



Cor Hendriks: Richard Deacon, master of disinformation

Spies are masters in cheating and deceiving. One of the means they have at their disposal is the dissemination of so-called disinformation, say lies. A good lie, meaning a lie that is easily believed, is based on factual data, so it will not be exposed with closer scrutiny.

For a spy it is quite normal to give out disinformation in exchange for good information from the opposite party. But what will happen when a former spy becomes a journalist and the author of popular scientific books? Will he still when it suits him hand out disinformation?

Richard Deacon is actually Donald McCormick (1911-1998), a British journalist, who worked as a spy during the second World War and was afterwards a reporter for the Sunday Times and the author of a great number of books. WorldCat mentions 65 works in 400 publications, because many of his books were translated or published more than once. Most of his books deal with the spy business. An incomplete list is given by Wikipedia:

- *The Identity of Jack the Ripper*. London: Jarrolds, 1959.
- *The Mystery of Lord Kitchener's Death*. Putnam, 1959.
- *Temple of Love*. New York: Citadel Press. 1965.
- *The Red Barn Mystery: some new evidence on an old murder*. London: John Long, 1967.
- *John Dee: Scientist, Geographer, Astrologer and Secret Agent to Elizabeth I*. London: Muller, 1968.
- *Murder By Witchcraft*. London: Long, 1968.
- *A History of the British Secret Service*. London: Muller, 1969. New York: Taplinger, 1970. Reprinted in paperback, London: Grafton, 1991.
- *Murder by Perfection: Maundy Gregory, the Man Behind Two Unsolved Mysteries?*. London: Jarrolds, 1970.
- *A History of the Russian Secret Service*. New York: Taplinger, 1972. London: Muller, 1972.
- *The Chinese Secret Service*. New York: Taplinger, 1974. [pb] Revised and updated. London: Grafton Books, 1989.
- *The Hell-Fire Club: the story of the amorous Knights of Wycombe*. London: Sphere, 1975.
- *Matthew Hopkins: Witchfinder General*. London: F. Mueller, 1976.
- *The Israeli Secret Service*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977.
- *The Silent War: A History of Western Naval Intelligence*. Newton Abbot, UK: David & Charles, 1978. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1978.
- *The British Connection: Russia's Manipulation of British Individuals and Institutions*, London: Hamish Hamilton. 1979. Later withdrawn.
- *Escape!* London: BBC, 1980.
- *Love In Code, or, How to Keep Your Secrets*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1980.
- *Kempai Tai: A History of the Japanese Secret Service*. London: Muller, 1982. New York: Beaufort Books, 1983. Revised and updated edition, Tokyo: Charles Tuttle Books, 1990.
- *With My Little Eye: The Memoirs of a Spy-Hunter*. London: Frederick Muller, 1982.
- *"C": A Biography of Sir Maurice Oldfield*. London: MacDonald, 1985.
- *The Cambridge Apostles: A History of Cambridge University's Elite Intellectual Secret Society*. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1986.
- *Spyclopedia: The Comprehensive Handbook of Espionage*. New York: Morrow, 1987.
- *The Truth Twisters*. London: Macdonald, 1987.

- *The Greatest Treason: The Bizarre Story of Hollis, Liddell and Mountbatten*. London: Century, 1990. (A 1989 printing had resulted in a libel suit and was withdrawn; this edition had the offending material withdrawn.)
- *Super Spy: The Man Who Infiltrated the Kremlin and the Gestapo*. UK: Futura, 1990.
- *The French Secret Service*. London: Grafton, 1990.
- *The Life of Ian Fleming*. Dufour Editions, 1994.

Not mentioned is the book that raised quite a stir in the study of Madoc and was investigated by Hubert Lampo in his *Kroniek van Madoc* (Amsterdam, 1975). It is *Madoc and the Discovery of America: some new light on an old controversy*, published in 1967.

Recently (in 2014), a book partially devoted to the ‘Deacon’ McCormick controversy has appeared, composed by Robert Leeson.¹ In it, chapter 9 is a contribution of Howard Kimberley about “‘Deacon’ McCormick and the Madoc Myth”. The book of Deacon is praised on the cover as ‘an authentic documentary of a little-known piece of history, so thoroughly researched and cross-referenced that it must become a standard work on the subject.’ So no mean achievement! The work of Deacon-McCormick is according to Kimberley very readable (WorldCat rates his works just above average on the line from youth literature to scientific work, so meant for the average reader) and at first sight very plausible; he pictures himself as a genuine scholar, who writes factual history, based on sound painstaking research. And he wonders if this a true image.

