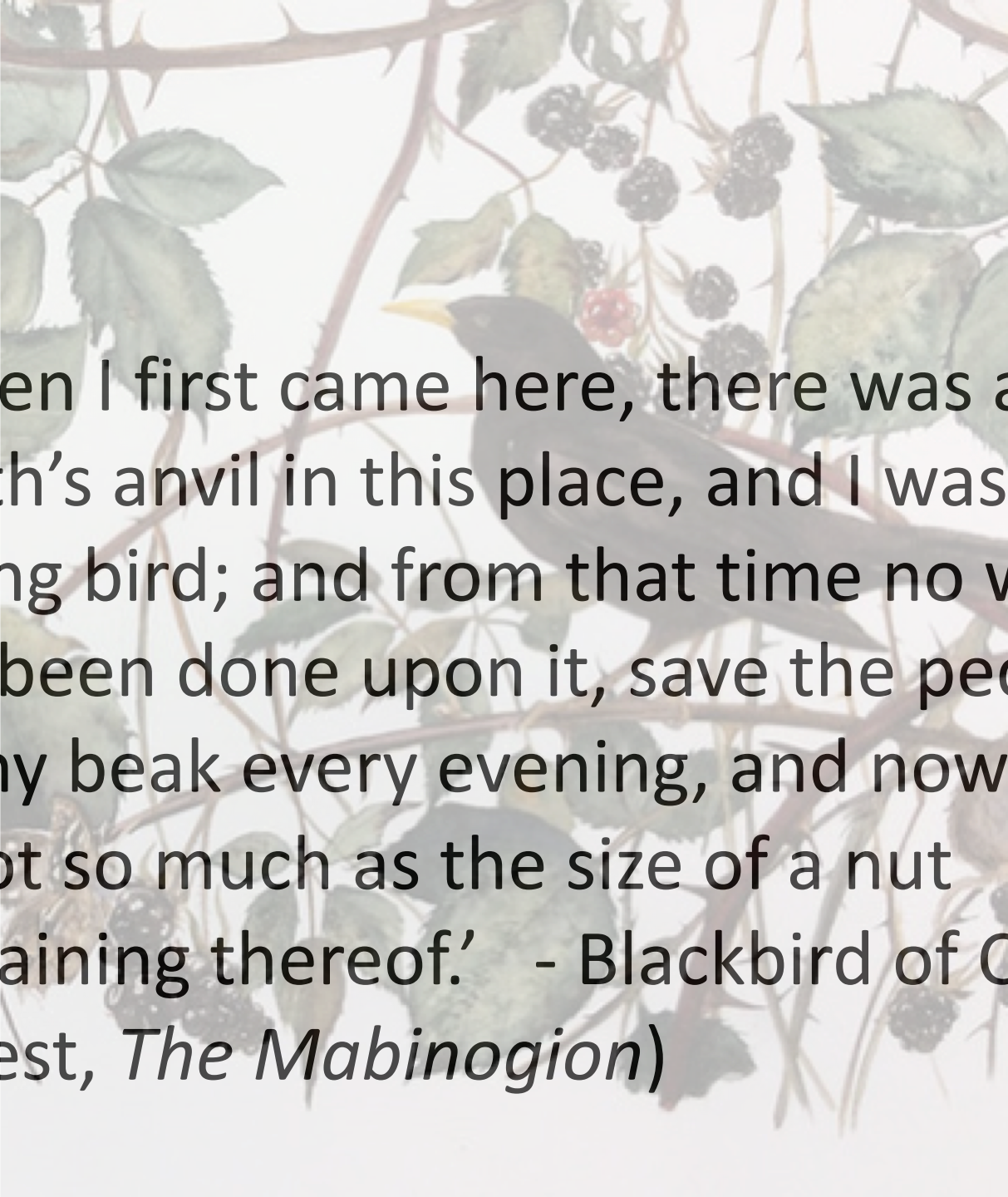


A stone carving of a salmon and a bird, likely a salmon symbol from early Welsh literature. The carving is on a light-colored stone, possibly limestone or sandstone, and shows a salmon swimming upwards towards a bird, possibly a swan or a goose, which is perched on a rock or branch. The carving is simple and stylized, with clear outlines and some internal detailing. The text "The Oldest Animal: Salmon in Early Welsh Literature" is overlaid on the image in a black, sans-serif font.

