

Hysbysiad Hawlfraint

Dyma atgoffa staff a myfyrwyr y Brifysgol hwn fod hawlfraint yn gymwys ar y darn hwn ac ar y gwaith y mae'n dod ohono. Gwnaed y Copi Digidol hwn yn unol â thelerau Trwydded yr Asiantaeth Trwyddedu Hawlfraint, sy'n golygu eich bod yn cael:

- Gweld a lawr lwytho copi
- Argraffu copi

Mae'r Copi Digidol hwn ac unrhyw gopi digidol neu argraffedig a roddir ichi neu a wnaed gennych yn ôl telerau'r Drwydded hon i'w ddefnyddio yng nghyd-destun y modiwl hwn neu'r cwrs astudio hwn. Cewch gadw'r copïau hyn ar ddiwedd y cwrs, ond dim ond at eich defnydd eich hun.

Rhaid i bob copi (gan gynnwys copïau electronig) gynnwys yr Hysbysiad Hawlfraint hwn a rhaid iddynt gael eu dinistrio neu eu dileu os bydd y Brifysgol yn gofyn ichi wneud hynny.

Ac eithrio'r hyn sy'n dderbyniol yn ôl darpariaethau cyfraith hawlfraint, ni cheir copïo, cadw na dosbarthu (gan gynnwys dosbarthu drwy e-bost) heb ganiatâd y sawl sy'n dal yr hawlfraint.

Mae gan yr awdur (ymadrodd sy'n cynnwys arlunydd a'r sawl sy'n creu gweithiau gweledol eraill) hawliau moesol ar y gwaith ac ni chaiff staff na myfyrwyr achosi na chaniatáu i'r gwaith gael ei anffurfio, ei lurgunio na'i addasu fel arall, na'i drin mewn unrhyw fodd difriol arall, a fyddai'n gwneud cam ag anrhydedd neu enw da'r awdur.

Teitl y darn: **Gwydion and Aranrhod: Crossing the Borders of Gender in Math**

Enw'r Awdur: **Valente, R.L.**

Teitl/Awdur/Argraffiad y llyfr (os yw'n berthnasol):

Enw Crëwr Gwaith Gweledol neu

gydnabyddiaeth arall (os yw'n berthnasol):

Manylion cyfnodolyn -

teitl/Cyrol/Blwyddyn (os yw'n berthnasol): **Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies
Cyf 35 (1988)**

Cyhoeddwr: **Caerdydd Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru**

Tudalennau a sganiwyd: **1 - 9**

Cwrs Astudio (Enw a rhif y modiwl): **Y Mabinogi CYCS7015C**

Enw'r sawl a awdurdododd

y sganio:

E.L. Harris

Dyddiad y rhoddwyd awdurdod: 16.03.17.

Moodle/Powerpoint

BWLETIN Y BWRDD GWYBODAU
CELTAIDD

THE BULLETIN OF THE BOARD OF
CELTIC STUDIES

CYF./VOL. XXXV 1988

I

IAITH ALLÊN ~ LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Gwydion and Aranrhod: crossing the borders of
gender in *Math*

THE lives of the men and women of the first three Branches of the *Mabinogi* are sometimes made bitter by tribulation, but it is in the retributive exchanges between Gwydion and Aranrhod in the Fourth Branch that we see how the failure of individuals to live up to appropriate codes of behavior can alienate them from their social group. Math, Goewin, and Lleu act within the traditional limits of legal codes, but Gwydion and Aranrhod, in challenging each other, evade the gender roles which convention demands of them. Gwydion, who should have some responsibility for the protection of the women in his kinship group, not only violates this trust when he rapes Goewin and continuously shames Aranrhod—he also manifests a female function—fertility—which no man ought to possess. Aranrhod, his equally unconventional sister, refuses to accept the limitations of socially determined female behavior when she denies the proof and punishment of her fertility, so that both attempt to cross borders of behavior to which they should have no access.