Daniel Baldino, in chapter 10 of the same book (“Assessing ‘Deacon’ McCormick from the Perspective of the Intelligence Community”) says concerning Donald McCormick a.k.a. Richard Deacon: “a prodigious writer who was drawn to the thorny field of spycraft, provides an insightful case study in a person’s efforts to frame a problem and expose real-world ‘truth’. This chapter [= 10] will examine some of the dilemmas involved in information (intelligence) collection and analysis, as well as addressing how individuals might develop expectations, make decisions and reach conclusions based on imperfect data. The evidence suggests that ‘Deacon’ McCormick’s judgements are systematically biased: the authenticity and reliability of many of the sources in his worldwide network remain acutely problematical. ‘Deacon’ McCormick was a persuasive storyteller – but his approach to information, based on his attraction to doubtful sources, hidden assumptions and ‘insider’ reports, enhanced the likelihood of biased verdicts and coloured his efforts to produce substantial and reliable evaluations. Key critical errors in scholarship reflected both a lack of quality of information and a record of artistic guesswork to fill gaps in knowledge. At best, he methodically overestimated the validity of his beliefs and produced a stream of inferential errors. At worst, he was a charlatan who took a dishonest, mischievous approach to gathering evidence in order to provide a more complete picture.”

Chapter 12 is the contribution by Richard B. Spence with the title ‘Donald McCormick: 2 + 2 = 5’, in which everything is summarized: “the question at the heart of this volume is the reliability, indeed, the fundamental honesty, of Donald McCormick, best known under his ‘nom de plume’, Richard Deacon. As the chapters generally attest, ‘Deacon’ McCormick could be an unreliable,

¹ Leeson, Robert (ed.), *Hayek: A Collaborative Biography. Part III: Fraud, Fascism and Free Market Religion*, [Macmillan] 2014. The book is not (yet) present in the University Library of Leiden, and so I had to make do with the first two pages of each chapter that are made available on the Internet. The rest of the book I have skimmed with Google search, which allowed me to read almost all of chapter 9.

even misleading source. This, of course, raises the ticklish question – why? Was it just carelessness, a cavalier disregard for proper citation, or maybe a reflexive journalistic penchant for sensationalism and exaggeration? Then again, was he a deliberate, puckish hoaxer: ‘a very clever man who enjoys his quiet fun?’ (Harris 1997). Or, in ‘Deacon’ McCormick do we have something more sinister: A malicious pathological liar who did not shy from outright character assassination? Was he a conscious or unconscious tool of disinformation and propaganda? Was he, maybe, a little bit of each?”

Let us look at some of the examples of fraud given by Kimberley. According to Deacon, in 1865 a stone tablet was found on the island of Lundy. On it, carved in old style Welsh lettering, was the legend: “Mae un ffai-(th) gened-(Leith)-ol / I Madoc o Lund fudo’n ormodol / Ir mor-gor-(lle)-winol, / Ond ni ddaith byth y-(nol).” And Deacon adds: ‘Thus on a remote island in the Bristol Channel, a long way from his native Gwynedd, Madoc the sailor was commemorated by the bald statement: “It is an established fact, known far and wide, that Madoc ventured far out into the Western Ocean never to return.”’ Kimberley took the trouble of contacting the Devonshire Records Office in Exeter and then the North Devon Records Office in Barnstaple, where he was told that an archaeologist, Keith Gardner, had already examined Deacon’s assertions and had been unable to identify the source for the Lundy archives; he had also been unable to locate the source of the story, one Mr. G. G. Evans of Bristol. Also, there is no such a stone on the island. And when Gardner called Deacon he got the reply that all Deacon’s notes were over in America so he could not verify his sources. Also, if the text was written in the 12th or 13th century, it would not have been in Welsh but in Latin.

