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The Theme of Sovereignty in *Pwyll*

ALTHOUGH it is generally agreed that *Pedair Cainc y Mabinogi* is a highly literary work, most studies have been devoted to reconstructing coherent narratives which can be regarded as the original, and implicitly the correct, forms of the stories, or to explaining, by reference to oral traditional processes, their development out of a jumble of originally separate themes and motifs. The first approach sees the *Mabinogi*, or at least each of its branches, as a unified whole of which we see but the distorted shadow on the wall of the cave. The second sees it as a patchwork whole, and is more interested in examining the seams which traverse it than in describing the design thereby created. While both approaches have yielded valuable insight into the *Mabinogi* and underlying Celtic traditions, both leave us, finally, with an uncomfortably contradictory view of the author of the text as we have it. He appears to have been, on one hand, a master of fine prose, especially of dialogue, and a connoisseur of courtly manners, and on the other, a man who did not understand the stories he was recounting but who dutifully recorded, to the best of his limited ability, ancient and fragmentary Welsh traditions. Perhaps we must ultimately come to terms with this portrait of the artist, but perhaps a re-examination of the Four Branches which assumes that the text is in some sense coherent, whatever its relations to its origins, might yield a less paradoxical understanding. Such a re-examination would assume that the text was intended to be read as meaningful narrative by an audience which did not consist entirely of antiquarians or literary archaeologists and would look for the coherence it might have held for that contemporary audience. So examined, it is possible to regard the first branch as a story about the growth to full and effective lordship over Dyfed of its protagonist, Pwyll, and as a mirror and exhortation for medieval Welsh princes.

The reconstructive approach to *Mabinogi* criticism is, of course, best exemplified by the work of W. J. Gruffydd, who regarded the Four Branches as the story of the hero Pryderi. The first branch, he contended, comprises Pryderi's *compert* or birth story and a version of the tale of his abduction by Otherworld forces. He saw the second branch, *Branwen*, as a tale of Pryderi's greatest exploit, which he understood to have been, originally, an expedition to Annwfn to seize the cauldron of resurrection. He read *Manawydan* as a version of the 'rape of Pryderi' alternative to the second part of *Pwyll* and *Math* as Pryderi's *aided* or death tale.¹

In the original form of the first branch, as Gruffydd would have it, a mortal stole an Otherworld woman from her Otherworld lover, who pursued her and begot upon her the child Pryderi, whom he subsequently abducted to the Otherworld.² This interpretation involved considerable violence to the text, for Gruffydd arrived at it by separating Pwyll

¹ W. J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon* (Cardiff, 1953), p. 11. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Celtic Discussion Group of the Modern Language

Association of America at its annual meeting in New York on 28 December 1978.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

from the title he bears at the beginning of the story, 'Pendefig Dyfed', and making of him two separate characters, the Otherworld king Pwyll Pen Annwn and the mortal chieftain or 'Pendefig Dyfed' whose role is actually played in the text by Arawn, mistakenly identified there as himself a king of Annwn. Further, according to Gruffydd, Pwyll the lord of Annwn fathered Pryderi upon Rhiannon, the Otherworld bride of the mortal chieftain with whom he had exchanged forms. Yet according to the text, Pwyll remained chaste in his relationship with Arawn's wife—a circumstance whose dramatic and humorous implications are explored with great skill.

Gruffydd supported his reconstruction of *Pwyll* by reference to Irish tales which he saw as analogues of the original story, and the method he thereby introduced into *Mabinogi* scholarship has been a very fruitful one. It is the method of Proinsias MacCana's excellent study of the second branch¹ and essentially the method of Kenneth Jackson's criticism of Gruffydd's work as well. Professor Jackson examined the *Mabinogi* in relation not only to Irish literary analogues but to international tale types and motifs as well. He demonstrated that reconstruction of the Annwn section of *Pwyll* to make Pryderi a son of Pwyll and Arawn's wife conceived during that period is unnecessary, since the motifs of exchanging shapes, the chaste friend, and the vicarious duel had been joined in international popular tradition before the *Mabinogi* as we have it was composed. In his view, this complex of motifs was adapted by a storyteller for use in a Welsh narrative tradition according to which Pwyll went to the Otherworld to fight Arawn's enemy on his behalf.² He showed further that Gruffydd's identification of Pwyll as the original Otherworld king and Arawn as properly a mortal is equally unnecessary, since the motif of the mortal warrior assisting the Otherworld king in battle appears in several Irish sagas.³

Jackson's work on the *Mabinogi* led criticism in several directions simultaneously. His revision of Gruffydd's reading of the Annwn episode suggested the possibility of reading the text as a consciously crafted narrative, valid in itself and not merely a puzzle from which a hypothetical lost original might be reconstructed. At the same time, his attention to international popular motifs involved an analytical method whose end result is fragmentation of each tale into its component parts.

Subsequent work on the Four Branches has tended to develop Jackson's analytical methods of criticism and Gruffydd's archaeological interest in uncovering by such analysis Celtic mythic traditions, although a recent article by Seán Ó Coileáin attempts to synthesize Jackson's analysis of *Pwyll* into a comprehensive thematic explanation of the tale.⁴ He reads *Pwyll* as Pryderi's birth tale, and explains the Rhiannon section as a functional doublet of the Annwn section necessitated by the deflection of the story from its narrative goal—the birth—which occurs when the motif of the chaste friend is introduced. The

¹ Proinsias MacCana, *Bramwen Daughter of Llŷr* (Cardiff, 1958).

² Kenneth Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff, 1961), pp. 82–3.

³ Kenneth Jackson, 'Some Popular Motifs in

Early Welsh Tradition', *Études Celtiques*, 11 (1964–5), 84.

⁴ Seán Ó Coileáin, 'A Thematic Study of the Tale *Pwyll Pendefig Dyfed*', *Studia Celtica*, 12–13 (1977–8), 78–82.

Teyrnnon section in turn is a doublet of part of the Rhiannon section, which is deflected by introduction of the Calumniated Wife theme. However, while Ó Coileáin reads *Pwyll* as a unified tale, his interest is primarily in the processes by which its separate parts are joined and only secondarily in the nature of the whole thereby created. Furthermore, he is not concerned with the question of why the birth story of Pryderi should have been of interest to a late eleventh- or twelfth-century audience, but with the developmental processes which forged it.

With few other exceptions, recent criticism has tended to focus on the underlying mythic nature of material in the Four Branches, but has avoided the temptation to reconstruct lost originals of the tales. Proinsias MacCana approached the text in this fashion in *Celtic Mythology*,¹ and so more recently has Patrick Ford, who describes the *Mabinogi* as 'an extensive collection of more or less related adventures, related sufficiently for them to be metaphorically conceived as branches', each consisting of 'episodes of related lore (*cyfarwydd*) and adventures (*cyfrangau*)'.² Study of the mythic material in the Four Branches has indeed proven fruitful; in regard to *Pwyll* its most valuable discovery has been the relationship of Rhiannon to the continental Epona and other equine divinities of Celtic tradition.³ However, as much as such scholarship contributes to our understanding of the Four Branches, it does not in and of itself define the nature of the text for us at all.