# The Oldest Animal: Salmon in Early Welsh Literature

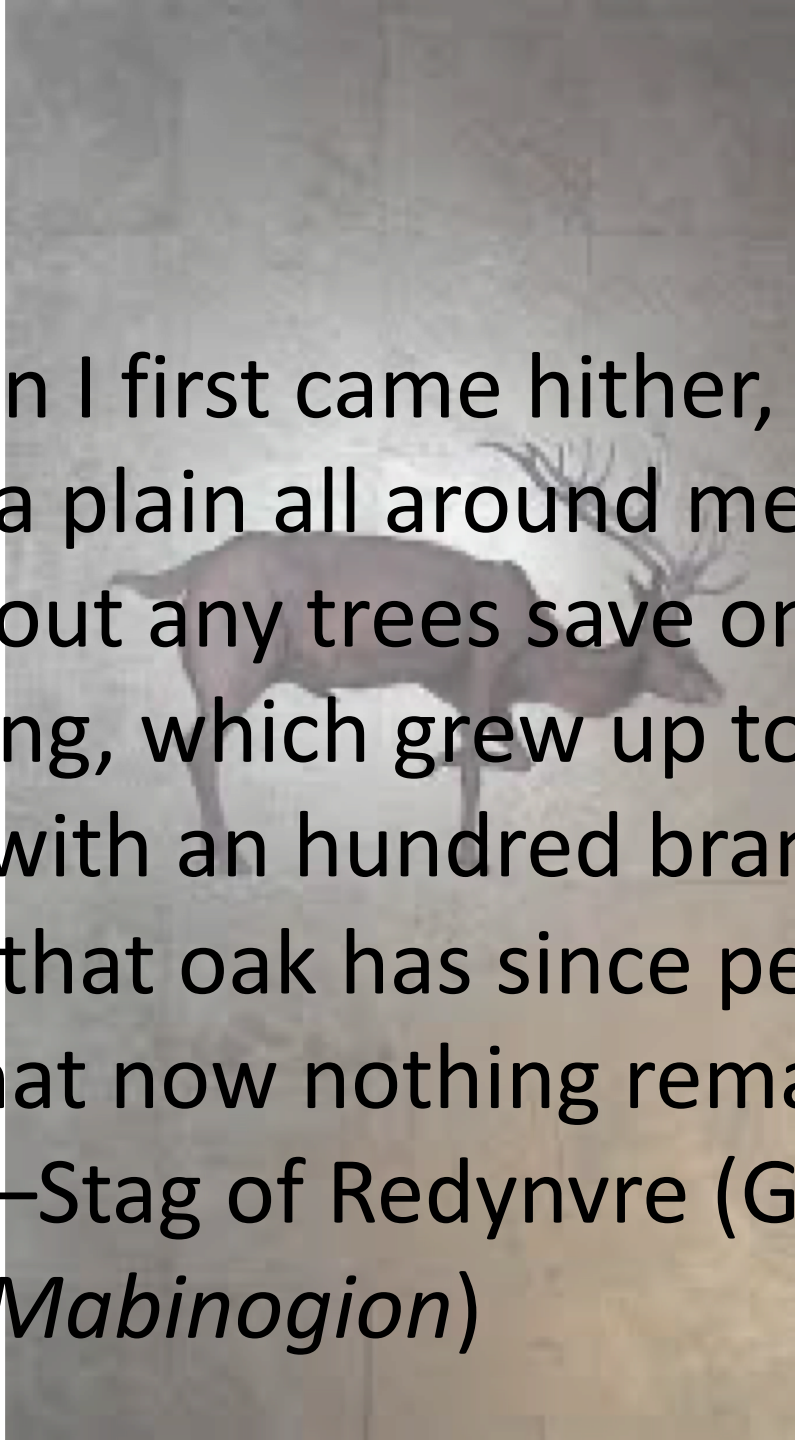




'When I first came here, there was a smith's anvil in this place, and I was then a young bird; and from that time no work has been done upon it, save the pecking of my beak every evening, and now there is not so much as the size of a nut remaining thereof.' - Blackbird of Cilgwri-  
(Guest, *The Mabinogion*)