According to Deacon, *lund* is Norse for penguin; according to Kimberley, it means puffin (seaparrat). They are both wrong. The Norse *lund* means ‘bush’ (a small forest), while the puffin is *lunde* or *lundefugl* (meaning probably bush-bird).

Another thing Kimberley investigated was the remarkable discovery by Reverend E. F. Synnott, the late Rector of Iden in Kent, which he made in a sale-room at Rey in Sussex (several years ago, according to Deacon in 1967, 98). “Together with a collection of old books he purchased an assortment of ancient and mould-infested manuscripts which had obviously been rescued from destruction. Many of them were torn in pieces and some charred as though they had been consigned to a bonfire before their previous owner thought better of it. The manuscripts, such as they were, appeared to be some form of port records for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, compiled partly in Latin and partly in broken English. Mr. Synnott was of the opinion that, though not every manuscript was part of a whole, some of the pieces when placed together added up to what was a list of ships lost, or unaccounted for in various ports of England and Wales. Among the entries was one which particularly interested the Iden Rector because he knew something Madoc legend. It read: ‘ABER-KERRIK-GUIGNON Non sunt Guignon Gorn, Madauc. Pedr Sant, Riryd, filius Oweni Gueneti An. 1171’.” So Deacon provided contemporary proof that Madoc had a ship named Gwennan Gorn (which is given a French-corrupted spelling in the ms.) and that in 1171 this ship was missing, or her whereabouts unknown. Rev. Synnott has indeed been Rector of Iden, East Sussex, but there is no record of an old book of missing ships. Furthermore, no medieval document would bear the date ‘An. 1171’ in Arabic numerals – it would have been ‘Annus MCLXI’. Nor would there have been any English, broken or otherwise, in any official document written before 1400, at the very earliest. (Kimberley, 203-5)

The conclusion of Kimberley is: “All the facts found so far clearly indicate that ‘Deacon’ McCormick: fabricated evidence about the island of Lundy, the manuscript and the stone; made up a story about a mysterious ledger of missing ships found in an antique shop in Rye; invented a M. Eduard Duvivier and a fictitious manuscript in Poitiers; conjured up a record of Madoc’s marriage and the birth of a daughter in the annals of Conwy Abbey, when there is no reference to Madoc in the surviving abridgement of them; asserted that the Annals have been destroyed by Edward I, and that there were relics of Madoc in the Abbey (yet there is no evidence to support either statement; indeed, Edward I was recorded as ordering the copying and preservation of Annals and Chronicles).” (Kimberley 208f)

An example of disinformation from the ‘Madoc’ article of Wikipedia:

A Flemish writer called Willem, in around 1250 to 1255, identifies himself in his poem ‘Van den Vos Reinaerde’ as “Willem die Madocke maecte” (Willem, the author of Madoc, a/k/a “Willem the Minstrel”). Though no copies of “Madoc” survive, Gwyn Williams tells us that “In the seventeenth century a fragment of a reputed copy of the work is said to have been found in Poitiers”. It provides no topographical details relating to North America, but mentions a sea that may be the Sargasso Sea and says that Madoc (not related to Owain in the fragment according to Gwyn Williams) discovered an island paradise, where he intended “to launch a new kingdom of love and music”.

Gwyn Williams is one of the authors infected by Deacon. Although he assumes a reasonably critical attitude, he still lets himself be persuaded by many of Deacon’s fantasies. For one thing, there is the naming of the author of the *Reinaert* as ‘Willem the Minstrel’. Deacon has not invented this title himself, a thing Lampo already discovered: the term comes from the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1875 and was launched by the Canadian author Kathleen O’Loughlin in 1949, who wrote two books about Madoc. Also Ellen Pugh in her Madoc-book *Brave his soul* of 1970 uses this term and claims: ‘Willem the Minstrel, living in Flanders, translated a long romance about Madoc from the Welsh priests’ Latin.’ But also Pugh was strongly influenced by Deacon.