Such definition ought properly to begin, as has been generally recognized, with an understanding of the term *mabinogi*. Many interpretations have been put forward over the years,⁴ of which the most recent and the most closely argued is that of Eric Hamp. Professor Hamp interprets the term as meaning 'the collective material pertaining to Maponos',⁵ thus associating the Four Branches with the 'divine youth' whose cult is attested archaeologically in Britain and Gaul. This analysis offers strong support for the view of the *Mabinogi* as mythology. Whether we read the Four Branches, with Professor Ford, as a 'collection of more or less related adventures' grounded in the mythology of Maponos or as four separate but individually unified tales dealing with discrete aspects of a mythic tradition,⁶ it seems clear that their redactor had some notion of the material he was

¹ Proinsias MacCana, *Celtic Mythology* (London, 1970), pp. 75–83.

² Patrick Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 3–4. Brinley Rees has explored the *Mabinogi* in terms of Dumézilian tripartition in *Ceinciau'r Mabinogi* (Sili-wen, Bangor, 1975); I am grateful to Professor D. Ellis Evans for bringing this work to my attention. Eric Hamp, too, has examined the Indo-European background of the tales, in his lecture for the opening of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, on 18 July 1979.

³ See e.g. Ford, pp. 4–10; T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Native Political Organisation and the Origin of MW *brenhin*' in *Antiquitates Indogermanicae*, ed. Manfred Mayrhofer et al. (Innsbruck, 1974), p. 40.

⁴ These are reviewed by Eric P. Hamp in 'Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of*

Cymmrodorion (1974–5), p. 243.

⁵ Ibid., p. 247.

⁶ Such a view of the Four Branches is fundamental, of course, to Gruffydd's analysis of the collection. It is implicit, too, in studies which regard the tales as distinguished by the divine families which provide the main characters for each, but united in being traditional narratives about the most ancient gods or ancestors remembered in various parts of Wales. Such studies include Edward Anwyl's 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 1 (1897), 277–93; 2 (1899), 124–33; 3 (1901), 123–34, and Rachel Bromwich's 'The Character of Early Welsh Tradition', in H. M. Chadwick et al., *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 83–136, at pp. 103–4. Brinley Rees and Eric Hamp, on the other hand, view the *Mabinogi* as a single body of myth reflecting the

recounting as traditional mythic material, regardless of the confusion over ancient traditions which may have caused him to drop the thread of his narrative occasionally. Survival of the term *mabinogi* is very difficult to explain otherwise.

Nevertheless, to claim, tentatively, for the redactor of the Four Branches an awareness of the nature of his received material is not, necessarily, to understand his intention in composing the text. Despite general agreement on the presence of mythological tradition in the *Mabinogi*, there are some scholars who regard the preservation of this material as the sole or primary purpose of the text and others who see the mythology as a material rather than a formal cause, that is, as the narrative matter out of which the redactor consciously formed a different literary artefact.

It is to the former group, of course, that W. J. Gruffydd belonged. While he regarded the *Mabinogi* as a conscious work of art never very well known in Wales,¹ he believed it to be a reworking of traditional material into, figuratively speaking, 'one sentence with only one subject and one main verb',² a sentence about the hero Pryderi. *Pwyll*, in his view, is Pryderi's birth story and explains how it is 'that Pryderi is said to have succeeded his father as Lord of Dyfed when he was notoriously the son of the Head of Annwfn. The question was answered by making the Lord of Dyfed and the Head of Annwfn into one person under two names.'³

Jackson regards the text as the studied work of a courtly entertainer of antiquarian bent 'who "revived" this body of tales which had been out of fashion for so long that it was capable of being made fashionable and interesting once again . . . but he was not able clearly to restore the thread of the tales where this had been lost'.⁴ Like Gruffydd, he focuses on the traditional nature of *Pwyll*, a tale which may have originated as an explanation of how Pwyll became the Head of Annwfn,⁵ and he accounts for its literary redaction by reference to the traditional, antiquarian inclinations of the Celtic peoples. Seán Ó Coileáin's recent analysis of *Pwyll* supports Jackson's view by demonstrating, very persuasively, that the structure of the tale might very well reflect development in the oral tradition.⁶ Although Ó Coileáin reads the tale as a *compert*, or birth story, and attributes the breaking and twisting of its narrative threads to its oral history, rather than to the inability of the antiquarian redactor to restore lost material, he implicitly regards the tale as traditional narrative preserved for tradition's sake. Brynley Roberts holds a similar view.⁷

Patrick Ford goes a step further than other scholars of this school and claims that the redactor of the Four Branches not only recounted ancient mythic traditions but to some extent understood them. The first branch, for example,

tripartition of divine and social functions perceived by Georges Dumézil in Indo-European myth and society. Both see each of the branches as particularly concerned with one of these functions, although they disagree in the conclusions they draw concerning the places of *Pwyll* and *Branwen* in the tripartite scheme. See Rees, *Ceinciau'r Mabinogi*, pp. 12-16.

¹ Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*, pp. 4-5.

² W. J. Gruffydd, 'Mabon vab Modron', *Y Cymmrodor*, 42 (1931), 131.

³ Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*, p. 33.

⁴ Kenneth Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*, p. 126.

⁵ Jackson, 'Some Popular Motifs in Early Welsh Tradition', 84.

⁶ Ó Coileáin, 'A Thematic Study of the Tale *Pwyll Pendewic Dyuet*', 82.

⁷ Brynley F. Roberts, 'Tales and Romances', ch. 9 in A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym Rees Hughes, eds., *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, i (Swansea, 1976), p. 206.

appears to confront the problem of the failure of the horse-goddess to guarantee fertility and generate a hero (at the anthropomorphic level) and a foal (at the hippomorphic level). For that failure, she is punished by being reduced to the function of beast of burden. . . . The story is successfully resolved . . . in that the hero and foal are restored and so is Rhiannon to her proper role as consort of the king and guarantor of fertility.¹

Among those who credit the author with rhetorical intentions beyond the preservation of ancient mythic tradition is Proinsias MacCana, who has himself contributed a great deal to our recovery of that tradition from the text. Jackson describes the *Mabinogi* as 'the product of the study rather than the mead-hall',² and MacCana concurs, picturing the redactor as 'a cleric, learned in Latin and reasonably well informed, if not professionally expert in vernacular literature'.³ But he believes further that the redactor has exalted the virtues of the study, rather than the battlefield, in his literary treatment of traditional oral material. 'In his narrative and use of character,' MacCana contends, 'particularly in the case of Manawydan, he subtly conveys a scale of values which, by implication, he commends to the practice of contemporary society. For the exaggerated and impulsive ideals of heroic tradition . . . he projects the more Christian and more practical virtues of patience and compromise.'⁴ For MacCana, as for D. Myrddin Lloyd, it is the character of Manawydan, who does not appear in the first branch, whom the author has chosen to voice his own attitudes; in connection with the first branch, however, it is noteworthy that 'good sense' is Manawydan's outstanding virtue, a virtue whose Welsh name is *pwyl*.⁴ MacCana's reading of the Four Branches is supported by a close study of the first branch, which shows the tale to be concerned with Pwyll's growth to effective sovereignty through the development and exercise of his wisdom and good sense.⁵

Obviously, any attempt to define the rhetorical intentions of the redactor of the Four Branches must begin with a description of the audience he was addressing. Chronologically, that audience seems to have belonged to the last half of the eleventh century or the first quarter of the twelfth. Sir Ifor Williams argued that the text was composed c. 1060,⁶ but recent scholarship has called into question the possibility of making such a precise determination on the basis of available evidence, and Professor MacCana and Dr. T. M. Charles-Edwards have concurred that composition may have occurred as late as 1120.⁷

¹ Ford, *The Mabinogi*, p. 13.

² Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*, p. 130.

³ Proinsias MacCana, *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff, 1977), p. 60.

⁴ The word is used in this sense in early poetry. See, e.g., Ifor Williams, ed., *Canu Llywarch Hen* (Cardiff, 1953), p. 91.

⁵ Another scholar who has examined the *Mabinogi* for authorial intentions is J. K. Bollard, in 'The Structure of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1974-5), pp. 250-76. In Bollard's view, the author develops three main themes in the Four

Branches—friendships, marriages, and feuds. Through these themes, which are interlaced through the four tales, the author explores 'the modes of personal conduct which are necessary for society to survive and progress' (p. 252). See further Jeffrey Gantz's idiosyncratic reading 'Thematic Structure in the Mabinogi', *Medium Aevum*, 47 (1978), 247-254.

⁶ Ifor Williams, ed., *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, 2nd edn. (Cardiff, 1964), p. xli. I cite this work hereinafter as PKM.

⁷ T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1970), p. 298.

Socially, of course, the original audience of the Four Branches may be taken to have been an aristocratic one. This is attested by the preoccupation of the tales with the activities of kings and lords, as well as by what is known about the circumstances in which literature was produced, in medieval Celtic and in early medieval European society generally. The Four Branches draw upon a tradition of native learning. In *Pwyll* this tradition manifests itself in a concern with specific geographical and genealogical data. Pwyll holds court in Arberth, *prif lys idaw*, whence he sets forth on the hunting expedition to Glyn Cuch via Pen Llwyn Diarwya which culminates in his meeting with Arawn. It is from Arberth, too, that Pwyll sets out on the after-dinner walk which leads him, ultimately, to his meeting with Rhiannon. It is at Presseleu that Pwyll meets with *gwyr y wlat* in the third year of his marriage to discuss Rhiannon's barrenness. Teyrnnon is lord of Gwent Is Coed, and it is thence that he and his wife travel to Arberth in Dyfed to return Pwyll's son to him. Finally, at the end of the story, Pryderi's expansion of his realm is detailed quite specifically: he ultimately rules not only the seven cantrefs of Dyfed, but also the three cantrefs of Ystrad Tywi and the four cantrefs of Ceredigion, collectively known as the seven cantrefs of Seisyllwch. The redactor's interest in genealogy is clearest in his description of Pryderi's bride as Cigfa daughter of Gwyn Gohoyw son of Gloyw Gwallt Llydan son of Casnar Wledig *o dyledogyon yr ynys hon*.

The redactor's interest in Welsh lore is even more apparent in the other branches—in his onomastic stories about places with the element *moch* in their names in *Math*, for example, and in the explicit references to *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, which appear in all of the stories except *Pwyll*. Yet, even in the first branch his approach to his material is a learned one, although he only once allows his knowledge to slow the pace of his narrative. That one occasion is his indulgence of the Celtic penchant for onomastic material in the story of the naming of Pryderi:

'Y rof i a Duw', heb y Riannon, 'oed escor uym pryder im, pei gwir hynny.' 'Arlwydes', heb y Pendaran Dyuet, 'da yd enweist dy uab, Pryderi'. . . 'Yawnahaf yw hynny', heb y Pwyll, 'kymryt enw y mab y wrth geir a dywot y uam, pann gauas llawen chwedyl y wrthaw.'¹

All of this geographical, genealogical, and onomastic lore suggests an educated audience, interested in more than a satisfying series of adventures; it suggests an audience in court or monastery. That the original audience was more likely a courtly than a monastic one is suggested by the interest which the tales take in courtly life and manners.

In *Pwyll*, for example, considerable space is devoted to descriptions of hunting and feasting, the major peacetime activities of aristocratic life. The redactor enjoys, too, the details of courtly conversation among noblemen of various ranks and among aristocratic ladies and gentlemen.

In Pwyll's first adventure, his meeting with Arawn in the wood, the redactor observes the scene with the eyes and ears of an experienced huntsman:

Ac ual y byd yn ymwrndaw a llef yr erchwys, ef a glywei llef erchwys arall, ac nid oedynt unlef, a hynny yn dyuot yn erbyn y erchwys ef.²

¹ PKM, p. 26.

² PKM, p. 1.

He not only hears the difference in vocal quality between the two packs of hounds, but visualizes very precisely the rapid sequence of events which ensues:

Ac ef a welei lannerch yn y coet o uaes guastat; ac ual yd oed y erchwys ef yn ymgael ac ystlys y lannerch, ef a welei carw o ulaen yr erchwys arall. A pharth a pherued y lannerch, llyma yr erchwys a oed yn y ol yn ymordiwes ac ef, ac yn y uwrw y'r llawr.¹

Later on in the tale, in the episode of Pwyll's meeting with Rhiannon, the redactor demonstrates an aristocratic feeling for specific details of horsemanship. The first of Pwyll's men to pursue the mysterious horsewoman who rides past the Gorsedd Arberth waits until he reaches open, level ground (*maestir guastat*) and then shows his horse the spurs (*ef a dangosses yr ysparduneu y'r march*). He knows enough to give up the chase, however, when he feels his horse failing in speed (*pan wybu ef ar y uarch pallu y bedestric*).² In the second attempt to overtake Rhiannon, the rider is said to give the horse its head, or more literally, to release it from the reins (*ellwg y uarch a oruc wrth auwyneue*).³

The redactor is equally familiar with the pleasures of the hall and the protocol of courtly life. He paints a vivid picture of the appointments of Arawn's court, with its beautifully adorned sleeping quarters, halls, and chambers (*hundyeu ac yneuadeu ac ysteuyllyl a'r addurn teccaf a welsei neb o adeiladeu*), its golden vessels and royal jewels (*eur llestri a theyrn dlysseu*). He describes Pwyll's being assisted out of his hunting garments and into a robe of gold-embroidered silk, young lads or squires (*makwyueit a gueisson ieuieinc*) performing the menial chore of pulling his boots off, before two knights (*deu uarchauc*) array him in his feasting robe. He attends to such details of the feast as washing before the meal (*e ymolchi yd aethant*) and seating arrangements (*y urenhines o'r neill parth idaw ef, a'r iarll, debygei ef, o'r parth arall*). And he praises the pleasures of courtly life: hunting (*hela*), conversation (*ymdidan*), food (*bwyt*), drink (*llynn*), song (*cerdeu*), affection (*carueidrwyd*), and carousal (*cyuedach*).⁴

Similar detail enlivens the accounts of the two feasts at the court of Hyfaidd Hen, Rhiannon's father. At the second of these, after being released from the bag in which he has been trapped, Gwawl quickly recovers his dignity: his first thought is of a bath:

'briwedid wyf i, a chymriw mawr a geueis, ac ennein yssyd reit ymi, ac i ymdeith yd af i, gan dy gannyat ti.'⁵

Courtly interests are evident in other dialogues as well. Pwyll's first interchange with Arawn centres at first on the identification of social status, so that the privileges and obligations of each party with respect to the other may be determined:

'A unben,' heb ef, 'mi a wnn pwy wytti ac ny chyuarachaf i well it.' 'Ie,' heb ef, 'ac atuyd y mae arnat o anryded ual nas dyliei.'

