹¹ See Norseng, ‘Law Codes as a Source for Nordic History’, 137-66.

¹² P.H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings* (New York, 1994), pp 39-64.

¹³ E.g.s, *ENL*, pp 25, 12-13, 123; *LEI* I, pp 109, 118-9, 230; II, pp 6-7, 53, 77. See Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp 7-16, 140-1, 222-4.

¹⁴ E.g.s, *ENL*, p. 16; 121; *LEI* I, pp 143-4, 155; II, p. 36. See Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp 198ff, 214.

¹⁵ H.B. Clarke, *Dublin Part 1* Irish Historic Towns Atlas (Dublin, 2002), p. 5; *ENL*, p. 11.

secret were deemed to carry a more severe penalty than if the act was committed in public, or not concealed.¹⁶ On certain core principles relating to how societies functioned, a much longer and more detailed list could be made of similarities both on legal principle and in detail across these traditions. What this may suggest was that many aspects of Scandinavian society were well suited to being grafted, or grafting themselves onto Irish society (especially once Christianised).

Living space

Before turning to the legal commentary and the somewhat virtual world of the child on vellum, it is important to consider what do we know of the physical domain and living-quarters in Dublin in which to situate the child. It has been estimated that the population of Viking-Age Dublin in the mid-eleventh century, with 900 houses and five per house, was *ca.* 4,500.¹⁷ The general environment is summarised by Mitchell as follows, ‘narrow uncleaned streets and alleys were lined with small houses, most of which had a small garden plot behind: in the plot there would be a shed or byre and a cesspit.’¹⁸ On the actual domestic dwelling, Wallace comments (on a ‘Type 1’ structure which represents approximately three-quarters of all buildings in Dublin) that,

‘In its classic expression, the Type 1 building has low post-and-wattle walls and a roof supported by two pairs of large posts or groups of posts situated well in from the side and end-walls and on the other side of a centrally located stone-kerbed hearth which was positioned on a line between the two end walls both of which usually had a doorway. The longitudinal floor strip which ran between the end wall doorways was flanked on either side by built-up bedding/bench areas which backed onto the side walls... and the raised character of the bedding/benches meant that they were only bed/seats and not meant to be walked on. The average floor area of these buildings was about 40 m².’¹⁹

Within this ‘Dublin house *par excellence*’, on average 8.5m long by 4.75m wide, the family unit resided.²⁰ With every excavation and analysis of material

¹⁶ E.g.s, *ENL*, pp 17, 140; *LEI* II, p. 177; Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 128.

¹⁷ S. Geraghty, *Viking Dublin: Botanical Evidence from Fishamble Street* (Dublin, 1996), p. 59.

¹⁸ Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment in Early Dublin*, p. 22.

¹⁹ P.F. Wallace, ‘Ireland’s Viking Towns’ in A-C. Larsen (ed.), *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), p. 45; P.F. Wallace, *The Viking Age Buildings of Dublin* (Dublin, 1992), Part 1: Text, pp 9-14; See Part 2, for Illustrations, pp 58-60.

²⁰ Wallace, *Viking Age Buildings*, p. 9; Geraghty, *Viking Dublin: Botanical Evidence*, p. 5.

undertaken, our understanding of living conditions improve, and these analyses have indicated a range in standards from the more affluent merchant quarter of Fishamble Street to the presence of possible drainage problems, the flea, the wood pest, and lice in one particular dwelling on Essex Street West.²¹ Based on the illustration and measurements noted above, people lived in very close proximity within dwellings. What is also striking is the external proximity between dwellings within the wider community, an illustration of which can be found in the archaeologist and artist Simon Dick's well-known impression of Dublin c. 1000.²² Certain streets developed their own character, e.g. the property plots on Werburgh Street were no bigger than the actual houses;²³ those on Christchurch Place appear to have been set back from the thoroughfare; and the layout in Winetavern Street to High Street would appear to indicate that this area was relatively congested.²⁴ The mass of detail which archaeology has provided, and continues to provide, is crucial in informing us about the natural and man-made environment in which the child was brought up, including health and safety issues in the child's surroundings.

The unborn child & pregnant women

Within the legal writings, the health and safety of a potential member of the kin began in the womb. 'A man has no right to kill a woman with a live child in her womb even if she has forfeited immunity by her own act or she is outlawed', according to Icelandic law. Were it to occur, it would be deemed as two killings.²⁵ We read a similar stance taken by the medieval Irish jurist whereupon the termination of a foetus (and/or the mother), the person responsible (noting that the husband is in the frame in this scenario) must make compensation for *both* mother and foetus.²⁶ In theory, an awareness of what penalties would ensue should extend a degree of added protection to the pregnancy. The issue of the health of an expectant mother is of further interest in Icelandic tradition within a discussion on fasting, which formed part of the Christian calendar. It is noted that both pregnant and breastfeeding women were exempt from undertaking a fast,²⁷ which we may speculate was for the

²¹ E. Reilly, 'The Excavation of insect remains to an understanding of the environment of Viking-age and medieval Dublin' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin IV* (Dublin, 2003), pp 51-2, 56.

²² The illustration can be found in H.B. Clarke, *Dublin Part 1 Irish Historic Towns Atlas* (Dublin, 2002).

²³ L. Simpson, 'Forty years a-digging: a preliminary synthesis of archaeological investigations in medieval Dublin' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin I* (Dublin, 2000), p. 32.