Next Williams speaks of the seventeenth century fragment from Poitiers, a pure Deacon fantasy which has been extensively investigated by Lampo. Also the Belgian professor Louis Peeters has occupied himself with Deacon and says about the Poitiers manuscript: ‘He (Deacon) makes extensive use of a written communication by Edouard Duvivier of Poitiers (letter 12-20-1965) who has investigated a French manuscript from Poitiers, dating from the 17th century. The text would point to a translation of the end of the 14th century or possibly earlier. The manuscript offers probably just a summary of the ‘Madoc’ of the author “Guillaume qui fait Reynaud”. Willem would have been an acquaintance of Walter Map, the author of *De Nugis Curialium* (end 12th century), a servant (priest) at the court of Henry II in England. Willem would have known the Welsh language, later he resided at the court of Marie de Champagne in Poitiers. Thanks to Willem’s knowledge of the Welsh language ‘Madoc’ could be translated first in Latin, then in French. A Dutch translation would not have existed! Willem as a singer and a soldier would have accompanied Flemish mercenaries in England. That the ‘Madoc’ would not have existed in the Dutch language, is seriously doubted by Peeters viewing the citations that exist. “But that according to this manuscript Willem would have told about a journey of Madoc to a *paradis ravi par le soleil, resplendissant come fruits de mer*, and farther after six days sailing had wanted to visit *La Mer Dégringolade* [tumbling down],” reminds Peeters “quite strongly of the wonderful expeditions of Mador the navigator in the *Histoire de Fouke Warin*, and even more so because also in the manuscript from Poitiers Madoc, who belongs to a family of navigators, maintains

relations between the rulers in France and England.” And he wonders: “Is the manuscript of Poitiers relevant both for the *Histoire* as well as for our *Madoc*?” (Peeters 1968, 163)

In his third *Madoc* article of 1972 Peeters returns once more to the book of Deacon, citing the *Times Literary Supplement* (March 2, 1967): ‘no shortage of theories, just a complete absence of facts’, and the characterization by Samuel Eliot Morison in his bulky volume *The European Discovery of America. The Northern Voyages A.D. 500-1600* (New York 1971, 106): ‘His approach to the subject is uncertain; he feels there must be something in it, but cannot say what.’ Morison classifies the story about the *Madoc* in question under ‘Flyaway islands and false voyages 1100-1492’. And Peeters concludes: “Lampo’s ‘sources’ have been weighed and came up short!”

Deacon took over the outdated information from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which still mentions the *Lancelot* by Walter Map. This Map, court-chaplain of Henry II and author of *De Nugis Curialium*, which contains all kinds of interesting stories, was considered in former days to be the author of the books on the Grail, but this claim is nowadays denied. In his book there is nothing to be found about a *jongleur-bardh Willem, proud as any peacock, an singe, y-wis, as eny nightingale* (because Map wrote in Latin), nor in the *Lancelot* or the *Quest* (which are both in French) nor even in the *Poems attributed to Walter Map*. Lampo analyzes the language of the quote (by Deacon) as Late Middle English from the 15th century with flaws. Then there is the letter by Duvivier from Poitiers that also drew Peeters’ attention. The sentence *Guillaume qui fait Reynaud* is very strange, because Reynaud is the hero of a well-known Charlemagne romance (*Reynaud de Montauban*), while *fait* is present tense. Anyhow, it is strange when an author mentions a book he still has to write. But it is possible that a copyist has indicated the author by his much more famous book as ‘Guillaume, qui a fait Renart’. Further it is claimed of Willem (we have already seen this briefly with Peeters) that he was both a minstrel and a soldier and originally set out with the English troops against the Welshmen who under the successors of Owen Gwynedd, *Madoc*’s father, tried to face the invasion. Willem switched sides, lived or was stationed on the island of Ely from where he crossed the channel, roamed through the Low Lands and France, where he resided in Poitiers at the court of Marie de Champagne, this last part again on the authority of Walter Map. Willem had borrowed the material for his *Madoc* from ‘bards and men of the sea’, but actually should have kept it secret for the English [typical spy idea of McCormick]. Owen Gwynedd is not mentioned; the navigator’s blood in *Madoc*’s veins comes from his grandfather who was half a Viking. Disguised as monk *Madoc* traveled to the court of Louis VII, king of France, with whom Thomas Becket in those days was seeking assistance. The story is as follows: There was a woman loved by *Madoc*, a river-nymph, who incensed him and some bards to decide to go in search of the Fountain of Life. First he sails to the Isle of Ely, but does not find there what he is searching for and continues further out on the ocean. *Madoc* has to make this voyage as a penance laid on him by a bard [= a geiss]. After reaching the *paradis ravi par le soleil, resplendissant com fruits de mer*, he returns and now equips two ships and discovers a wonderful realm ‘of eternal youth, love and singing, where everyone could share in the affluence of the good things of this earth.’ While he is on his way we hear though that the actual goal of the journey, placed on him under duress, is six more days sailing further on. It is a strange garden in the middle of *La Mer Dégringolade*, ‘that no storm could blot out and that swallowed ships’. In view of this dangerous journey the ship of *Madoc* is equipped not with iron but with