Arawn explains that it is, rather, Pwyll's discourtesy in seizing the stag for himself which explains his coldness. Pwyll then offers to pay compensation, *wrth ual y bo dy anryded, ac ny wnn i pwy wytti*. Arawn announces that he is a crowned king (*brenhin corunawc*), which

¹ Ibid.

² PKM, p. 10.

³ PKM, p. 11.

⁴ PKM, pp. 4-5.

⁵ PKM, p. 18.

Pwyll is not. In his response, Pwyll addresses Arawn as *arglwyd*, a form of address suitable to his newly revealed status. Hitherto, Pwyll and Arawn have been addressing each other as *unbenn*.¹

At the conclusion of the tale, the privileges and obligations of social rank and relationship are again the main concern of the dialogue between Pwyll and Teyrnon. They comment on Pryderi's obligation to remember and recompense the foster parents of his infancy. Pwyll in his gratitude promises to support Teyrnon in his lordship over Gwent Is Coed, but the main bond is between the foster father and the child himself: *iawnach yw idaw dy gynnal nogyt y mi*.²

The general atmosphere of courtliness in Pwyll, then, reveals itself under close scrutiny as a real and reasonably specific knowledge of and interest in the ways of the court. This fact suggests that it was for a secular court, rather than a monastic audience, that the redaction of the first branch was originally intended.

Before proceeding further with an examination of the aristocratic concern which most fundamentally informs the tale, that is, the nature of effective sovereignty, it would be well to consider briefly the historical situation of Welsh princes during the period when the text was composed (c. 1060–1120). The beginning of that period was marked by the considerable statesmanship of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, who united all Wales under his rule from 1055 until he was defeated and killed by Earl Harold of Wessex in 1063. He accomplished the unification of Wales and successful resistance to English incursion by virtue of birth, victory in battle, and judicious alliance. He was the son of Llywelyn ap Seisyll, ruler of Gwynedd, and of Angharad, daughter of Maredudd ap Owain of Deheubarth and descendant of the great kings of tradition, Rhodri Mawr and Hywel Dda. Such ancestry lent a certain legitimacy and considerable emotional appeal to his gradual armed conquest of Deheubarth after his accession to the throne of Gwynedd in 1039. Meanwhile, his successful maintenance of the Welsh border against the English was facilitated by his alliance with Aelfgar, who was from 1057 the Earl of Mercia. This alliance was cemented by Gruffudd's marriage to Aelfgar's daughter Ealdgyth. Gruffudd's reign revived in Wales on the eve of the Norman invasion a spirit of ardent nationalism; yet interestingly, tradition has it that he began his life as a weak and lazy youth, and only shortly before his accession to the throne of Gwynedd began to develop lordly virtues.³ It would be a mistake, of course, to make too much of such traditions, since the theme of the unpromising youth is known to attach itself to the stories of legendary heroes of mythic, fictitious, and historical origin. Whether or not this story is based in fact in Gruffudd's case, however, it is certainly true that his reign was a great one in the history of medieval Wales.

During the remainder of the period, of course, the major concern of Welsh political

¹ PKM, p. 2. The use of dialogue to explore the issue of 'relative status' in *Pwyll* is examined in detail in T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status in Some Irish and Welsh Prose Tales', *Ériu* 29 (1978), 123–41. This illuminating discussion of the protocol of greetings and of terms of address provides further evidence of the aristocratic preoccupations of

Pwyll. I am grateful to Professors D. Ellis Evans and Eric Hamp for bringing the article to my attention.

² PKM, p. 26.

³ J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, 3rd edn., 2 vols. (London, 1939), ii. 358–71. I cite this work hereinafter as *HW*.

leadership was the Norman attempt to subjugate Wales. This period produced several outstanding princes in the persons of Gruffudd ap Cynan, Rhys ap Tewdwr, Gruffudd ap Rhys, and Bleddyn ap Cynfyn. Gruffudd ap Cynan, born in Ireland of a Welsh father and a Dublin Norse mother, devoted his young manhood to recovering the throne of Gwynedd, which had been held by his grandfather. This goal he had accomplished, with the help of various Irish and Scandinavian allies, by 1081. Subsequently, during the period 1094–1114, he was able to expand the borders of Gwynedd by recovering territory from the Normans, and although he was compelled in that year to do homage to Henry I, the strength of Gwynedd was maintained during the rest of his reign by his sons. Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1137) was not only a militarily strong prince, but one with whom was associated a renaissance of the arts in Wales.¹ The *Historia Gruffud Vab Kenan*,² the only biography in medieval Welsh literature, tells us that Gruffudd brought poets and musicians from Ireland to his court in Gwynedd. The biography is neither contemporary, having been composed c. 1162–70, nor unbiased, since it is highly eulogistic, but the tradition of Gruffudd's interest in the arts was strong enough that a sixteenth-century codification of *eisteddfod* regulations was attributed to him. Whether or not such traditions have an historical foundation, it is certain that it is with Gruffudd's reign that the work of Meilyr Brydydd, the earliest of the *Gogynfeirdd* whose name has come down to us, is associated. Whether as a result of Gruffudd's encouragement or by sheer coincidence, his reign marked the beginning of an outpouring of bardic poetry which continued through the end of Welsh independence in the thirteenth century.

A third notable prince of the period was Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth (c. 1078–93), who maintained authority over southern Wales despite some opposition from other Welsh princes. He seems to have accomplished this by force of arms, by alliance with Gruffudd ap Cynan, and by compact with William. Most of Deheubarth fell to the Normans soon after Rhys's death, but his son Gruffudd ap Rhys (d. 1137) led in 1116 a rising against the Normans and their Welsh allies which, although its successes were very minor, rekindled for a time the courage and hope of South Wales. Gruffudd eventually established an acceptable relationship with Henry I; furthermore, although he received little assistance to his rebellion from Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd, he established a connection between the two royal houses by marrying Gruffudd ap Cynan's daughter Gwenllïan, upon whom he fathered the lord Rhys, one of the greatest Welsh princes of the late twelfth century.³

Finally, mention may be made of Bleddyn ap Cynfyn of Powys (d. 1075), a prince whose military achievements in maintaining his realm against Welsh opposition and Norman incursion were modest but respectable, and a prince singled out for praise by the *Brut y Tywysogion*. He is described there as 'support of the wise, the glory and cornerstone of the Church . . . terrible in war, but in peace beloved'. And he is one of very few Welsh princes known to have introduced reforms into the legal code attributed to Hywel Dda.⁴

¹ HW ii. 379 ff.

³ HW ii. 392 ff.

² D. Simon Evans, *Historia Gruffud Vab Kenan* (Cardiff, 1977).

⁴ HW ii. 377.

Scholars have speculated about relationships between some of these princes and the composition of the Four Branches. Ifor Williams, for example, suggested that the text was composed during the reign of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, when the unification of Wales under one prince would have facilitated the exchange of narrative traditions among bards and story tellers from different parts of Wales.¹ Without going so far as to identify a particular prince as patron of the text of *Pedair Cainc y Mabinogi*, however, one may certainly say of the period that it was one in which strong rulers were absolutely essential to the survival of Wales, whose political and cultural identity was threatened with Norman conquest. It was a period, too, which produced several such princes, men worthy of the supportive service of literary artists, able to offer them patronage, and in several cases associated by tradition with support of the peaceful arts.