²⁴ Wallace, 'Ireland's Viking Towns' in Larsen (ed.), *The Vikings in Ireland*, p. 41.

²⁵ *LEI* I, p. 159.

²⁶ *CIH* 270.30-31.

²⁷ *LEI* I, p. 49.

overall benefit of foetus, infant and mother. A pregnant woman's dietary requirements were also a concern within the medieval Irish corpus: a pregnant woman was permitted to ask for food to satiate cravings or hunger, even if this involved the act of theft.²⁸ Once again, the primary concern that underlies this entry would appear to be the health of the pregnant woman and how society should facilitate her basic needs.

The basic dietary needs of the infant within the Norse tradition took precedence over the location of the child in a separation case, in which the man was granted the sole responsibility for the care of any children of the marriage. If an infant was under the age of one, he/she was to remain with his/her mother for breastfeeding purposes until the end of that year,²⁹ which probably reflects the realisation that infants were particularly susceptible to suffer malnutrition and in turn illness, infection and fatality.

The legal writings recognised the possibility of serious injury to the mother, or death during the childbirth process,³⁰ which some scholars would suggest was the greatest threat to a woman's life in medieval times.³¹ Murphy and Potterton make reference to an excavation at Swords, 'of the 6 individuals represented in the remains..., one was an unborn foetus, one a neonate (which may have died during childbirth) and all four adults were female'.³² Similarly, early medieval burials at Cabinteely, County Dublin, included two females, each with a full-term foetus, one of which was in breach-birth position,³³ once again indicating the possible risk which pregnancy presented to both mother and foetus. The excavation on South Great George's Street included a pre-term infant (35 weeks gestation) within the earliest ninth-century level.³⁴ For those who survived childbirth, Norwegian legal tradition records that a servant woman was to return to her duties once 'she can carry two buckets of water from the well',³⁵ whereas a timeframe of one month is noted for a servant woman within the native Irish sources.³⁶

²⁸ *CIH* 387.30. 387.34-36; 242.17; 270.24-271.9; 940. 28-941.24; 1256.25-1257.37.

²⁹ *LEI* II, p. 30.

³⁰ *ENL*, p. 77.

³¹ M. Murphy and M. Potterton, 'Investigating living standards in medieval Dublin and its region' in Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin VI*, p. 251.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 251.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

³⁴ L. Simpson,

http://www.mglarc.com/projects/viking_dublin/south_great_georges_street.htm.

Date visited, 1-11-07.

³⁵ *ENL*, p. 77.

³⁶ *CIH* 387.31; 388.8-9.

Stages within childhood

Although the killing of a foetus was regarded as homicide, the child was officially recognised as a potential inheritor within Icelandic tradition only when ‘it comes alive into the world and food gets down inside it’.³⁷ At that point the child entered into the initial stage which lasted until about seven years of age. Once a boy reached seven winters he could, for example, baptise in cases of absolute necessity.³⁸ This age is an important turning point with the child not only considered to possess a greater degree of sense, but also capable of assuming a greater degree of responsibility for his/her actions. One Irish text asks, what is the age when one can expect to distinguish between a sensible person and a fool? And the answer that is given is seven years of age.³⁹ The child’s legal and social standing within the community has increased at this age, clearly illustrated in the following entry within the Norse material: ‘a father is accountable for the deeds of his child till it is eight winters old; but a boy of eight winters shall be entitled to a half atonement [i.e. receive compensation for injury inflicted upon him] and shall pay atonement at the same rate [i.e. for his actions], till he is fifteen winters old.’⁴⁰ A child, although still a minor, as reflected in the reduced amount noted, was expected to make restitution for any illicit acts which he committed.

Twelve years of age indicates a further turning point in a child’s life. At this age a child is no longer exempt from fasting.⁴¹ In this new phase, a minor’s legal involvement and responsibility may increase depending on the situation. For example, in Icelandic tradition he can prosecute a murder case if agreed upon ‘but he does not need to take over the case formally from anyone’.⁴² It appears that between the age of twelve and fifteen/sixteen, we witness a transitional phase for the minor on his path to adulthood. At 15 or 16 winters,⁴³ he is able to establish his own residence,⁴⁴ to officially assume responsibility for younger siblings, if both parents are deceased,⁴⁵ and also possesses the right to arrange the betrothal of his mother.⁴⁶ We are presented with a similar paradigm within the medieval Irish legal corpus, which highlights the ages of seven and twelve as particularly pivotal times within the early life-

³⁷ *LEI* II, p. 243.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

³⁹ D.A. Binchy, ‘Bretha Crólige’, *Celtica* 8 (1968), § 7, 6; *CIH* 1265.4.

⁴⁰ *ENL*, p. 272.

⁴¹ *LEI* I, p. 49. See also, F.L. Attenborough, *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge, 1922), *Æthelstan* II.1, p. 127; S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Somerset, 1999), *Canute* 20-1, p. 177.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁴³ *ENL*, pp 141, 272.

⁴⁴ *LEI* I, p. 126; II, pp 4, 6, 8.

⁴⁵ *ENL*, p. 340.

⁴⁶ *LEI* II, p. 218.

cycle of a child, followed by the age of fourteen.⁴⁷ At this age, a son can establish an independent homestead, but he is not completely independent of his father's rule,⁴⁸ with seventeen being a further age-marker.⁴⁹ It is important to emphasize how Irish, Norwegian and Icelandic traditions give recognition to childhood and its limitations.⁵⁰ The texts indicate an incremental growth in a child's social and legal persona and in the degree of responsibility assumed within the community.