stag-horn bolts, while from Ely he has taken with him a 'sailor's stone' (loadstone).² Deacon remarks concerning the river-nymph from the letter of Duvivier: 'This mysterious young woman was called "the river-nymph" based on her resemblance with a mermaid which was the result of her hiding her legs in fishnets, which makes her without doubt the inventor of the net-stockings!' Lampo, of course, wanted to know more about the case and contacted Deacon, who only after long insisting replied no longer to have his notes at his disposal. A mister Duvivier was not known in Poitiers, neither was such a manuscript known, not in Paris or elsewhere. From the Cwrtmawr manuscript of Aberystwyth Lampo unearthed the tradition that Madoc used nails of stag horn to build his ship. The manuscript is from 1582 and reports: "Madoc ab Owen Gwynedd was a great navigator who liked to travel, and as he could in no other way sail into the Vortex, he designed a ship without the use of iron, and made the nails from the horn of stags to prevent it from being swallowed by the sea..." (Lampo, 113)³

Another fantasy of Deacon is that Willem was much interested in ancient discoveries of lands in the West, from 'Seneca to Madoc' (Deacon's quotes!), according to Lampo a typical Renaissance trait. (Lampo, 117f) Another unfounded assertion is that *Les Romans de Guillaume le Jongleur* won great fame in France and the Provence. (Lampo, 131) Lampo's final conclusion is that "the very dubious Willem chapter in the quite sloppy book of Richard Deacon still contains a number of things that should be considered." (Lampo, 141f)

Deacon is a journalist and not a scientist and Gwyn Williams calls him 'Madoc's last defender' (of the theory that Madoc has discovered America), whose book is 'often wild and sometimes silly, but always challenging.'⁴ There is also a problem with William's book: an adequate notes recording is lacking, so that it is sometimes unclear on what his assertions are based. He does indicate his sources, both in the text as well as at the end of the book under the heading 'Documentation', where he remarks 'On Willem the Fleming':

I have found most useful E. Colledge (ed.), *Reynard the Fox and other medieval Netherlands secular literature*, London 1967; J.F. Willems (ed.) with essay by O. Delepierre, *Le Roman de*

² Lampo 1975, 77-79. In the poem *La Vie de Saint Thomas Becket* of the French poet Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence of 1174 it is said that among the Welshmen, that were at the end of Becket's life among his trusted men, there was a 'Madoc, messenger de Thomas Becket' (Lampo, 95).

³ See the blog by Stephen Grant Davies, 'Pre-Columbian References to Madoc' (6 feb. 2014): Unfortunately, modern researches in Poitiers fail to unearth support for any of this fabrication. Even the great cynic, Professor Gwyn Alf Williams, unusually for him, was taken in by Deacon's fabrications about the 'Poitiers translation'. Unfortunately, he seems to have accepted Deacon's fables about Willem and the lost précis in Poitiers, without checking its veracity - and allowed it to impress him as the best plank in a shaky tale.