Given the historical situation of the Welsh princes during the period 1060–1120 and the aristocratic preoccupations of the redactor of *Pwyll*, I would suggest that it was in a princely court that the text was composed. Further, I would suggest that the redactor's intention was not only to record or re-weave archaic traditions to create a courtly entertainment, but also to compose a tale which would describe and praise the traditional virtues of Celtic sovereignty, as well as some newer political virtues, thus fulfilling a function similar to that of contemporary bardic poetry, which was both eulogistic and exhortatory.

Welsh bardic poetry often associates its subject with great heroes and rulers of the past, both by explicit reference and by the use of traditional diction, epithets, and forms which echo earlier panegyrics. In his *molawd* to Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170), for example, Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr calls his patron,

... hil cadyr Cadell Hiryell hiryein ar beryg koelyg ...²

Cynddelw thus associates the twelfth-century prince Owain with his legendary ancestors, Coel Hen, fifth-century king of northern Britain, and Cadell son of Rhodri Mawr, a late

¹ PKM, pp. xl–xli. It has been observed, however, that such freedom of movement was probably the privilege of men of letters at all times. See e.g. R. L. Thomson, *Pwyll Pendewic Dyuet* (Dublin, 1957), p. xvi, and T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 268. Nevertheless, the Deheubarth connections of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn's mother and his own *de facto* authority there might have rendered him particularly receptive to stories about lords of Dyfed as well as of Gwynedd. He would be able to identify with Pwyll and Manawydan as well as with Math, and the description of Brân as *brenhin coronawc ar yr ynys hon* (PKM, p. 29) might have been taken as a hyperbolic compliment to the extent of his authority in Wales. References to authority over *Prydain*, rather than the *Cymry* alone, appear in *gogynfeirdd* poetry. See

Rhian Andrews, 'Rhai Agweddu ar Sofraniaeth yng Ngherddi'r Gogynfeirdd', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 27 (1976), 25–6. Gruffudd himself is described in the Bruts as *brenhin y brytanyeid*. See Thomas Jones, ed., *Brut y Tywysogyon or the Chronicle of the Princes; Red Book of Hergest Version*, 2nd edn. (Cardiff, 1973), p. 26. Bleddyn ap Cynfyn (p. 28) and other, earlier kings are accorded similar titles. I believe that a case can indeed be made for redaction of the *Mabinogi* at Gruffudd's court, although without greater precision in the dating of the text it is of course impossible to make a confident judgement on this issue.

² John Morris-Jones, Rhiannon Morris-Jones, and T. H. Parry-Williams, *Llawysgrif Hendregadredd* (Cardiff, 1933), p. 84.

ninth-century prince. Elsewhere, lamenting the death of Madog ap Maredudd of Powys (d. 1160), he terms this prince

rut ongyr bran vab llyr lledyeith.¹

Here he associates his late patron with the king of Britain in the second branch of the *Mabinogi*.

The conventions of bardic poetry had clearly accustomed the Welsh princes to thinking of themselves as reflections of legendary heroes. Thus, a prince for whom the text of the *Mabinogi* was composed would have been predisposed to see himself mirrored in the story of Pwyll, the legendary lord of Dyfed.² In this model of lordship he would have seen heroism, justice, and promotion of the land's fertility and prosperity—three qualities associated throughout Celtic tradition with effective sovereignty. The redactor's concern with these qualities is apparent in the nature of the mythic material he employs, in the structure, whether received or original, of that material, and in the prose style of the tale. He devotes all three aspects of his narrative art to creating, despite the significant element of the magical and fantastic in Pwyll's adventures, a very human model of effective sovereignty. Pwyll is a figure who enters into full and successful lordship only as a result of meeting a series of challenges, successfully passing a series of tests, and gradually acquiring wisdom (*pwyll*), which he conspicuously lacks at the tale's beginning. Unlike legendary heroes as they are presented in bardic verse, Pwyll is a fairly comic, and thus accessible, figure. In him a medieval Welsh prince could see not only an image of good lordship, but an image too of inept humanity, struggling successfully to achieve full sovereignty not so much through battlefield heroics and unlimited munificence as through the exercise of less spectacular but more practical virtues—humility, prudence, judicious wisdom, and self-restraint. Hence the tale of the lord of Dyfed would serve not only as an implicitly flattering catalogue of princely virtues but also as an exhortation to similar achievement in the challenging circumstances of contemporary Wales.

The theme of sovereignty is implicit in the traditional material which the redactor of *Pwyll* chose as the basis for his tales. This may help to explain why he chose it, although it is by no means certain that he understood, in the eleventh or twelfth century, the

¹ Ibid., p. 118. On the use of legendary figures by the *gogynfeirdd* in genealogy and metaphorical description, see further D. Myrddin Lloyd, *Rhai Agweddu ar Ddysg y Gogynfeirdd* (The G. J. Williams Memorial Lecture) (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 4–10. Although the earliest extant *gogynfeirdd* poetry of known authorship (c. 1137) is later than the *terminus ad quem* which has been established for the text of the *Mabinogi* (c. 1120), there is evidence for a continuity of tradition in bardic eulogy from the time of Aneirin and Taliesin to that of the *gogynfeirdd*, as well as evidence that *gogynfeirdd* poetry properly speaking was being composed as early as c. 1081. See J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Beirdd y Tywysogion: Arolwg', *Llên Cymru*, 11 (1970), 12–14;

R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'A poem in Praise of Cuhelyn Fardd', *Studia Celtica*, 10–11 (1975–6), 198–209. Consequently, it seems valid to make these comparisons between the poetry and the *Mabinogi*.

² It may be significant that Pwyll himself is not *brenhin*, but *arglwyd* or *pendewic*. Perhaps this reflects the historical situation of the twelfth century, for which the Bruts employ the title *brenhin* only three times. In the laws, however, *arglwyd* and *brenhin* are often interchangeable, although the use of *arglwyd* may be a thirteenth-century development. See Dafydd Jenkins, 'Kings, Lords, and Princes: The Nomenclature of Authority in Thirteenth-century Wales', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26 (1976), 451–61, and cf. p. 44 n. 1, above.

implications which scholars have articulated for us in the twentieth. The core of the sovereignty theme in *Pwyll* is the figure of Rhiannon. Her name has been analysed as Rīgantonā, or 'great divine queen', and as such she may be identified with the goddess of sovereignty so important to Celtic tradition, the goddess whose hand must be won by any aspirant to kingship. Further evidence for the identification of Rhiannon with the goddess of sovereignty, who appears under many names in Celtic tradition, lies in her equine associations: she initially appears to Pwyll riding on a horse; the birth and abduction of her son are associated with the birth and abduction of a foal; and her punishment for the suspected murder of her child is to fulfill the function of a horse as beast of burden. These features link her to the Gaulish goddess Epona, to other Celtic equine divinities, and to the equine aspects of some Celtic and other Indo-European rites of inauguration to kingship.¹ In addition, Rhiannon behaves, in her manifestation of supernatural power, her independent strong-mindedness in choosing a husband, and her superior wisdom, like other manifestations of the sovereignty goddess such as the Irish Medb.