The issue of paternity

Rights within the kin and the community, access to land, to inheritance and to a possible position or privilege were all interwoven in the recognition of the child in the first instance as belonging to a particular kin. It is no surprise therefore to find contention over the matter of paternity. Icelandic legal tradition punished the false identification of the paternity of a child by lesser outlawry.⁵¹ To resolve the situation, the overriding method of proof was the ordeal, a feature of many cultures in medieval times and one that was implemented only after other methods of proof or evidence (e.g., oaths or testimony) were not forthcoming.⁵² Several high-profile incidents make it into the Norwegian historical record, e.g., in 1128 Harald Gillecrist proved his claim to royal blood by walking over nine hot ploughshares,⁵³ and in 1218, Inga of Varteig carried hot iron to prove that her son was the son of Hakon III (d. 1204), her son in turn becoming Hakon IV (b. 1204).⁵⁴ The use of the ordeal for paternity disputes features within the medieval Irish legal writings, though little detail is provided on how ordeals were to be undertaken.⁵⁵

In both Irish and Norwegian tradition, it is of interest to note the incorporation of physical resemblance between father and child as an indicator of biological ties. According to the Norwegian text, 'if the child comes to resemble him [i.e. the once putative father] and he sees that he has taken a wrong oath [i.e. has denied the child previously] let him go into a gathering of

⁴⁷ *CIH* 439.33-34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 777.25-7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 902.4.

⁵⁰ See D. Alexandre-Bidon and D. Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages* (Indiana, 1999); B. Hanawalt, 'Medievalists and the Study of Childhood', *Speculum* vol. 77, no. 2 (2002), 440-460; Classen, A., 'Philippe Ariès and the consequences History of Childhood, Family Relations, and Personal Emotions Where do we stand today?', in Classen (ed.) *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality* (New York, 2005), pp 1-65.

⁵¹ *LEI* II, p. 80; see also p. 249.

⁵² See R. Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water* (Oxford, 1986); *LEI* II, p. 233.

⁵³ *ENL*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water*, p. 18.

⁵⁵ *CIH* 107.18; 981.24; 2036.37, 2037.1.

men and acknowledge the child as his own, and let him do penance for his perjury.⁵⁶ The comparable Irish discourse permits a three-year waiting period before a decision on paternity was reached-- a decision which was based on three characteristics, *fineguth*, *finecruth* and *finebés* (the voice of the kin, the physical shape of the kin, and the mannerisms of the kin).⁵⁷ Whether the ordeal was undertaken, a specific amount of time was permitted to allow for physical development to take place, or other methods of proof were produced, the paternity of a child could not be left unresolved.

Care & responsibility

There was a responsibility upon parents to provide adequate care for the child. 'Every man here in the country is to maintain his own child',⁵⁸ notes Icelandic law, with exposure regarded as murder in Norse tradition,⁵⁹ and murder of an infant considered grounds for divorce within Irish tradition.⁶⁰ If a man attempted to neglect his duty and abandoned his young charge, a fine was incurred.⁶¹ Across the legal traditions, we witness the involvement of both the maternal and paternal kin in the up-bringing of any children.⁶² In the example noted earlier, in which the husband's action caused the termination of the foetus, not only was his wife compensated for this act, but also her kin as well as *his* kin.⁶³ Both descent lines had an interest in the welfare of the child and could participate in his/her up-bringing.

Adults were expected to behave responsibly when dealing with minors, 'if a man younger than 12 winters old inflicts injury on someone, then the latter should ward him off as he would do if he were his foster-father or father, and he is not to do him any lasting injury'.⁶⁴ Therefore, restraint on the part of the adult or person over twelve years of age was expected. This finds a parallel in the Irish legal tradition where no lasting mark or blemish should be evident or remain on the skin of a minor having been disciplined.⁶⁵ By the legal nature of this material, it is no surprise to read of the potential misbehaviour of children. Within Icelandic and Norwegian texts, references to delinquent acts include homicide, inflicting injury, damage to property, and setting fire to property.⁶⁶ Assault, theft and intentional injury during play feature within the Irish

⁵⁶ *ENL*, p. 78.

⁵⁷ *CIH* 232.21; 1871.9; D. A. Binchy, 'Fionna-Chruth', *Éigse* 15 (1974), 19-22.

⁵⁸ *LEI* II, p. 30; *ENL*, p. 340.

⁵⁹ *ENL*, p. 50.

⁶⁰ Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, p. 175.

⁶¹ *LEI* II, p. 40.

⁶² *CIH* 503.20; *ENL*, pp 114-15.

⁶³ See above, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *LEI* I, p. 155.

⁶⁵ *CIH* 1761.18.

⁶⁶ *LEI* I, p. 155; *ENL*, p. 105.

commentary,⁶⁷ which records a detailed entry on how a child's action was assessed to determine the degree of punishment and/or compensation required; the age of the child (either between seven and twelve years of age, or over twelve); the nature of the crime, and the number of previous acts committed were all taken into consideration.⁶⁸ Discipline could involve chastisement, fasting, compensation and restitution, and physical punishment (with restraint).