⁴ Williams 1979, preface, second page. Also others had the same experience as Lampo with Deacon: The Lundy stone - Richard Deacon claims in his book that in a load of granite that arrived in Barnstaple in 1865, there was a partly-defaced tablet with a carving in old-style Welsh which read 'It is an established fact, known far and wide, that Madoc ventured out into the western ocean, never to return.' Unfortunately, this vital piece of evidence cannot be authenticated. Deacon claimed that he had been informed of the discovery in a letter from Mr D G Evans of Bristol, but extensive enquiries failed to find this person. At the time, The Lundy Society contacted Deacon for more information, but he said that all his papers were in America. Richard Deacon is dead and his papers are untraced. The Barnstaple Museum and Devon records have no knowledge of such a find. On 24 July 1967, the *Bristol Evening Post* published an article on the story and asked for any information about the identity of D. G. Evans or any trace of the inscribed stone. No response was forthcoming and the truth of the claim must remain in doubt. (information internet: Prof. Bernard Knight CBE, President of MIRA, de Madoc International Research Organisation, who also writes: Even the great cynic, Professor Gwyn Alf Williams, was impressed by Willem's role in the search. Willem says he travelled to Wales, Lundy and probably Herefordshire where he knew the writer-priest Walter Map, who was dead by 1210 and who says knew Willem.)

Renarde, Brussels 1837; J. W. Muller (ed.), *Vos Reinaerde*, Leiden 1939; J.D. Wolters on the same subject (Groningen 1959); W.G. Hellinga, *Wie was Willem die de Reynaert schreef?* (1950?); E.S. Hartland (ed.), *Walter Map, De Nugis Curialium*, trans. M.R. James with notes by J.E. Lloyd, Cymmrodorion, London 1923; E.D. Jones, 'The reputed discovery of America by Madoc ap Owain Gwynedd', *National Library of Wales Journal*, XIV (1965).⁵

The first thing that is remarkable is his speaking of 'Celtic sources', which is a translation of the 'walschen [= French] boucken' (*Reinaert*, vs. 8). Next he asserts: 'The Flemish version of the story of Gawain (Gwyn), for example, was attributed to a Celtic poet Penninc whose work was said to have been "completed" by Peter Vostaert'. This concerns the *Roman van Walewein* by Penninc and Vostaert and the only reason for making a Celt out of Penninc, seems to me to be an *interpretatio cambrico* (Gwyn Williams is of Welsh descent, a 'Celt') or rather a pun on the well-known *pen* (head, cf. *pen-gwyn*: white head⁶). Of course, *penninc* is the same as English *penny*, an old Germanic word compounded from 'pand' (pledge, pawn) and 'dinc' (thing).⁷ About the *Reinaert* he says: 'No story was more successful than Willem's *Reynard*, which followed the original French and German classics.' Also this doesn't inspire faith, because the German is based on the Dutch version. Nobody knows where Willem came from, but in 1938 a memorial was erected for him on the Dutch-Belgian border near Hulst. Some researchers have identified Willam as a premonstratenser from the Abbey of Drongen near Gent, who possessed lands in Hulst and Hulsterlo in Dutch Flanders; a Willelmus clericus lived near Hulsterloo in 1269. There is another obvious referral to Willem in the work of his 'near contemporary' Jacob van Maerlant, who refers to a *priest* Willem Utenhove van Ardenbourg, who has written a bestiary. Williams remarks at this that the *Reynard* itself mentions Hoeckenbroeck in Ardenbourg.⁸

After having reproduced in 'most scholarly English' the first lines of the *Reinaert* ('Willem who laboured to indite / Madoc in many a wakeful night') William mentions from Maerlant's *Rijmbybel* of ca. 1270: 'Want dit is niet Madocs droem / No Reinaerts no Artus boerden...' Maerlant, who had written himself romances about Merlin and the Grail, renounced such nonsense and started to write enormous and indigestible works with secular and biblical history. And in these works there was no place for 'Madoc's dream, neither Reynard's nor Arthur's pranks...' This proves that there was a Madoc-romance, written by Willem, that was well-known and in circulation at the beginning of the 13th century. I have no objections to this, but then Williams continues with 'snippets of information' that suggest that Willem 'travelled widely' in France and England, including Wales. A 'jongleur-bardh Willem' was known to the author Walter Map. The quotes here are from Williams, who cites here Deacon (without mentioning). Then he communicates the known facts about Map, concluding with the words: 'Map himself was dead by 1210, but he recorded his acquaintance with a young poet Willem, proud as a peacock, who sang like a nightingale, and who, he said, left for the court of Marie de Champagne.' (Williams, 50f)

⁵ Williams 1979, 208. The last entry is probably by accident from the next rubric 'On Wales, Madoc and America'.