Proinsias MacCana's detailed study of the goddess of sovereignty in Irish tradition² explores some dozen different versions of the story of her union with the rightful king of the land. He demonstrates the importance of the sovereignty goddess in Irish literature from the earliest times down to the present and shows that she appears in historical texts as late as the eleventh century. Perhaps most importantly, he shows that the theme 'was one of which the early Irish story-teller understood the implications and, moreover, was one which he would not hesitate to attach to characters, be they historical or unhistorical, which literature and tradition set in the seventh century'.³ That ancient mythical implications of sovereignty stories, because of the continuity of tradition, were understood by eleventh-century Irish writers lends credence to the notion, advanced by Professor Ford, that the myths reflected in *Pwyll* 'were very much alive and that the story-teller was very much aware of them',⁴ in eleventh- or twelfth-century Wales. Unfortunately, it is impossible to trace the Welsh sovereignty tradition as MacCana has traced the Irish because of the lack of surviving Welsh narrative significantly earlier than the Four Branches. Professor MacCana himself believes that,

... by the eleventh or twelfth century in Wales the knowledge and understanding of native mythology, even among the learned poets, was patchy and unsystematic, but nevertheless, as in a much later period in Ireland, certain basic concepts seem to have survived the social system which had generated them, and of these the myth of the goddess of sovereignty and of the sacred marriage, the *hieros gamos*, was one of the most permanent and productive.⁵

In support of his claim for the tenacity of such traditions he cites the symbolic marriage between her son Richard and the legendary patron of the region, Ste. Valery,

¹ See Ford, *The Mabinogi*, pp. 8–10.

² Proinsias MacCana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature', *Études celtiques*, 7 (1955–6), 76–114, 356–413; 8 (1958), 59–65.

³ Ibid., Part 2, 357.

⁴ Ford, *The Mabinogi*, p. 13.

⁵ MacCana, *The Mabinogi*, p. 116. Rhian Andrews

sees evidence for the survival of the myth of the *hieros gamos* in the *gogynfeirdd* formula *Prydein priawd* and its variants. ('Rhai Agweddu ar Sofraniaeth', 26–7.) It is not clear to me, however, that the term has the sense of 'spouse' in the poetry as Mrs. Andrews suggests, rather than that of 'owner' or 'holder'.

which Eleanor of Aquitaine arranged in conjunction with Richard's installation as Duke of Aquitaine.¹

The salient features of the sovereignty myth which are pertinent to the tale of *Pwyll* are as follows. First, the aspiring ruler at once reveals himself as the rightful king and claims his kingship by union with the goddess of sovereignty. Professor Binchy recognizes that a symbolic mating, 'destined to bring fertility to man and beast in his reign', was an essential feature of early Irish inauguration rites.² In Irish myth, according to MacCana, the two main elements of the theme are the feast or libation which the goddess offers to her kingly spouse and their sexual union.³ In *Pwyll*, it is Rhiannon who provides the wedding feast, both on the occasion when Gwawl attempts to claim her from the unwary Pwyll and a year later, when Pwyll wins her back. She emphasizes this in her response to Gwawl's demand, on the first occasion, for *yr arlwy a'r darmerth yssyd ymma*.⁴ She answers that,

am y wled a'r darpar yssyd yma, hwnnw a rodeis i y wyr Dyuet ac y'r teulu, a'r yniuroed yssyd ymma. Hwnnw nit eidawaf y rodi y neb.⁵

Concerning the second element of the marriage theme, the narrator tells us that *y'r ystauell yd aeth Pwyll a Rhiannon, a threulaw y nos honno drwy digriuwch a llonydwch*.⁶ He is discreet, but explicit.

A second pertinent feature of Celtic sovereignty tales, according to MacCana's analysis, is that the goddess not only marries the rightful king but is 'the mother of such a king and the ancestress of a royal line'.⁷ It is possible to understand in these terms the fact that the tale of *Pwyll* concludes with the restoration of Pryderi to his natural parents and with the reassuring information that Pryderi grew into a noble manhood and succeeded Pwyll as the prosperous and beloved lord of Dyfed, whose borders he expanded through conquest, and that he in turn married.⁸ The tale's concern with Pwyll's effective sovereignty demands that it conclude with the securing of continuity to his royal line.

A third common feature of sovereignty tales is the theme of the goddess's changing her form or condition when without her proper spouse and king. This theme, which is in origin closely related to a belief that the fertility and prosperity of the land depend upon true and rightful kingship, takes various forms in Celtic tradition. Sovereignty may appear as an aged hag who is transformed into a beautiful young woman upon sexual acceptance by the rightful king, as a madwoman whom he restores to sanity by sexual intercourse, or as

¹ MacCana, *The Mabinogi*, p. 116.

² D. A. Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship* (Oxford, 1970), p. 11. Rhian Andrews believes that the idea of relationship between true sovereignty and the fertility of the land may survive in some *gogynfeirdd marwnadau* that describe the land as wasted by the death of the sovereign ('Rhai Agweddu ar Sofraniaeth', 28–9); she acknowledges, however, the possibility that such imagery is influenced rather by the Christian eschatological tradition of Judgment Day signs, and the role of this *topos* in classical elegy also needs further examination. See A. T. E. Matonis,

'Gruffudd ap yr Ynad Coch's Elegy on the Last Llywelyn', *Studia Celtica*, 14–15 (1979–80).

³ MacCana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Early Irish Literature', 85–6. MacCana also points out that the two elements do not receive equal emphasis in all stories and, further, that Irish *fess* (or *feis*) means both a 'feast' and a 'sleeping (with)'.

⁴ PKM, p. 14.

⁵ PKM, p. 15.

⁶ PKM, p. 18.

⁷ MacCana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Early Irish Literature', Part 1, 88.

⁸ PKM, p. 27.

a princess reared among peasants and restored to her proper dignity through a royal marriage.¹ A fourth variant, in which Sovereignty appears in the form of a white hart and must be disenchanted by the rightful king, appears to have been common in Breton tradition.² Rhiannon undergoes none of these transformations, but she does suffer a tremendous loss of queenly dignity when she is compelled to wait by the horse-block near the gate of the court and to bear to the court any guest or stranger who will permit her to carry him. Although her change in status is not associated directly with the loss of her rightful spouse, it is the result of the loss of her child, the rightful heir to the kingship who is himself, as has been seen, integral to the sovereignty myth. Furthermore, her restoration to dignity, while it is the result of her vindication when the child is found, coincides with Pryderi's refusal to be carried, in which is implicit a recognition of her true nature. To her offer he replies, '*aet a'y mynho, . . . nyt af i*'.³ Moreover, Rhiannon's suffering is at least loosely related to a separation from her spouse, for it is a penance imposed on her by Pwyll to appease those who demand that he divorce her for her supposed crime.⁴ Her marriage to Pwyll is disrupted and threatened until Pryderi is restored. Rhiannon's suffering has roots in international popular tradition⁵ and in history,⁶ but it is appropriate to a Celtic sovereignty tale as well. The redactor may have understood this and other features of the myth that he incorporated into his tale, although the felicitous conjunction of mythic traditions about sovereignty and rhetorical emphasis on princely virtues may be a coincidence of which he was unaware.

It is not only in its treatment of the figure of Rhiannon that the tale deals with the theme of sovereignty, but also in its narrative structure and use of dialogue. The composition reflects conscious rhetorical intention, whatever may be true of the content.