Awareness of and knowledge regarding children within the community and acceptance of responsibility for minors were of public concern. The maintenance of a dependent in certain circumstances was to be declared at the assembly in Icelandic tradition.⁶⁹ The role of the Thingmount in Dublin and the issues declared to the community present leaves a tantalising amount to the imagination. The possibility of public declarations find similarities within medieval Irish tradition, whereby a person responsible for the child could officially declare to the community that the child was a delinquent, the purpose seemingly twofold; first, to inform the locality in order that one should be cautious when interacting with this child; second, it could have financial implications on any subsequent misbehaviour by the child, now that the community were aware of his behaviour.⁷⁰ The public, community-centred nature of both societies, as portrayed in the legal material, accommodated for children and their interaction within the community with a duty of care towards a minor very much in evidence across the material.

Diet & health

Regarding the nutritional necessities of child-rearing, Geraghty's detailed analysis of the botanical evidence from Fishamble Street, and also Mitchell's discourse concerning organic refuse in various locations within Dublin, reveal 'the diet was one which would now be considered well balanced' (cereal, fruit (cherry, sloes, frochans, blackberry/raspberry, apple, bilberry), hazelnuts; vegetative tissue; meat, fish, honey).⁷¹ This can be further supplemented with references to breads and porridge-type substances in the legal and literary record.⁷² The Irish legal sources make general reference to a child's foodstuff

⁶⁷ *CIH* 1768.25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1768.23-5.

⁶⁹ *LEI* II, p. 36.

⁷⁰ *CIH* 1765.12-13; 1769.17-25.

⁷¹ Geraghty, *Viking Dublin: Botanical Evidence*, p. 67; Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment*, p. 27; Reilly, 'The contribution of insect remains' in Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin IV*, p. 55.

⁷² R. Sexton, 'The Porridges, Gruels and Breads: The Cereal Foodstuffs of Early Medieval Ireland' in M.A. Monk and J. Sheehan (eds), *Early Medieval Munster Archaeology, History and Society* (Cork, 1998), pp 76-86; F. Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin, 2000), pp 330-32.

being appropriate to the status of that child.⁷³ A porridge-type substance in particular is noted, served with a variety of condiments that reflected the status of the child in question.⁷⁴ Skeletal analysis, however, can indicate that not everyone had the means or access to the range of foodstuffs noted. A child's remains may well reveal acute infections or having suffered nutritional distress, evident in episodes of hypoplasia.⁷⁵ In an atypical group of a possible ten individuals in pre-Norman burials near St Michan's church, Meenan indentifies three adolescents (16-20 year olds, one male, two female), four juveniles (three 5-9 year olds, one 10-16 year old), and one infant (4-11 months).⁷⁶ One of the juveniles (radio-carbon dating AD 980-1160) had a chronic infection of the jaw. Within this site, the disarticulated remains of a child's left femur, and deposits of bone, along with fragments of a child's skull were also discovered.⁷⁷ The deposition of disarticulated remains, including the jaw of a child between 6-8 years of age, was also noted by Simpson from the ninth century levels of the excavation on South Great George's Street.⁷⁸ Whether the cause of death was natural, accidental, intentional or collateral damage in the plunder, attack and siege episodes noted in the annalistic record, life could be harsh and perilous for the child in early Dublin.

Dress

Regarding a child's attire, the Irish legal tradition notes in schematic manner the colour and ornament/adornment, the number of changes of clothing that were appropriate for the given status of a child.⁷⁹ From archaeological finds in Dublin and from leather-working in particular, there is evidence for children's footwear, e.g., 'a simple wrap-round style... a 'slip-on' child's shoe for the right foot', an ankle boot of calf-skin or deer-skin;⁸⁰ and a child's boot upper of fine calf-skin, with thong slits.⁸¹ A second item of dress is the head-covering (caps,

⁷³ Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 351.

⁷⁴ CIH 1759.37; 1759.39-1760.2.

⁷⁵ L. Buckley, 'Health status in medieval Dublin: analysis of the skeletal remains from the abbey of St Thomas the Martyr' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland IV* (Dublin, 2003), pp 99-100.

⁷⁶ R. Meenan, 'The excavation of pre-Norman burials and ditch near St Michan's church, Dublin' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin V* (Dublin, 2004), pp 98-9.

⁷⁷ Meenan, 'The excavation of pre-Norman burials', p. 100.

⁷⁸ L. Simpson, 'South Great George's Street', http://www.mglarc.com/projects/viking_dublin/south_great_georges_street.htm. Dated visited, 1-11-07.

⁷⁹ CIH 1759.13-15.

⁸⁰ A. Halpin, *The Port of Medieval Dublin Archaeological Excavations at the Civic Offices Winetavern Street* (Dublin, 1993), p. 145.

⁸¹ C. Walsh, *Archaeological Excavations at Patrick, Nicholas & Winetavern Streets* (Dublin, 1997), p. 169.

scarves and bands) for which Dublin provides a range of examples which are discussed in detail by Heckett.⁸² 'The number of caps, both in wool and silk, surviving from ten of the thirteen houses and a refuse pit in Dublin, suggest an accepted fashion for the townspeople... it is likely that the wool type was the original and the silks a luxury version'.⁸³ One well-worn cap, with double patches and darning is particularly informative as it would appear to have been originally used by an adult but subsequently re-worked to fit a child-sized head.⁸⁴ According to Heckett, some of the caps are lightweight and of fine quality (i.e. silk) and perhaps worn by women and children on special occasions. Interestingly, they were not sewn up at the back, 'perhaps to show off coiled or knotted hair'.⁸⁵ One cannot be certain whether this reflected current fashion trends and/or a specific social statement (e.g., as to status, whether personal and/or marital). Within medieval Icelandic tradition a woman should not cut her hair short (nor dress in male attire) in fear of lesser outlawry.⁸⁶ The emphasis placed on status within the legal material, and the identifiable status of many characters from physical descriptions within the literary texts, would lead one to note that appearance, including hairstyles, would have played a significant role in an expression of social order.