All the Branches of the *Mabinogi* illustrate in some way the codes which must be obeyed to maintain the social order, as well as the kinds of reparation which are owed if a character wilfully goes against the rules of society,¹ but in the Fourth Branch, in the two episodes

¹ Morfydd Owen, "Shame and Reparation; Woman's Place in the Kin", in *The Welsh Law of Women*, eds. Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd Owen, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), p. 58; J. K. Bollard,

"The Thematic Structure of the *Mabinogi*", *Transactions of the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion*, (1974-75, p. 252; Brinley Rees, *Ceinciau'r Mabinogi* (Bangor, 1975), p. 15.

concerning both Gwydion and Aranrhod, the discussion of correct behavior and reparation is subordinated to a narrative showing individual will prevailing over custom. Interestingly, the primary issue over which Gwydion and Aranrhod battle is fertility, a function traditionally ascribed to women. Three legal violations related to this function occur in the Fourth Branch: rape, a false claim of virginity, and adultery. In each case, the codes prohibiting these crimes are meant to protect the social group from undesirable manifestations of fertility. And each legal violation is linked in the narrative to either Gwydion or Aranrhod and their actions which are inappropriate to their gender.

Before I begin to look at particular events concerning these two unusual siblings, I would like to consider the ways in which men and women's responsibilities are defined in the whole of the *Mabinogi*—in preparation for a discussion of the significance of behavior that crosses the socially and legally defined borders of gender.

Men in the *Mabinogi* are described in terms of the titles which indicate their status in their own lands. What we also learn about rank in the first three Branches is that it does not necessarily divide men from each other. Even though Pwyll, the Lord of Dyfed, is of lesser rank than Arawn, the King of Annwfn, the two can evolve a relationship which is based on the obligations of friendship rather than the divisions of hierarchy. In the Second Branch, Bendigeidfran's title of *brenhin coronawc* places him above his brothers, but the description of his kinship ties with the group who sit around him also suggests the obligations he shares with his kin. When a man is without status as Manawydan is in the beginning of the Third Branch, the first order of business in the narrative is to establish him securely in a position which will give him honor and a sense of affectionate obligation to his friend Pryderi.

This emphasis on titles reminds us of the men's role as protectors of their people—and the women nearest them. In the world of the *Mabinogi*, most women are defined through their fathers, husbands, or brothers. This is in keeping with medieval Welsh law, as Morfydd Owen has demonstrated: a women's position in society was as a dependent of her nearest male kin. In terms of compensatory payments for insult or injury, a woman's worth was valued at half her brother's and when she married, her worth dropped to a third of her husband's. Events reflecting on her honor were answerable by her male kin—her husband, if she were married.¹

In a literary work like the *Mabinogi*, the descriptions of these types of relationships are in keeping with the essence of medieval Welsh law. Most of the women of the Four Branches live under the protection of their male kin and are named according to their relationships to these men: Rhiannon, the daughter of Hefeydd Hen, comes from the house of her father to court Pwyll, and the closing lines of the First Branch define Cigfa as the wife of Pryderi and the daughter of Gwynn Gohoyw. Arawn's, Teyrnnon's, and Llwyd ap Cil Coed's wives are known to us only through their husbands' names, while Branwen, whom we know as the daughter of Llŷr, is better protected by her brothers than her husband.

For the most part, the men of the *Mabinogi* enact their obligations to their women as willingly as they prove their loyalty to men. Pwyll must protect Arawn's wife from insult at the same time that he compensates the insult he had unwittingly offered the King of Annwfn. Though he might, in Arawn's form—and by Arawn's own offer²—sleep with Arawn's queen, Pwyll

¹ Iorwerth 46.1-2, *WLW*, p. 165. Her *galanas*, if she were unmarried, was half the value of her brother's; her *sarhaed* was half the value of her brother's *sarhaed* but it

would drop to a third of her husband's after marriage.

² "...mi... a rodaf y wreic deccaf a weleisti ei roet y gyscu gyt a thi beunoeth," *PKM*, p. 3.

also concerns himself with Arawn's wife's sense of honor; he sleeps with her chastely to avoid causing her the kind of insult the laws prohibit.¹ Bendigeidfran, of course, is responsible for Branwen's protection, when Matholwch, who should be her protector as her husband and king, insults her unjustly. Even in the Third Branch, the issue of woman's need for a protector emerges in the discussion between Cigfa and Manawydan, after Pryderi and Rhiannon have been whisked away by magic.