In the first section of the tale, Pwyll meets Arawn king of Annwfn, exchanges shapes with him for a year, fights and defeats Arawn's enemy Hafgan, and returns to his own realm. The most obvious result of this sequence is that Pwyll is established as a champion among warriors. He defeats Hafgan quickly and dramatically, and in the traditional manner of Celtic heroes: although Pwyll and Hafgan fight on horseback rather than from chariots or on foot, like CúChulainn, they do meet in single combat in the middle of a ford.⁷ It does not diminish Pwyll's achievement that Hafgan's death depends upon his refusing to administer a second blow, which he does only at Arawn's behest; victory in battle by force of arms is his none the less.

The magnitude of this victory is measured by its result: Pwyll is now *brenhin ar holl Annwbyn*, and his might is so great that

dechreu guereskynn y wlat. Ac erbyn hanner dyd drannoeth, yd oed yn y uedyant y dwy dynas.⁸

¹ For Irish examples of each type, see MacCana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Early Irish Literature', Part 3, 64 f.

² See Rachel Bromwich, 'The Celtic Inheritance of Medieval Literature', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 26 (1965), 214.

³ PKM, p. 25.

⁴ See Jackson, 'The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition', pp. 94 ff.

⁵ See Brynley Roberts, 'Penyd Rhiannon', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 23 (1970), 325-7.

⁶ PKM, p. 5.

⁷ PKM, p. 21.

⁸ PKM, p. 6.

It is primarily his achievement in battle which wins Pwyll the title *Pen Annwfn*:

Ac o achaws i drigiant ef y ulwydyn honno yn Annwbyn, a gwledychu o honaw yno mor lwydannus, a dwyn y dwy dynas yn un drwy y dewred ef a'y uilwraeth, y diffygywys y enw ef ar Pwyll, Pendeuc Dyuet, ac y gelwit Pwyll Penn Annwbyn o hynny allan.¹

By demonstrating his valour and prowess in battle, Pwyll gives proof of his ability to protect and defend, the first and foremost quality required of a king and the attribute most praised by Welsh bards.²

The significance of the victory over an Otherworld enemy seems not to have escaped the redactor. Dramatically, it is after his combat with Hafgan that Pwyll first addresses the men of Annwfn directly:

'Vy ngwyrda innheu . . . kymerwch ych kyuarwyd, a gwybydwch pwy a dylyo bot yn wyr ymi.'

When the nobles reply that Pwyll is now king over the whole of Annwfn and entitled to claim the homage of all, he answers with a kingly dignity which he has had no previous opportunity to reveal:

'Ie . . . a del yn waredauc, iawn yw y gymryt. Ar ny del yn uuyd, kymmeller o nerth cledyueu.'³

The testing of Pwyll's valour, from which he emerges a greater ruler than he had been previously, stems directly from an action on his part which reveals him to be seriously deficient in qualities of great importance to a ruler. After Pwyll has driven Arawn's hunting dogs away from the stag they have felled, in favour of his own animals, Arawn accuses Pwyll of *amrybot* and *ansyberwyd* (ignorance and discourtesy).⁴ Medieval Welsh law prescribed that a certain period of time, amounting to several hours, must elapse before a stag which had been felled by the king or his huntsman might be claimed by whoever held the land.⁵ Pwyll, of course, violates this law when he so precipitously seizes the quarry of a crowned king. He does so, in all likelihood, in the belief that there is no greater lord than he in the region and that he has, consequently, first hunting rights. He violates the law out of ignorance and rashness rather than malice, but he breaks it none the less, as is indicated by the use of the legal term *carennnydd* to denote the state of amity with Arawn which he seeks to restore.⁶ Hence, Pwyll's achievement in Annwfn is directly related to the error which takes him there. He is guilty of an overweening pride in his own sovereignty;

¹ PKM, p. 8.

² See Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*, p. 17 and *passim*, on the importance of valour as a kingly attribute. In bardic poetry, Gwalchmai ap Meilyr's description of Owain Gwynedd as 'dreic mon mor drud y eissylud yn aer', *Llawysgrif Hendregadredd*, p. 14, is typical. Bravery, generosity, and lineage are the princely qualities most praised by the *gogynfeirdd*; see Jane Ann Cousins, 'Moliant Beirdd gyda Sylw Arbennig i Waith y Gogynfeirdd', M.A. thesis, University of Wales, Swansea, 1978, pp. 37-85. I am grateful to Professor D. Ellis Evans for bringing this thesis to my attention.

³ PKM, p. 6.

⁴ PKM, p. 2.

⁵ Aled Rhys Williams, ed., *Llyfr Iorwerth* (Cardiff, 1960), § 136.

⁶ PKM, pp. 2-3. On *carennnydd*, see T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 278. Elsewhere, Charles-Edwards defines the legal issue involved in this incident somewhat differently ('Honour and Status in some Irish and Welsh Prose Tales', 124-5); it is clear, however, that Pwyll's seizure of the stag is a legal infraction.

consequently, he must not only compensate the victim of his rashness but must also undergo a trial of an aspect of that sovereignty, a trial which both tests and increases his kingliness, winning for him the title *Pen Annwfn*.

One further feature of this first section of the tale, whose main concern is with the proof of Pwyll's valour, may be mentioned. Despite the approval which is accorded to Pwyll for lordly prowess, the redactor clearly advocates prudence and self-restraint to counterbalance the aggression which Pwyll channels into martial activity, as is clear in the treatment of the chaste friend motif. Considerable attention is devoted to the beauty of Arawn's wife, who is *yn deccaf gwreic o'r a welsei neb*, and to her graciousness: she is *dissymlaf gwreic a bendigeidaf i hannwyd a'y hymdidan*.¹ There are *tirionwch ac ymdidan hygar*² between her and Pwyll by day. Yet, the text emphasizes, every night for a year,

Y gyt ac yd aethant yn y guely ymchwelut e weneb at yr erchwyn a oruc ef, a'y geuyn attei hitheu. O hynny hyt trannoeth ny dywot ef wrthi un geir.³

Both Arawn and his wife marvel at the chastity of Pwyll, which had not been required of him, but both regard it approvingly as a mark of the strong friendship between the two men. Arawn thinks,

'Oy a Arglwyd Duw . . . cadarn a ungwr y gydymdeithas a diffleis, a geueis i yn gedymdeith.'⁴

His wife, meanwhile, observes that

'gauael gadarn a geueist ar gedymdeith yn herwyd ymlad a frouedigaeth y gorff, a chadw kywirdeb wrthyt titheu.'⁵

Her language makes it explicit that Pwyll has been tested successfully not only with respect to martial prowess against enemies but with respect to sacrifice and keeping of faith with allies as well. Significantly, it is after the revelation of Pwyll's chastity that the narrator comments on the strong and productive alliance between Pwyll and Arawn which obtained thenceforth:

Ac o hynny allan, dechreu cadarnhau kedymdeithas y ryngthunt, ac anuon o pop un y gilid meirch a milgwn a hebogeu a fob gyfryw dlws, o'r a debygei bob un digrifhau medwl y gilid o honaw.⁶

However, the first successful test of Pwyll's royal mettle gives rise to another, for upon his return to Dyfed, his men observe concerning their governance during the preceding year that,

'ny bu gystal dy wybot; ny buost gyn hygaret guas ditheu; ny bu gyn hawsset gennyt titheu treulaw dy da, ny bu well dy dosparth eiroet no'r ulwydyn honn.'⁷

Having successfully challenged Pwyll to prove his royal might in arms, Arawn has now set a standard of justice, generosity, and beneficence which Pwyll must match. Like heroism

¹ PKM, p. 4.