Toys and Play

The material evidence for the presence and possible activity of children is wonderfully illustrated in a selection of objects 'specifically designed to amuse a child' and therefore commonly accepted as toys.⁸⁷ It seems particularly appropriate that the material culture of a child of the sea-faring Viking-world would include the wooden toy ship. One such find comes from a pit in Fishamble Street, dated to the tenth century,⁸⁸ and another from Winetavern Street, dated by Mitchell to possibly the tenth century, but by Christensen to *ca.* 1200 on grounds of specific technical design.⁸⁹ The ships have been identified as being of 'Norse type' and considered 'sailing models of real vessels' and therefore, likely to mirror what was visible in their surroundings.⁹⁰

⁸² For an illustration of possible usage of caps and scarves see, E. Wincott Heckett, *Viking Age Headcoverings from Dublin* (Dublin, 2003), pp 5, 48.

⁸³ Wincott Heckett, *Viking Age Headcoverings*, p. 49.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁸⁶ *LEI* II, p. 219.

⁸⁷ S. Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 1999), p. 141.

⁸⁸ Lang, *Viking-Age Decorated Wood*, pp 43, 79. For an illustration, see Lang, *Viking-Age Decorated Wood*, p. 80.

⁸⁹ Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment*, p. 30; A-E Christensen, 'Ship Graffiti and Models' in P.F. Wallace (ed.), *Miscellanea 1* (Dublin, 1988), p. 23. For an illustration, see Christensen, 'Ship Graffiti and Models', p. 20.

⁹⁰ Christensen, 'Ship Graffiti and Models', p. 19.

Lang notes the presence of faint scrolls on the better-preserved end of the Fishamble Street model and raises the possibility of serpents adorning the vessel.⁹¹ These models also provide fine detail in relation to masts and rigging and 'were most likely rigged and furnished with a sail, to be raced on some pond or river by their proud (young?) owners'.⁹² The very existence of toy models in any settlement context is held to reflect a large number of children present,⁹³ which would support Simpson's point in relation to the large 'support team' present in the composition of the *longphort*, and Viking-age Dublin in turn.⁹⁴

A second type of toy comes in the shape of a wooden horse, dated to the eleventh-century (possibly 1000-25), which was discovered in a pit in Fishamble Street.⁹⁵ Lang has described this find as 'a naturalistic toy horse with thinly incised human marks on each side. There are spirals on the joints, one in the belly. Faint traces of an eye appears'.⁹⁶ It has come under the adjectives 'rustic', 'primitive', 'crudely carved' and 'naturalistic' which perhaps reflects a well-worn, or well-played with exterior. On stylistic grounds, Kavanagh proposes that the squiggles produce an effect more Scandinavian than Irish.⁹⁷ We may speculate that the horse, along with the toy boat, must have been a common sight in and around the settlement of Dublin. In the wider Viking world, its use is well documented for transport, pulling carts and wagons, as pack animals, in burial practice, and even horse fighting.⁹⁸ Judging from both annalistic evidence relating to the mobility of the Vikings over land, and of horse and cattle rustling, in addition to the Dublin archaeological evidence containing horse skulls, bones, and equine trappings, harness, bridle bits, stirrups, spurs horseshoes,⁹⁹ the horse was a very practical, desirable, and prestige item within society and we can appreciate its attraction as a toy, alongside the model ships.

A third child-oriented find is a toy sword. As with the ship models held to be of Norse-type form and influence, this sword also 'reflects Viking-age

⁹¹ Lang, *Viking-Age Decorated Wood*, pp 43, 79. Dimensions: L 30.9cm, W. 8.5cm, H. 4.0cm.

⁹² Christensen, 'Ship Graffiti and Models', p. 23.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹⁴ Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin', p. 15.

⁹⁵ R.M. Kavanagh, 'The Horse in Viking Ireland' in J. Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 106; Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, p. 79. Dimensions: L 12.5cm, H. 6.6cm, T. 0.6cm. For an illustration, see Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, p. 34.

⁹⁶ Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, p. 33.

⁹⁷ Kavanagh, 'The Horse in Viking Ireland', p. 106.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 94-7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[adult] sword types'.¹⁰⁰ Lang's primary focus is on decorated wood, and hence he comments that, 'strictly speaking the toy is functional rather than decorative'. 'Functional' within the child's world may indicate the possible mock-play or mimicking of the adult world, and since the toy is an adult object in miniature, we may speculate that play incorporated the practical and physical skills necessary to prepare the child for his adult environment and needs. This is a very appropriate object for a child to gain familiarity in use in order to develop into one of Simpsons' under twenty-five 'young, strong male... of 'warrior' status' from Ship Street Great and Great George's Street.¹⁰¹

From archaeological evidence and within both Scandinavian and Irish narrative texts, the importance of board games is well evidenced, and many possible gaming pieces have been discovered within the settlement.¹⁰² One eleventh-century structure on High Street contained four gaming pieces and five rough outs for gaming pieces, along with bits of antler, suggesting to Murray some degree of hand industry in this area.¹⁰³ Another gaming piece find on High Street had the image of a 'highly stylised ship under sail'.¹⁰⁴ Such objects were of both educational and entertainment value to adult and child within a household. It is worth bearing in mind Crawford's stance on board games within the Anglo-Saxon context, how the playing of 'formal' games was an activity associated with older males rather than with children.¹⁰⁵ We should not overlook the exposure to board games and gaming pieces children would have received in an informal way. By their very presence in the living space, this would have provided familiarity with skills necessary in later life.