⁶ See Skeat, 342: In a tract printed in 1588, we read that Sir F. Drake gave a certain island the name of *Penguin Island* in 1587, from the penguins found there. The word appears to be W[elsh] *pen gwyn*, i.e. white head. If so, it must first have been given to another bird, such as the auk (the puffin is common in Anglesey), since the penguin's head is black.

⁷ According to Skeat, 326 is the meaning 'little pledge', i.e. a token, coin.

⁸ Williams, 50. I have not been able to locate this; is this a Williams' fabrication, or one of Deacon's many fantasies?

After a citation from the commentary of Delepierre from 1837, who wondered whether Willem's *Madoc* were the adventures of 'Madoc, fils d'Owen Gwynned, prince de Galle (Wales), qui vers l'an 1170 découvrit l'Amérique?', we get the story of the Duvivier letter, that we have already seen. In the 17th century a fragment of a so-called French copy of the *Madoc* would have been found in Poitiers. This is quite late and might have been made after the 16th-century stories about Madoc came into circulation (although it baffles Williams why someone in 17th-century France would go that far with such a fraud). A local scholar (i.e. Duvivier) is of the opinion that the fragment belongs to the late 14th century or even earlier, and connects them with the *romans de Guillaume le Jongleur*, that were in circulation in the Provence and Champagne in the 13th century. 'The author identifies himself as *Guillaume qui fait Reynaud*, which certainly sounds familiar!'

The manuscript, according to Williams, 'itself an incomplete précis', relates a romantic tale. Madoc is not related to Owain Gwynedd, but a member of Welsh nobility and his grandfather was half a Viking. Williams adds between parentheses that Owain Gwynedd's father Gruffydd ap Cynan sailed with the Norse of Ireland and the Isle of Man. Then Williams continues: "A famous sailor, this Madoc went on a mission to the court of France disguised as a monk (Owain Gwynedd in reality did send clerical emissaries to the French court). Madoc, whose lover dressed her legs in fishnets, went sailing to find the Fountain of Youth, landed on an island called Ely to look for the lodestone (magnet) which he could safely use because the nails of his ship were made of stag horn. Sailing out from Ely, he found an island paradise bathed in the sun, and returned to Ely for more ships to launch a new kingdom of love and music. Willem mentions an island surrounded by a very large fish, identified as one of the magic isles of *Gwerddonau Llion* and a 'treacherous garden in the sea' reminiscent of explorers' stories and sailor's yarns of the Sargasso Sea and the 'warm sea in which plants grow', an untraceable Madoc reference attributed to Cynwric ap Gronw."

This tale (if any way authentic) combines, according to Williams, the traditions of romance and some traits of medieval speculative geography. It should belong to the known Quest genre of voyages to the 'Isles of the Blessed', the 'Fortunate Isles' and 'Antilla of the Seven Golden Cities', mixed with the many 'sightings' of 'fly-away island', that crowded the late medieval maps. Williams is reminded by the nails of horn of the tales of a semi-magic ship *Gwennan Gorn*, that can be found in North Wales, and connects this with the information of 1582 about a race along the coast of Gwynedd, where there is mention of a ship *Gwennan Gorn*, built by Madoc, with stag horn instead of nails, that still ran into trouble. Also the mentioning of Ely is remarkable, because that name was once given to Lundy Island in the channel of Bristol [from its patron saint Helen, the mother of Constantine the Great]. Lundy, as *Ynis Wair*, is identified in ancient Welsh poetry with the Fountain of Youth. And in later traditions it is mentioned as the starting point of Madoc's second voyage. (Williams, 51f)

Williams rushes on with stories about sailing Welshmen, Vikings, and proposes the possibility that some tale about Madoc not only intruded in the European literature in the 13th century, but also in the serious scientific speculation. This Madoc fragment of Willem, 'in its simultaneous "southern" atmosphere of sun-drenched islands, seas of weed and isles of *Llion* and "northern" hints of semi-Vikings and Lundy, and above all in its concern for stag-horn protection against the deadly powers of magnetism' reminds Williams of one of the most famous of 'lost texts' of early geographic speculation, namely the 14th-century English *Inventio Fortunata*, where John Dee and

Richard Hakluyt searched for in vain. In this connection Williams introduces the letter of Mercator to John Dee with the story of Cnoyen of 's Hertogenbosch in whose sources there would be mention of a 'Willem of Ghent'.⁹ (Williams, 54f)