² PKM, p. 5.

³ PKM, pp. 4-5.

⁴ PKM, p. 7.

⁵ PKM, pp. 7-8.

⁶ PKM, p. 8.

⁷ PKM, p. 8.

in battle, these are princely qualities much praised in bardic eulogy.¹ The second section of the tale concerns itself with Pwyll's further growth towards full sovereignty through the development of these virtues. He assures his men that he will not deprive them of the governance (*arglwydiaeth*) they have had from Arawn, but the section of the tale dealing with the courtship of Rhiannon shows that he has much to learn about the virtues of a sovereign.

Pwyll demonstrates his lack of discernment (*gwybot* or *dosparth* or *pwyll*) from the time of Rhiannon's first appearance. Although he acknowledges on the first day that the failure of his servant to overtake her on horseback betokens some magic meaning (*ryw ystyr hut*),² it is not until the third day, when he himself is unable to overtake her, that he adopts the more appropriate course of asking her to stop. As he does so often, the redactor underscores the point, that is, Pwyll's foolishness, in dialogue. Rhiannon responds, '*Arhoaf yn llawen . . . ac oed llessach y'r march, pei ass archut yr meityn*'.³

Although his belated discernment in dealing with the mysterious horsewoman wins him a vision of Rhiannon's face unveiled and her offer of her hand in marriage,⁴ Pwyll still has a great deal to learn. In his first encounter with the rival suitor Gwawl, Pwyll fails to temper lordly generosity with prudence, and he makes the rash promise that '*Pa arch bynnac a erchych di ymi, hyt y gallwyf y gaffael, itti y byd*'. Again, Rhiannon, who is herself the boon which Gwawl claims, judges Pwyll unhesitatingly: '*ny bu uuscrellach gwr ar y ssynnwyr e hun nog ry uuost ti*'.⁵

However, although he has not yet achieved full sovereignty, Pwyll is the chosen mate of the sovereignty figure, and she provides him with a ruse by means of which he may reclaim his bride.⁶ Having learned his lesson, Pwyll is then able, albeit only with the further counsel of Rhiannon and Hyfaidd, to moderate lordly munificence with prudence and discernment. He frees Gwawl from the bag in which he has trapped him only when he has taken sureties for Gwawl's pledge to refrain from seeking compensation or vengeance.⁷

In the second part of the tale, Pwyll achieves the wisdom which his name reflects, and so it ends, appropriately, with the consummation of his marriage to the sovereignty figure and a celebration of his lordly generosity, especially towards courtly entertainers:

Ef a gyuodes Pwyll y uynyd, a pheri dodi gostec, y erchi y holl eirheit a cherdoryon dangos, a menegi udunt y llonydit pawb o honunt wrth y uod a'y uympwy; a hynny a wnaethpwyd. Y wled honno a dreulwyd, ac ny ommedwyd neb tra barhau.⁸

At this point in the tale, it remains to Pwyll to prove and achieve his sovereignty in one further regard. The consummation of the marriage at the conclusion of the preceding

¹ For example, in his *marwnad* for Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Bleddyn Fardd called that prince

gwr gwaewrut gwr prut uegys priaf
gwr gwiw yn urenhin uyddin ualchaf
gwr hylwyd y glod gwr haelaf am dreul
hyd yr gertei yr heul yr hwyl bellaf
(*Llawysgrif Hendregadredd*, p. 66).

² PKM, p. 10.

³ PKM, p. 12.

⁴ PKM, pp. 12-13.

⁵ PKM, p. 14. An interesting feature of the ensuing *broch yng nghod* episode is Rhiannon's bag of unlimited capacity. This appears to belong to the class of Celtic vessels of plenty and to associate her, as sovereignty goddess, with the fertility of the land.

⁷ PKM, pp. 17-18.

⁸ PKM, pp. 18-19.

section naturally raises the question of its fertility. It has been seen that giving birth to a future ruler was a function of the sovereignty figure in Celtic narratives about her. It is known too that fertility of the land was dependent in Celtic thought on the 'truth' of the prince and magically related to his own potency. Hence the fertility of the royal marriage is not only a dynastic necessity but also a measure of the rightfulness of the reign.¹ The importance of the king's fertility is also reflected in the concern with lineage of medieval Welsh bards.²

For Pwyll, this final achievement of full sovereignty is impeded first by Rhiannon's failure to give birth to a son until nearly three years have passed and then by the mysterious abduction of the boy and the accusation of murder against Rhiannon. Throughout, Pwyll acts in accordance with the wisdom he has acquired. He refuses at first to divorce his wife for barrenness because they have been married so short a time, but he promises to submit to the counsel of his men after an allotted period passes.³ When the child disappears, he refuses again to divorce Rhiannon, but agrees because of the evidence against her that she should be punished:

'Nyt oed achaws ganthunt wy y erchi y mi yscar a'm gwreic namyn na bydei plant idi. Plant a wnn i y uot idi hi. Ac nyt yscaraf a hi. O gwnaeth hitheu gam, kymeret y phenyt amdanaw.'⁴

This judicious wisdom, however, does not solve the problem of Pwyll's fertility. The tale requires the restoration of the child for its completion.

The focus of the tale shifts to Teyrnnon, who has been Pwyll's 'man' (*gwr*) or vassal,⁵ and his wife, who find and raise the boy. When they hear the story of Pwyll's loss and recognize the child, they are motivated to return him by anticipation of the fruits of beneficent sovereignty which they will reap.⁶ Thus it is through the strength and righteousness of his reign that Pwyll achieves the restoration of his heir and the proof of the fertility of his marriage, just as it is through the glory of his earlier career that he wins the love and guidance of Rhiannon.

At the conclusion of the tale, Pwyll and his son have achieved full sovereignty over Dyfed, but that sovereignty has been won in a series of trials and lessons through which Pwyll develops from a rash and foolish fellow into a powerful, prudent, prosperous, and well-connected lord. There can be no doubt that the tale is woven of fragments of myth, international and Celtic narrative motifs, and pedantic lore. Yet this material has been consciously worked into a coherent tale about what an eleventh- or twelfth-century Welsh prince should be—brave, generous, just, and of noble lineage, like the ideal prince of the bards, but prudent and self-restrained as well. He must be able to augment the traditional virtues with skill in making useful political and marital alliances, as were men like Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, Gruffudd ap Cynan, Rhys ap Tewdwr, and Gruffudd ap Rhys.

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¹ See Binchy, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship*, pp. 9 ff.

² Gwalchmai ap Meilyr, for example, often opens his poems of praise with a reference to lineage: *Arđwyreafy hael o hil gruffut; Arđwyreaf hael o hil*

yago Arđwyreaf hael o hil rodri, Llawysgrif Hendregadredd, pp. 12-13.

⁴ PKM, p. 20.

⁶ PKM, p. 25.

³ PKM, pp. 19-20.

⁵ PKM, p. 24.