Within the medieval Irish legal corpus, the list of play items includes hurleys, hoops, balls, cats and dogs.¹⁰⁶ One medieval commentator notes these are 'noble items which remove the *serg* [illness, boredom/ malaise?] from little boys'.¹⁰⁷ The importance of play items is revealed in an entry which notes how they could be legally acquired, if they had not been provided with a child who was given into the care of another.¹⁰⁸ Finds from Dublin also indicate the presence of young pigs, goats, dogs, and cats in and around the environment

¹⁰⁰ Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, p. 33. Dimensions: L 23.7cm, W. 6.0cm, T. 1.5cm, p. 79. For an illustration see, Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, p. 33.

¹⁰¹ Simpson, 'Viking warrior burials in Dublin', p. 11.

¹⁰² Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, pp 50, 84; Halpin, *The Port of Medieval Dublin*, p. 175.

¹⁰³ H. Murray, *Viking and Early Medieval Buildings in Dublin* (BAR British Series 119, 1983), p. 114.

¹⁰⁴ Christensen, 'Ship Graffiti and Models', p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ Crawford, *Childhood*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁶ CIH 373.26.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 373.26.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 373.26. For the legal process involved (distrain), see Kelly, *Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp 177-189.

of the household.¹⁰⁹ Although it is apparent that many of these animals served to further the dietary or economic situation within the household, it is difficult not to imagine such animals playing a role in the lives of children. Within the Irish legal corpus reference to pet animals within the household exists (dogs, cats, hens, herons, birds, pigs, even deer, wolves, and foxes) and would have been both entertaining and educational in exposing children to animal husbandry.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, we do not read of any reference to actual play within the Norse legal material under examination here. We are, however, provided with a list of games and children's activities within a fragment of an Old-Irish legal text on *Sport-Judgements* which deals with injuries during sports and play and include two categories: first, 'hurley, ball, 'boundary pillar', 'excavating small dwellings'..., jumping, swimming, wrestling (?), b., f. and b. (three board-games), hide-and-seek, carrying..., juggling in the air with balls',¹¹¹ and appear to involve younger children; second, '(fian) games whose arrangements (rules?) are different:...- swinging, horse-riding, putting the weight, climbing, leaping, and pelting...'.¹¹² The physical and educational dimension through play is plain to see in this wide variety of activity noted. Other toys may well have been made from organic materials which did not pass the tests of time, but from what has survived, the concept of children's play in Hiberno-Norse Dublin is very much in evidence.

Education

Any child was an extra pair of hands in the household and an economic resource. In general, we would expect the education of the child to have occurred within the household, with many of the crafts and skills taught needed for the domestic realm. With areas of the settlement revealing areas of 'industrial activity',¹¹³ and many of the houses possibly serving as small workshops, or having workshops on-site, we may speculate how a child being reared in this environment picked up the tools of his family trade when physically capable (alongside playing with toy boats, swords and horses). The archaeological evidence indicates areas within the layout of Dublin having a concentration of a particular craft or industry, for example, comb-makers, cobblers and leatherworkers centred on High Street; metalworkers in Christchurch Place; and merchant quarters and amber workers around

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment*, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ CIH 372.37; 888.40-41; 383.32, 384.1; 73.19-20. See Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, pp 124-131.

¹¹¹ D.A. Binchy, 'Mellbretha', *Celtica* 8 (1968), 149.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 149.

¹¹³ Simpson, 'Forty years a-digging', pp 25, 36.

Fishamble Street.¹¹⁴ Evidence also points to the presence of blacksmiths, weavers and textile-makers,¹¹⁵ and the possibility of a native shipbuilding industry.¹¹⁶ Dublin was a place of trade and enterprise,¹¹⁷ and the child's upbringing would probably have reflected this also.

We have much tantalizing evidence that raises questions in relation to the acquisition of a particular skill. For example, what should we make of a fragment of a writing tablet (tenth century) or a stylus/pricker (late 10thc/e.11thc)?¹¹⁸ And what of motif pieces, which Johnson notes were 'primarily learning attempts or working drawings'?¹¹⁹ When and how a child or adolescent entered on the path of acquiring a skill and style that may reflect the 'Dublin School', Ringerike, or Urnes is open to speculation. We can also only speculate on the possibilities of more formalised education within a church context. The existence of an ecclesiastical site at Duiblinn/ Áth Cliath in the seventh and eighth centuries is attested,¹²⁰ which along with MacShamhráin's 131 ecclesiastical foundations of the twelfth century and earlier in the Dublin diocese, surely would have presented educational opportunities.¹²¹ Did foundations such as Finglas, Swords, Clondalkin, or Tallaght (or closer to *an lár*, the five churches east of the Poddle)¹²² cultivate relationships with native and Hiberno-Norse families residing in their hinterland? Might they have benefited from oblations or fosterage-type relations with the children of these households? What of the Christchurch (Holy Trinity) Cathedral, founded as a royal and episcopal church by King Sitric Silkbeard and Bishop Dúnán of Dublin, *c.* 1030.¹²³ The first record of a cathedral school dates to 1233,¹²⁴ however, would children and adolescents not have earlier served some function in these environs, or received an education in order to enter into the clerical profession here or in one of the many religious foundations encircling Dublin?