Pann welas Kicua, uerch Gwyn Gloew, gwreic Pryderi, nat oed yn y llys namyn hi a Manawydan, drygyruerth a wnaeth hyt nat oed well genti y byw no'y marw. Sef a wnaeth Manawydan, edrych ar hynny. "Dioer," heb ef, "cam yd wyt arnaw, os rac uy ouyn i y drygyruerthy di. Mi a rodaf Duw y uach it, na weleisti gedymdeith gywirach noc y keffy di ui, tra uynho Duw it uot uelly. Y rof a Duw, bei et uwni yn dechreu uy ieuengtut, mi a gadwn gywirdeb wrth Pryderi, ac yrot titheu mi a'y cadwn; ac na uit un ouyn arnat," heb ef. "E rof a Duw," heb ef, "titheu a gey y gedymdeithas a uynych y genhyf i, herwyd uyg gallu i, tra welho Duw yn bot yn y dihirwch hwnn a'r gual."²

Cigfa's lament functions as a preface to a cooperative negotiation between a woman concerned for her protection and a man who is willing to enact his obligatory role. This passage begins by naming Cigfa and, significantly, her relationships with her earlier protectors, her father and husband. At this point in her life, Cigfa's *naud* or protection should come from her husband, as would her honor and status, but Pryderi has mysteriously disappeared and might well be dead. Legally, a woman who has no near male kin must rely on the lord of the land to protect her³, and in this situation Manawydan is the only man in sight who might qualify in this respect. Manawydan's words are meant not only to comfort Cigfa, but to make the strongest possible contract of protection with her.

Though the female characters of the *Mabinogi* rely on their male kin for protection, we cannot say that they are entirely helpless, any more than we can say that the men of the *Mabinogi* always live up to their obligations. Challenges to those aspects of life which concern women most closely—fertility and protection from shame—inspire responses from the women of the *Mabinogi* (and no woman reacts more vehemently in this respect than Aranrhod) which can range from the entertaining to the dramatic. Legally, a woman's fertility has positive significance in her social group if she gives birth in a legitimate relationship, helping to ensure the continued stability and honor of her husband and her people; but if she gives birth under circumstances which prohibit her from having any kind of sexual experience, she causes shame for herself and her kin.⁴

Fertility also operates on a mythological level in the Four Branches, a substratum which occasionally emerges in the text. We know that in a number of medieval Celtic tales, woman's maternal function is metaphorically linked with the fertility of the land—and thus with

¹ "O teyr ford e serheyr e urenhines; o torry e naud, neu o'y tharau, neu o grybdyllau peth o'y llau." Iorwerth 110/1-10, quoted by Owen, *WLW*, p. 46. See also T. M. Charles-Edwards, "Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc," in *WLW*, p. 35, for the terms defining the deception of a woman in a sexual context.

² *PKM*, p. 57.

³ "...the lord is clearly the guardian of all those women not *sui juris* . . . i.e. not in the *mundium* or

wardship of her husband, father or other male agnate; or he is regarded as enjoying a species of *mundium* over all his vassals." D. B. Walters, "The European Context of the Welsh Law of Matrimonial Property," *WLW*, p. 125.

⁴ See in *WLW*: Charles Edwards, pp. 30-37; Owen, p. 51; Davies, pp. 106-108. See also R. R. Davies, "Buchedd a Moes y Cymry," *The Welsh History Review*, xii No. 2 (December, 1984), p. 176.

goddesses associated with the land—suggesting that her ability to give birth is a divine gift,¹ a creative, female power which men like Gwydion and Math emulate in the Fourth Branch. But the divine aspect of fertility is counterbalanced by mortal experience. Suffering accompanies the bearing of children in the stories of Rhiannon, Branwen and Aranrhod, the three mothers in these tales.² Rhiannon is first under threat of divorce for not having given birth, and then she is accused of murdering her child.³ Branwen gives birth without any trouble, but she suffers the agony of seeing her own brother throw Gwern to his death on the fire, setting off the war that destroys two islands. Aranrhod is manipulated by her brother into demonstrating her fertility publicly, and he fosters the product of her female power to her everlasting shame. In terms of a discussion of the unconventional behavior of Gwydion and Aranrhod, we find that the focus of their problems is fertility, which comes as no surprise, since fertility is a significant issue in most of the stories in which the women in the *Mabinogi* appear.