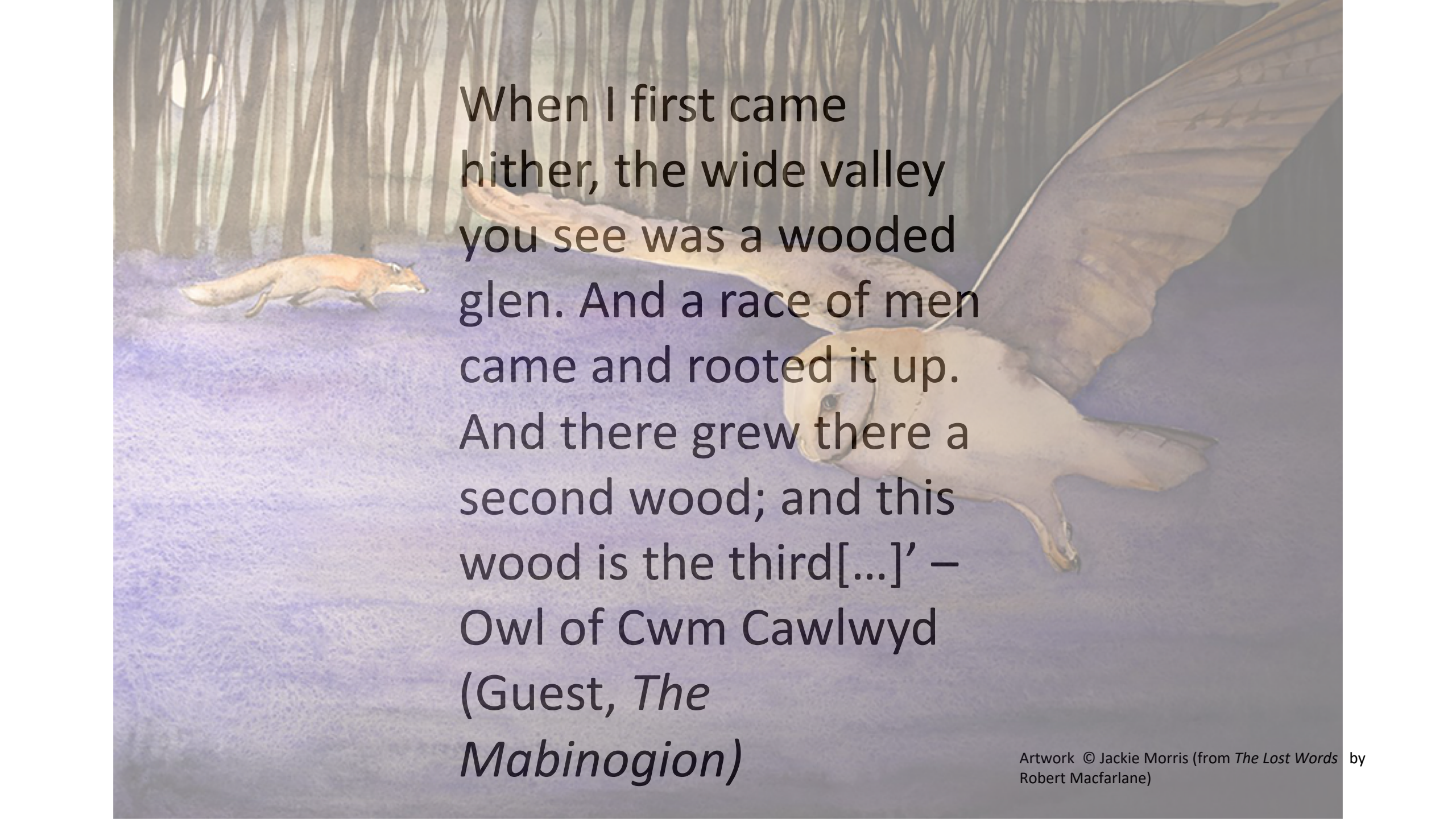
Artwork © Jackie Morris  
(from *The Lost Words* by  
Robert Macfarlane)