¹¹⁴ Wallace, 'Ireland's Viking Towns', pp 41-2.

¹¹⁵ Geraghty, *Viking Dublin: Botanical Evidence from Fishamble Street* (Dublin, 1996), p. 67.

¹¹⁶ Halpin, *The Port of Medieval Dublin*, p. 121.

¹¹⁷ Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment*, p. 22; Valente, 'Dublin's economic relations with hinterland and periphery in the later Viking Age', p. 69.

¹¹⁸ Lang, *Viking Age Decorated Wood*, pp 5, 52, 58, 90, 96.

¹¹⁹ R. Johnson, 'A Viking-Age bone motif-piece from Sheep Street Little, Dublin' in Linzi Simpson, 'Excavations on the southern side of the medieval town at Ship Street Little', Appendix, p. 44.

¹²⁰ Simpson, 'Forty years a-digging', pp 11-15.

¹²¹ A. MacShamhráin, 'The Monasticon Hibernicum project: the diocese of Dublin' in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin VI*, p. 126.

¹²² Clarke, *The Making of the Metropolis*, p. 63.

¹²³ Clarke, *Towns Atlas*, p. 17.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Within a tract on childrearing in the medieval Irish legal context, children, both male and female, of particular grades from free-farmer through to noble, were expected to be taught what was appropriate to their social status and in particular the skills they would need in life. Boys belonging to the grade of farmers were taught practical skills such as herding of calves, kids, young pigs, the drying and raking of malt, kiln-drying, and wood-cutting.¹²⁵ It is of interest to note that this list tells of boys learning to tend only young animals, which appears to reflect recognition of the limitations of a child's physical capabilities, coupled with an awareness of the dangers that could befall a child if larger animals were involved, a well-documented danger in the legal material.¹²⁶ Girls were to receive education in the use the quern-stone and the sieve, in how to knead, and also the herding of lambs and kids.¹²⁷ For both boys and girls of the freeman grade, domestic activities within or surrounding the homestead formed the focus of their educational curriculum. In addition to the life-skills already noted, the male children of the noble grades were to receive instruction in board-games (a good strategic, mental pursuit), spear-throwing, and what was labelled 'instruction in arts' (i.e. high status skill, craft or an expertise).¹²⁸ The nobler tasks for girls included learning to sew, to cut-out, and to embroider.¹²⁹

Within the medieval Irish legal writings, swimming was required to be taught if there was water present on the land.¹³⁰ This was clearly perceived as a potential hazard for the safety of the child. The physical geography of Dublin, with the presence and active use of the water (e.g. fishing) and watercourses in and around the Liffey, the Poddle and Linn Dubh itself,¹³¹ must have presented concerns for the safety of children and the Liffey being a flash-flood stream may only have compounded the danger.¹³² The post-and-wattle fences, which demarcated the plots within Dublin, may well have restrained the curious child.

Fosterage

A simple definition of the fosterage process within the Norse tradition reads, 'if someone brings up a child for another man and takes him for fostering,

¹²⁵ *CIH* 1760.21-22.

¹²⁶ For two legal anecdotes regarding children savaged by animals, *CIH* 2113.6-25. For translation see, M. Dillon, 'Stories from the Law Tracts', *Ériu* 11 (1932), no.s II & III, 52-3.

¹²⁷ *CIH* 1760.22; 82.5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1760.32-34; 82.13-14.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1760.34; 82.14.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1760.32-4.

¹³¹ Walsh, *Archaeological Excavation*, pp 18, 22, 26-7.

¹³² Mitchell, *Archaeology & Environment*, p. 15.

then he is to bring up that child until he is sixteen winters old.’¹³³ Fosterage functioned as an important mechanism for the care of the child and also in the creation of life-long family bonds and obligations between the parties involved. Child-rearing, nurturing and education were all interwoven in this institution, which we are told within the Irish tradition was entered into for the mutual prosperity of all parties involved *ar id carut a ngenelaighe* (for their family lines are in official friendship).¹³⁴ In both Irish and Icelandic tradition, the foster-bond had legal protection. The biological kin should not remove the child from the foster-family without due cause.¹³⁵ If however, the child is in poor health in his foster-home, then they have the right to take the child home’.¹³⁶ The importance placed on the foster-relationship is revealed in the fact that one of the very few occasions where physical force and the undertaking of a blood-feud was permitted in law was for the ‘vengeance for the foster-child of the family’,¹³⁷ and similarly within the Icelandic tradition, specifically mentioning the foster-daughter and foster-mother.¹³⁸ Within Norwegian tradition, inheritance rights could be extended to foster-children,¹³⁹ whereas in the Irish tradition, foster-relatives received a portion of the compensation payment for the intentional killing of a fosterling at *any* point in his lifetime.¹⁴⁰