We expect a story of unconventional behavior to have unconventional personalities in it, and the Fourth Branch satisfies us in this respect. Gwydion and Aranrhod, brother and sister, are extraordinary types in contrast with the rest of the characters of the *Mabinogi*. Though Gwydion is of the real world, the Island of the Mighty, he possesses magical powers which link him with the Otherworld. He is also a remarkable storyteller—"goreu kyuarwyd yn y byt oed"⁴—but he does not use his skill to entertain, as a bard should, rather he employs it to distract those whom he wishes to trick—like Pryderi or his own sister, Aranrhod. His duplicity is one of the first things we notice about him; he is so intent on setting things up in his own way that he is careless of the obligations he owes others as a man in a closely-knit social group. He helps Gilfaethwy, his brother, but he is assisting him in the crime of rape, and he does so by instigating a devastating war. He cares for Lleu, but it is at the cost of humiliating his sister

¹ The quantity of articles and books dealing with this topic are too numerous to list in their entirety here, but those dealing with the female fertility function and its link to one-time divinity in the *Mabinogi* are: W. J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon: an inquiry into the origins of the First and Third Branches of the Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1953); Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1970), and *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977); Brinley Roberts, "Penyd Rhiannon," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xxiii (1970), pp. 325-327; Patrick J. Ford, *The Mabinogi* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 13; Catherine McKenna, "The Theme of Sovereignty in *Pwyll*," *BBCS*, xxix (1980), pp. 35-52. In the case of a character like Rhiannon, the connection between Otherworld magic and her fertility function is fairly clear. When she first appears on Gorsedd Arberth, the place of wonders, the supernatural ability of her horse to evade Pwyll and his servants tells us that she has access to magic, and later, the monstrous claw which steals her newborn child reasserts the connection between fertility and magic.

² These are the women identified in the expression "tryded prif rieni yn yr ynys hon" (*PKM*, pp. 30-31) by Ifor Williams, *PKM*, p. 165. The only other

demonstrably fertile woman in the *Mabinogi* is Llwyd ap Cil Coed's wife. Her pregnancy has an unfortunate effect as well: Llwyd's magically planned revenge fails, since Manawydan can catch her and hold her hostage, forcing Llwyd to redeem her with Rhiannon and Pryderi.

³ Teyrnon's wife is presented as a positive foil to Rhiannon and her problems of fertility: Rhiannon is fertile, but loses her child after birth, while Teyrnon's wife is barren, but adopts a newly-born child; Rhiannon cannot raise her child, but Teyrnon's wife can raise a boy who grows larger and more skilled than any other children of his age; Rhiannon cannot refute the charge of murder (and by extension, of her own infertility) because her husband will not take her part against the conspiracy of her serving-women, but Teyrnon's wife creates the illusion of fertility with her husband's approval when she and her serving-women agree to conspire together. The other women who have no children (by either natural or adoptive means) are Arawn's wife, Cigfa, Goewin, and Blodeuedd. All of these women are involved in triangular relationships (whether voluntarily or not), and it may be that the discussion of the interactions with more than one man makes it too complicated to deal with their powers of fertility in addition to the resolution of interpersonal problems.

⁴ *PKM*, p. 69.

again and again, in violation of his fraternal obligations. He is not a man who protects the members of his social group from dishonor nor does he show respect for the obligations which he owes his lord and uncle, Math; indeed, he is often the instigator of the acts which cause shame or suffering.

His atypical socialization is reinforced by a particular ability he manifests, one which usually belongs to women, not men: the creation of new life. In each of the three main sections of the Fourth Branch, Gwydion seems to "give birth," either as the victim or wielder of magic. In the first part, he and Gilfaethwy are changed into animals as punishment for their own bestial behavior and alternately give birth to three animal-children. In the story of the testing of Aranrhod's virginity and its repercussions, the birthing process is more symbolic, as he takes up the generative role his sister spurns. And in the last section, with the help of his magician-uncle, Math, Gwydion truly and consciously usurps the female power of fertility in the creation of Blodeuedd.