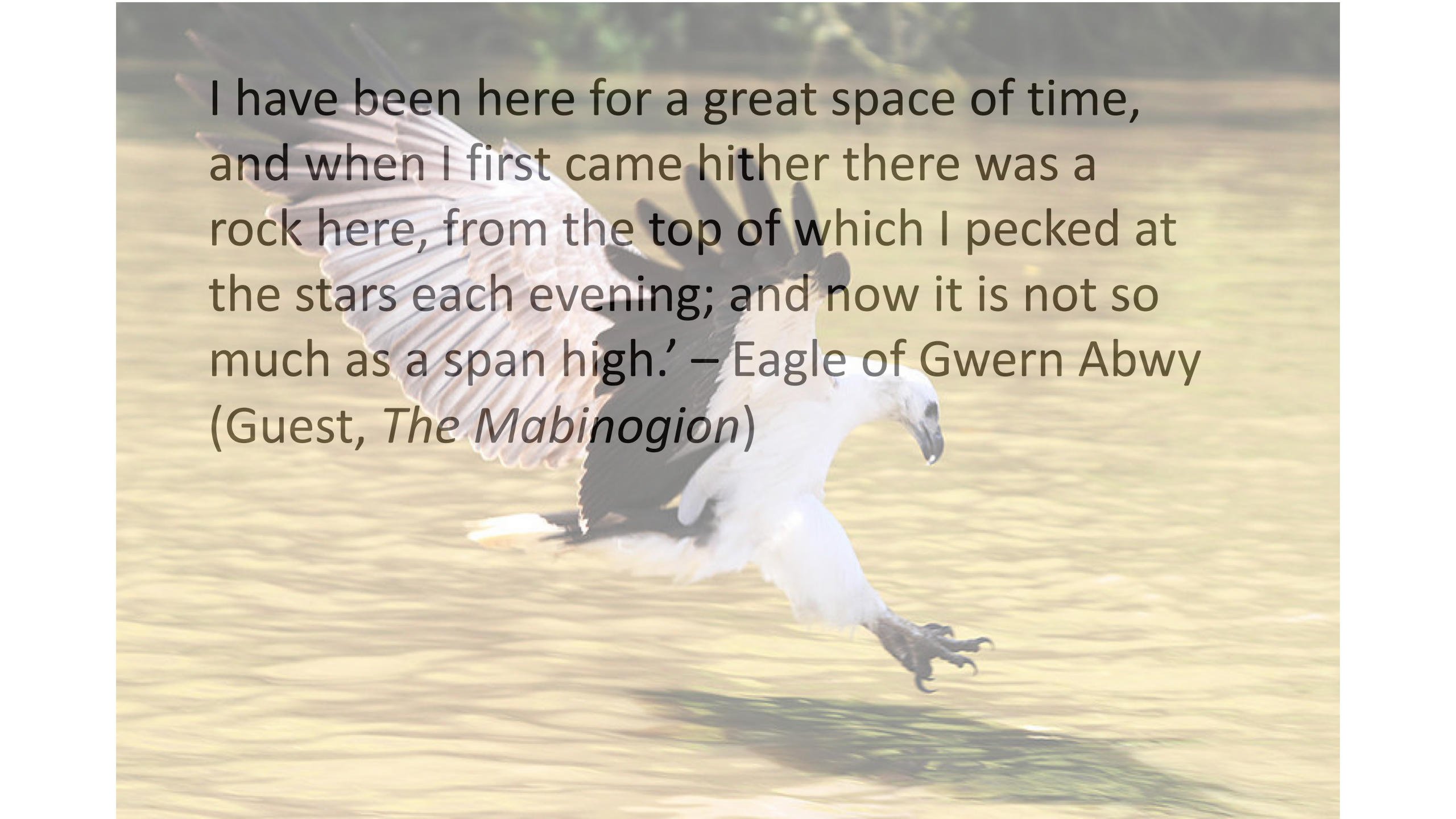
When I first came hither, there  
was a plain all around me,  
without any trees save one oak  
sapling, which grew up to be an  
oak with an hundred branches.  
And that oak has since perished  
so that now nothing remains  
[...]' –Stag of Redynvre (Guest,  
*The Mabinogion*)



The background is a misty, ethereal forest scene. In the foreground, a large owl with light brown and white feathers is shown in profile, facing left. Its wings are spread wide, and it appears to be perched or moving slowly. In the mid-ground, a fox with orange and white fur is walking away from the viewer towards the left. The forest floor is covered in a thick layer of purple and blue foliage. In the background, tall, thin trees with light-colored bark stand in a misty atmosphere. A single, bright white circle, possibly a moon or a light source, is visible in the upper left corner of the forest.

When I first came  
hither, the wide valley  
you see was a wooded  
glen. And a race of men  
came and rooted it up.  
And there grew there a  
second wood; and this  
wood is the third[...]’ –  
Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd  
(Guest, *The  
Mabinogion*)



A white eagle with dark wings is captured in mid-flight over a body of water. The eagle's wings are spread wide, showing the intricate patterns of its feathers. Its head is turned slightly to the right, and its talons are visible, reaching out. The background is a soft, out-of-focus view of water and distant trees, creating a serene and majestic atmosphere.

I have been here for a great space of time,  
and when I first came hither there was a  
rock here, from the top of which I pecked at  
the stars each evening; and now it is not so  
much as a span high.' – Eagle of Gwern Abwy  
(Guest, *The Mabinogion*)

*From 'That Morning' (Ted Hughes)*

[...] the salmon

That came on, came on, and kept on coming  
As if we flew slowly, their formations  
Lifting us toward some dazzle of blessing

One wrong thought might darken. As if the fallen  
World and salmon were over. As if these  
Were the imperishable fish

That had let the world pass away [...]