For both kins involved in the process, fosterage could create, strengthen, or re-establish relations which were expected to last over time in weaving families and generations together. This institution, therefore, also reflects one common approach taken by Irish, Norwegian, Icelandic society towards children—one which we may suggest could only have aided the process of interaction and assimilation. Reference to the possible on-going practice of fosterage in the Dublin area can be found in *Life of Gruffydd ap Cynan* (c. 1055–1136). He was of the line of the native royal house of Gwynedd (North Wales), whose father, Cynan ap Iago, fled to Dublin, allegedly married Ragnhildr, daughter of Amlaíb and grand-daughter of Sitric Silkbeard, and who bore a son, Gruffydd, from this union. His *Life* relates how he was born in Dublin and was fostered three miles from Swords where his mother and foster-mother lived.¹⁴¹ Gruffydd in time returned to Gwynedd to successfully claim his

¹³³ *LEI* II, p. 46.

¹³⁴ *CIH* 1762.24.

¹³⁵ *LEI* II, p. 46.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 46–7.

¹³⁷ *CIH*, 2014.18.

¹³⁸ *LEI* I, p. 154.

¹³⁹ *ENL*, pp 109, 337.

¹⁴⁰ *CIH* 439.15–18.

¹⁴¹ P. Russell (ed.), *Vita Griffini Filii Conani The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffydd ap Cynan* (Cardiff, 2005), §1; M.T. Flanagan, ‘*Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* and the Origins of Balrothery, Co. Dublin’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 28 (1994), pp 83–5; S. Duffy, ‘Ostmen, Irish and Welsh in the eleventh century’, *Peritia* 9 (1995), pp 387–390.

patrimony. Whether or not the facts are indeed historical, does not alter the choice to include the practice of fosterage as part of his up-bringing. A further text which comments on the role of fosterage, is the eleventh-century, *The Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, which proffers an interesting explanation of the term the *Gall-Góidil* (Foreign-Irish). The text notes how they were Irish foster-children of the Vikings (*daltai do Normainnoibh*).¹⁴² Leaving the pro-Cerball Mac Dúnláinge propaganda of the text to one side and the bad press given to the *Gall-Góidil* as a distinct (and despicable) group, the explanation that fosterage could be responsible for the creation of a distinct group of people is once again of interest in its own right. Radner finds the reference to the practice of fosterage ‘puzzling’.¹⁴³ However, amidst the raids, the fairs, trading, possible clientship, making oaths, taking hostages, exacting tribute, and intermarriage, the possibility of fostering does not seem so out of place, especially when it would appear well entrenched in native Irish society.

Conclusion

There is a great deal we simply do not know about the fortunes of those who lived in Hiberno-Norse Dublin and there is no denying a deficit in documentary evidence specifically relating to the settlement—evidence (licences, land grants, municipal ordinances etc.) which allow the historian of post-1169 Dublin the possibility of bringing the suburbs to life, as Emer Purcell’s detailed work on later medieval Oxmantown has illustrated.¹⁴⁴ And so the historian must work with what is present and to explore other avenues of investigation to see where they might lead. One such avenue takes us into the legal domain, and keeping Hiberno-Norse Dublin in focus, we find ourselves examining native Irish, Norwegian and Icelandic legal writings for this purpose. An examination of any legal corpus allows the historian to review a society, a very particular representation of a society it must be noted, but one which may provoke thought and initiate further dialogue when placed alongside other bodies of evidence and stemming from other disciplines. In an attempt to discuss and interpret aspects of society across legal traditions, we are edging ever so slightly closer to issues of coexistence and assimilation between cultures and further investigation following the legal path may indeed prove fruitful in this regard. We can only speculate as to what type of law and social discourse was being aired on the Thingmount of Dublin by the late eleventh-century. Did the *Gall-Góidil*, a term which represents contemporary

¹⁴² J. Radner, *The Fragmentary Irish Annals* (Dublin, 1978), §247, §260; Downham, ‘The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly’, pp 31-3.

¹⁴³ Radner, *The Fragmentary Irish Annals*, p. 198.

¹⁴⁴ E. Purcell, ‘Land Use in Medieval Oxmantown’ in Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin IV*, pp 193-228; ‘The city and the suburb: medieval Dublin and Oxmantown’, in Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin VI*, pp 188-223.

conceptual thought on interaction and accommodation, follow a *Gall-Gótdil* law or an *Ostman-Gótdil* law, and what would this have looked like? But that is for another day.

The several issues relating to children covered in the discussion above demonstrate that the legal minds of medieval Irish, Norwegian and Icelandic scribes gave substantial consideration to the younger members of their societies and to childhood in general: stages, capabilities and needs, activity and (mis)behaviour of children occupied significant textual space, and much more is present in the texts which could not be included within this preliminary study. The texts are in essence legal thoughts, theory and debate on a given subject and as such are extremely valuable to the historian for that reason. The archaeological evidence provides a body of evidence against which the legal information can be assessed, rejected, and mulled over, but perhaps in return it can provide possible scenarios and contexts for the physical evidence coming from the trenches and by making use of all these sources, the child begins to come off the page and take on multiple dimensions. Without question, the archaeological evidence will continue to enlighten and lead the way on studies of the child in Hiberno-Norse Dublin, and fortunately through current and ever-improving scientific analysis a great deal more information can be expected, which will in time un-bracket '(the children)'.

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