Aranrhod is a fair match for her conniving brother, as wilful a creature as he is. Like him, she can use her speech in powerful ways—and she uses that power to curse her son. Even though Gwydion manages to twist her own words to circumvent the first two curses she places on Lleu, he cannot manipulate his sister into participating in the breaking of the last curse. We are reminded again of her strength in the link between her name and the name of her fortress, *Caer Aranrhod*, a naming which suggests her independent power on two levels. In terms of the narrative style of the Four Branches, this reminds us of the traditional manner in which the men in the Four Branches are named. On the level of a mythological substratum, this naming reminds us of the powerful goddesses who give their names to the lands with which they are connected.¹ She is never named in relation to a man who might be her protector, suggesting her independence from conventional rules of female behavior. And unlike any other woman in the Four Branches, she really commits a violation for which she should be punished, but she walks away from her shame—as well as abandoning the responsibilities she has to the proof of her shameful fertility.

Gwydion is the character through whom the various episodes of the Fourth Branch are woven together. He functions as the "villain" in the story, in the sense that Vladimir Propp used the word: *not* as the embodiment of evil, but rather as a catalyzing agent whose meetings with other characters precipitates the crises which must be resolved by the end of the tale,² in this role, he treats most of the other characters as accomplices to or victims of his machinations. The exception is Aranrhod, who resists his efforts to effect control over certain intimate areas of her life. She functions as his female foil: her denial of both her sexual experience and her responsibilities as mother instigates a number of crises in the sections of the text which deal with the life of Lleu.

¹ This connection is very clearly developed in Irish legend. See T. F. O'Rahilly, "On the Origin of the Names *Érainn* and *Ériu*," *Eriu*, XIV (1940-1946), pp. 7-28; Anne Ross, pp. 204-5, 209, 218-219, 229-233. Aranrhod's divine aspects have been discussed in: T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946); Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (Cardiff:

University of Wales Press, 1961), p. 277; Ross, p. 227; Charles Bowen, "Great-Bladdered Medb: Mythology and Invention in the *Táin Bó Cuailgne*," *Eire Ireland*, X/4 (1975), pp. 14-34.

² *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 21.

Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's act of rape is not only a serious violation of Goewin's honor,¹ but is also an insult to the honor of Math, her lord and her protector.² Additionally, this rape is tantamount to a threat to Math's life, since he cannot live without placing both his feet in the lap of a virgin.³ In this sense, Gwydion is not as careful of his obligations to his kin and his people as the other men of the *Mabinogi* are, since he puts the desires of an individual, his lust-filled brother, Gilfaethwy, above the security of the social group when he risks war with Dyfed. The brothers' punishment is the most interesting aspect of this part of the Fourth Branch, for they both take on a function which is inappropriate to their human gender.

The punishment is symbolic rather than a realistic reflection of the laws: Math strikes them with his rod (a symbol which links this passage to Goewin's rape and, later, Aranrhod's test of virginity), so that the two brothers are three times turned into a male/female pair of animals and they alternate giving birth in each of these transformations. The law texts tell us that a rapist was obligated to make compensatory payments to both the victimized woman and the king, but according to one code, if a man rapes a woman who is alone and without protection, and he is unable to offer material compensation, then he may be castrated.⁴ Math's enchantment symbolically suggests this kind of punishment, since both men are, in the process of being changed into female animals, emasculated. Their unconventional fertility is emphasized in this story when Math tells them that their punishment shames them for each of them has borne a child to the other.⁵ It is as though the Lord of Gwynedd has chosen this punishment to teach them the vulnerability of the female role when men are unconcerned with the codes that protect women. In suffering this punishment, Gwydion has crossed a gender border, a change which causes him shame and a change which he undergoes unwillingly. In the next episode, he will parallel the experience of this punishment, when he crosses a gender border again. Here he will take on a female function willingly, using that function to cause Aranrhod shame: he will initiate the process whereby she commits a punishable violation, and he will use the illusion of fertility to attempt to punish her for that violation.