The contacts between Flanders and Holland on the one side and England on the other side are of all ages, but an intensification occurred in the days of William the Conqueror, who was married to Mathilda, daughter of count Baldwin V of Flanders. A number of those Flemings settled in England, but stayed in contact with the motherland. They can also be found in Rhos in South Wales, as reported by Gerald of Wales in his *Itinerarium Cambriae*, a 'travel guide of Wales': "The people living in that neighbourhood came from Flanders. They were sent there (i.e. South Wales) by King Henry I to colonise the area (meaning convert the swamp area to arable land, like they also did in Flanders). They are a brave and robust people but quite hostile to the Welsh population and in continuous state of conflict with them. They are very skilled in the wool-trade, prepared to work hard and willing to face the dangers of land and sea in order to make a profit. When the time and opportunity present themselves, they are all too eager to lend their hand either to the sword (as mercenaries) or to the plough.' This group was replaced by Henry I from Northumbria. The 16th-century humanist Lucas de Heere writes about the colony in Pembrokeshire: '*Daer den Conyngh hen een plaetse verordende aent oost eynde: Van waar zy in West Wallia vervoert waeren. Waer datse vermenichten, ende haer geslachte tot noch aen de sprake ende andersins bekent is ghelyc Humprij Lhuijd seyt; ende Ick hebbe ooc med eenighe ghesproken die noch goed Vlaemsch spraken tzelfde aen haer ouders ende als van vader tot kinde gheleert hebbende* (As the King ordered them a place at the east-end: from where they were replaced to West Wales. Where they multiplied and their descendants still are known by their speech and otherwise like Humprey Lhuud said; and I have also spoken with some who still spoke good Flemish just like their parents and as having learned from father to child).' So centuries later they had still kept the old language.¹⁰ Janssen brings this up in connection with the old mentions of the name Walewein (Gawain). He must have appealed to the imagination especially in Wales where at Rhos during the reign of William the Conqueror (1066-1087) the grave of Gawain was found. William of Malmesbury reports that Gawain's body washed up there and was buried at the coast. A typical 'Celtic' trait in the *Roman van Walewein* is the 'counter-curse': the fox was a prince enchanted by his stepmother; and he in turn had enchanted her into a toad which she had to be as long as he was a fox.¹¹

Finally, the cover of Lampo's *Kroniek van Madoc* (Chronicle of Madoc) has rather unfounded an image from the *Hortus sanitas* by Johann Neeck von Kaub (Jean de Cuba) from 1509, because in Lampo's book this is not mentioned. The picture is unclear, because the sea in the foreground has

⁹ I have published a new translation of the letter of Mercator to Dee on this site (RSM Oct. 8, 2015), As anyone can check, there is no mention of a 'Willem' nor 'Ghent' or 'Gent' in that letter.

¹⁰ As an example I can point to a passage from the Prologue of the *Eneydos* by William Caxton (1422-1491), where he treats the problems with the English that wasn't yet standardised: 'And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another.' And he gives an example of merchants sailing on the Thames (Tamyse) who for lack of wind were arrested at Forlond (North Foreland in Kent) and there went shopping. One of them asked for *eggys*; whereupon the good wife said, *that she coude speke no frenshe*. The merchant got angry, because he also could not speak French, but wanted *egges* and she didn't understand him. 'And theene at laste another sayd that he wolde haue *eyren* then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thysse dayes no write, *egges* or *eyren*?' Eyren = eieren, so Dutch, but no longer seen as such by the 'good wyf'. (Trevelyan I, 78 after *Eneydos*, E.E.T.S., 1890, 1-4).

¹¹ Citations after Janssens, Jozef, 'Arturstof in de Nederlanden', in: *Arturus Rex* 1987, 103-143, here 107f.

been replaced with the rectangle with the name of the author and the title. What we see is a ship that is sinking, because the nails from the ship – we see two of them hanging in the air – fly away from the ship toward the magnetic mountain. This reminds of the stag horn bolts with which the ship of Madoc was equipped in the ‘Duvivier fragment’.

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Picture of the Magnet-mountain from the *Hortus Sanitatis*.