In literary terms, the rape of Goewin motivates the introduction of Aranrhod into the Fourth Branch, as Math must find a new virgin to serve as footbearer. Gwydion offers his sister as a candidate, suggesting that he has some responsibility for or knowledge of his sister's status in this area. This makes sense, since a young woman's virginity was in the care of her kin. Math asks her if she is a maiden, and she answers rather ambiguously: "Ny wnn i amgen no'm

¹ "the most extreme violation a girl might suffer was the forcible termination of her virginity by rape . . . The offensiveness of the action of rape and the dishonour that it brings is acknowledged in the exaction of *sarhaed* or *wyneberth* which is paid to the girl." Owen, "Shame and Reparation," in *WLW* p. 49; see also, Dafydd Jenkins, "Property Interests in the Classical Welsh Law of Women," in *WLW*, pp. 86-88. The relevant passages are printed in *WLW*: Cyfnerth 73.13c-22; Latin Redaction A 52.35-41; Iorwerth 50.1-5, 54.4-6.

² "The last payment exacted as compensation for rape is the *dirwy* payable to the king. In the Iorwerth text this is specified as being twelve kine but elsewhere in terms which make it virtually identical with the king's

sarhaed; according to these texts it consists either of a silver rod, a golden plate and cup or of the silver rod alone. [Owen cites here: *Welsh Medieval Law*, ed. A. W. Wade-Evans, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), 92.10; *The Laws of Hywel Dda (The Book of Blegywryd)* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1954), 63.23; Latin Redaction A 52.39 in *WLW*.] The implication of this rule is that the safe keeping of virgins lay within the king's *nawdd* or protection," Owen in *WLW*, p. 49.

³ "Ac yn yr oes honno Math uab Mathonwy ny bydei uyw, namyn tra uei y deudroet ymlyc croth morwyn, onyt kynwryf ryuel a'y llesteirei," *PKM*, p. 67.

⁴ Peniarth 37, 72.16, in *WLW*, p. 143.

⁵ "a chywilyd mawr a gawssawch, bot plant o bob un o honawch o'y gildid," *PKM*, pp. 76-77.

bot."¹ The evasiveness of Aranrhod's reply recalls Gwydion's duplicity in the previous episode when he tricks both Math and Pryderi into war. The inexactness of her words forces Math to make a more specific test of her virgin status. He tells her to step over his "hutlath" or magic rod (the symbolism of this gesture is fairly striking, an image which recalls the violation of Goewin), and she does, dropping a yellow-haired boychild. Aranrhod then makes for the door, but before she can exit, she drops a small something, "ryw bethan ohonei,"² which Gwydion snatches up before anyone has seen it.

Presumably, Aranrhod would have known her true status, so her answer to Math takes on the quality of a lie, a denial of her sexual experience. A false claim of virginity before marriage was a legal violation, and though Math is not intending to marry Aranrhod, his dependence on the veracity of her claim is as urgent as that of any bridegroom.³ Aranrhod's quick exit out the door is a second denial, a rejection of the proof of her fertility. It is Math who must recognize the existence of the first child and name him, for it is clear that Aranrhod will not take responsibility for the fruit of her experience. The only woman in the *Mabinogi* having no defined obligatory bonds to any man, Aranrhod illustrates an unconventional image of fertile woman. She is not punished by any man when her illicit fertility is proven, but neither does any man take her part when she accuses her brother of causing her humiliation. Instead, she goes off alone to her own retreat, Caer Aranrhod. In a sense, she functions as her own protector.

Gwydion not only violates his sister's protection by exposing her to shame, but he nurtures it by taking over the care of the small "thing" which she abandons in the doorway. He wraps it in "llen o bali" (a kind of cloth which reminds us of another child whose birth led to the mother's humiliation—Gwri/Pryderi), and he hides it in a chest at the foot of his bed: "y mywn llaw gist is traed y wely."⁴ The "small thing," which is not identified as a child, as the first boy was, is a kind of premature baby, and Gwydion, by putting it in the chest, has put it back in a womb-like place. The success of this unusual action is manifest when some time later, Gwydion becomes aware of its presence again.

Val yd oed Wydyon diwarnawt yn y wely, ac yn deffroi, ef a glywei diaspat yn y gist is y draet. Kyn y bei uchel hi, kyuch oed ac y kigleu ef. Sef a oruc ynteu, kyudi yn gyflym, ac agori y gist. Ac ual y hegyr, ef a welei uab bychan yn rwyuaw y ureicheu o blyc y llen, ac yn y guascaru. Ac ef a gymerth y mab y rwng y dwylaw ac a gyrchwys y dref ac ef, lle y gwydat bot gwreic a bronneu genti. Ac ymobryn a wnaeth a'r wreic ueithryn y mab.⁵

Gwydion takes over the maternal process which Aranrhod has fled, and the description of the child's emergence from the chest is a caricature of a mother's experience. Gwydion is awakened by an awareness of the child's presence at the other end of the bed and opens the chest/womb. The image of a child pushing its way out of a fold in the sheet is a fairly clear imitation of a real birth. The phrase "o blyc y llen" reminds us again of women's sexual experience and fertility; it stylistically echoes two other phrases used in reference to women who must be protected from illicit sexual activity: the description of the proper resting place for

¹ *PKM*, p. 77. See in *WLW*: Christopher McAll, "The Normal Paradigms of a Woman's Life," p. 9; Owen, p. 48; Jenkins, p. 77.

² *PKM*, p. 77.

³ The women who falsely asserts her virginity and is

found out is called a *twyllforwyn*. In *WLW*: McAll, p. 9; Charles-Edwards, p. 34.

⁴ *PKM*, p. 77.

⁵ *PKM*, p. 78.

Math's feet, "Ymlyc croth morwyn,"¹ the virgin Goewin's lap; and a phrase Arawn's wife uses when she comments on the lack of sexual activity between herself and the disguised Lord of Dyfed "yn nyblyc yn dillat guely."² In this scene, Gwydion essentially gives birth to the child, and like a good mother, cradles it in his arms and finds it a satisfactory wetnurse.

The next events show us how Gwydion and Aranrhod fight over the fate of the child which has been "born" to both of them.

When Gwydion presents his sister with a prodigiously matured four-year-old son, the two siblings engage in a word-play which demonstrates both their anger and their intransigence. As long as Gwydion continues to nurture the child, taking on an inappropriately maternal role, Aranrhod will continue violating her obligations as a real mother to evade the shame her false claim has provoked. She says to her brother angrily:

"Oy a wr, ba doi arnat ti, uyg kywilydaw i, a dilyt uyg kywilyd, a'y gadw yn gyhyt a hynn?"³

Aranrhod's words have a double meaning: she refers to her shame in the abstract, a shame for which she has never been punished, but she also refers to her son in the noun "kywilyd," indicating that her attitude towards maternity has not yet changed. In the terms of the literary structure of this Branch, this expression of Aranrhod's anger is necessary to explain why she will later try to keep her son, the living proof of the shame, from a normal existence by denying him a name, arms, and a human wife. She, like her brother, intends to use him as the tangible symbol of *their* battle.

Gwydion, in his retort to her challenge, puns as cleverly:

"Ony byd arnat ti gywilyd uwy no meithryn o honaf i uab kystal a hwnn, ys bychan a beth uyd dy gywilyd di."⁴

He tries to goad her into admitting her maternal function by telling her he has played the female role better than she has. His words too have a double meaning: the small thing which she dropped before fleeing her test is recalled in his phrase "ys bychan a beth uyd dy gywilyd di."

This exchange instigates Aranrhod's first curse—that the child will not have a name unless he gets it from her.⁵ Gwydion's wrathful reply unambiguously charges Aranrhod with the legal violation for which she has not been officially punished yet:

"A thitheu," heb ef, "yr hwnn yd wyt ti [i.e., a *gwreic*], ac auar arnat am na'th elwir y uorwyn, ni'th elwir bellach byth yn uorwyn."⁶

For the child to survive, Aranrhod must recognize it, but no ordinary means will induce her to obey; it is only through magic that Gwydion can get Aranrhod to fulfil her obligations, and even then, Gwydion succeeds only because Aranrhod is involuntarily deceived. The man and the boy set themselves up in magical disguise, stitching shoes outside Aranrhod's *caer*; when she approaches the two false shoemakers at their work, she watches their actions and inadvertently names Llew,⁷ through the kind of word-play we have already seen in the

¹ PKM, p. 67.

² PKM, p. 7.

³ PKM, p. 78.

⁴ PKM, pp. 78-79.

⁵ "Te," heb hi, 'mi a dynghaf dyghet idaw, na chaffo enw yny caffo y genhyf i.' PKM, p. 79.

⁶ PKM, p. 79.

⁷ This incident reminds us of another mother, Rhiannon, who fulfils her responsibilities willingly, though she is suspected of not having done so. Like Aranrhod, she names her child inadvertently through her exclamation of surprise; and the significant word is picked out by a man, just as Aranrhod's words are picked out by Gwydion, as a formal process of naming.

exchanges between this brother and sister. This manipulative success incites Aranrhod's wrath again, for now the child has a name which he can pass on, creating the potential, as J. K. Bollard has noted, for Llew's "possibly perpetuating the memory of her shame even in future generations."¹ She swears a destiny on the boy again, that he will never bear arms until she herself arms him.²

The child needs a name and arms to take his place as a man in this society, so Aranrhod is not only denying her socially defined role in rejecting him, but she is also threatening the boy's ability to fulfill his obligations as a man. By refusing the child a name, Aranrhod unmaternally attempts to sever him from a relationship with herself or anyone, for that matter, since names are so closely connected with identification in a kinship bond. By denying him arms, Aranrhod cuts him off from the tools which will allow him to serve as a protector and gain lasting fame as a warrior.

To evade this unpleasant destiny, Gwydion must once again create the illusion of war through magic duplicity, as he did before to deceive Pryderi and Math; he magically creates an attacking navy. The irony of this trick is that his sister unwittingly performs her obligations to her child—and does so gladly, "yn llawen"³—because she is forced to demand protection from men. Her rage when the fleet disappears instigates her last curse—that Llew will never have a wife of the race which is now on earth.⁴ This destiny is phrased slightly differently, protecting Aranrhod from any further trickery. She simply says he will never have a wife, making no reference to her own agency in fulfilling this destiny. This is not a direct denial or rejection; she returns to her earlier policy of evasion, but this time she leaves no loose ends for Gwydion to pick up and twist to her disadvantage.

This signals the end of the competition between the siblings. In one sense, she has won the battle, for Gwydion will never punish her again with the proof of an illicit fertility which can only cause her shame, but in another sense, it is Gwydion who has won, for he will overcome her last prohibition without her assistance, taking on the female power of creation one more time, to "give birth" to Blodeuedd. But even this manifestation of masculine fertility fails, for the new woman is as wilful as the old one was and Gwydion's gift to Llew instigates the process of yet another legal violation, the adultery of Blodeuedd and Gronw. Gwydion may be able to nurture and shape a real boy into a chieftain, but he cannot succeed entirely at directing a woman, even one who is of his own making. Crossing the borders of gender functions in the Fourth Branch leads to legal violations, and men and women who refuse to recognize their roles bring shame to themselves or insult those close to them. The closing sentences of the Fourth Branch tell us that Llew wins his lands back, becoming a prosperous chieftain and eventually the Lord of Dyfed, a successful portrait, but one which is missing something. Looking back, we see that the First Branch closes with a marriage, the Second Branch ends with a bizarre but successful story of fertility, and the third tells us of the restoration of a husband and wife to their respective mates, all descriptions of cooperative couplings of men and women. As though to dramatize the hopelessness of male/female conflict through ironic understatement, the Fourth Branch ends with the image of a man alone.

University of Colorado Denver.

ROBERTA L. VALENTE

¹ Bollard, p. 268.

² "Te," heb hi, 'minheu a dyghaf dyghet y'r mab hwnn, na chaffo arueu byth yny gwiscof i ymdanaw.' PKM, p. 81.

³ PKM, p. 82.

⁴ "A mi a dynghaf dynghet idaw," heb hi, 'na chaffo wreic uyth, o'r genedyl yssyd ar y dayar honn yr awr honn.' PKM, p. 83.