

## 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.

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# Medieval Welsh Poems to Nuns

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AMONG the love songs of the medieval Welsh *cywyddwyr* there is a small sub-genre of poems addressed to nuns, as if they were maidens available to be courted.

According to *Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*, a nun was an appropriate object of praise poems to women, along with a *gwreicda* ('noble-woman') and *morwyn ieuang* ('young maiden'). The nuns were to be praised specifically for their holiness and pure way of life, their heavenly love of God, and other spiritual virtues, *megis y molir crefyddwr*, 'just as a religious man is praised'.<sup>1</sup> In making this recommendation, the Bardic Grammar acknowledges a wider tradition of literature addressed to nuns, a tradition begun in patristic writings of the early Middle Ages and continuing through to later Middle English didactic texts such as the *Ancrene Riwe*.<sup>2</sup>

Few medieval examples of formal praise poems in Welsh to abbesses and religious women have survived, compared to those addressed to men of the church such as Yr Abad Dafydd ab Owain, abbot of Ystrad Marchell, eulogized by Lewys Môn and Tudur Aled.<sup>3</sup> Praise poems which eulogize the holy virtues and devotion to God of particular religious women amply fulfil the requirements laid down in the Bardic Grammar for poems to nuns.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between poet and praise-object is typically formal, based on mutual respect

<sup>1</sup>*Gramadegau'r Penceirddiaid*, edited by G. J. Williams and E. J. Jones (Cardiff, 1934), p. 56. This article is based on a paper presented to the Eighth International Congress of Celtic Studies at Swansea in 1987. I would like to acknowledge the helpful research assistance of Rose McMahon in the preparation of the original paper. <sup>2</sup>For examples of this kind of writing, see *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from Ancrene Wisse and the Katherine Group*, edited and translated by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford, 1990). Selections from *Ancrene Wisse* appear in *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, edited by J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers (Oxford, 1968), pp. 223–45. <sup>3</sup>*Gwaith Lewys Môn*, edited by Eurys Rowlands (Cardiff, 1975), no. 65; *Gwaith Tudur Aled*, edited by T. Gwynn Jones, 2 vols (Cardiff, 1926), I, no. 3. <sup>4</sup>See, for example, the *marwnad* for Nest Stradling composed by Rhisiart ap Rhys in the late fifteenth century, in *Gwaith Rhys Brydydd a Rhisiart ap Rhys*, edited by Eurys Rowlands (Cardiff, 1976), no. 19. Compare also the *cywydd* to San Ffraid (St Bride) by Iorwerth Fynglwyd (fl. 1485–1527), in *Poems of the Cywyddwyr*, edited by Eurys Rowlands (Dublin, 1976), no. 25.

and acknowledgement of each other's status as a professional person holding a socially recognized office.

But there are other poems, all *cywyddau*, in which the poet presents himself as a love-suitors, and the nun to whom he declares himself is cast in the conventional literary role of the coy or disdainful maiden who has to be persuaded into the woodland. This role was as inappropriate to the actual social identity of nuns as it was for other noblewomen such as Dyddgu, wooed by Dafydd ap Gwilym—perhaps more so, since nuns were supposed to be kept cloistered. Yet the poems are apparently not intended as satires on the formal praise songs to nuns; they appear to function as genuine love poems in their own right. The virtues of the nuns, in their role as holy women, are more or less ignored; they are praised for their virtues as chaste women, in the same language that Dyddgu and other noblewomen are praised.

I have edited five love poems addressed to nuns and have included them at the end of the article. By examining these poems in the wider context of literature to and about nuns, and in the historical context of nunneries in Wales in the medieval period, I would like to suggest the possible function of such poems: why they were composed, and for what kind of audience they were intended.<sup>5</sup>

Of the five poems edited here, one belongs to the Dafydd ap Gwilym canon, as established by Thomas Parry, and the other four are among the apocrypha. None of these four is likely to be a genuine Dafydd ap Gwilym poem, as their style and language suggest fifteenth- rather than fourteenth-century composition.

The first poem is the one edited by Thomas Parry as no. 113 in *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* [GDG], which he gave the title 'Cyrchu Lleian', 'Fetching a Nun'. This poem is found in thirteen manuscripts, a relatively small number, but all of them attribute the poem to Dafydd, including the two oldest, Cardiff, South Glamorgan Library, Hafod 26 (c. 1574) and Aberystwyth, National Library of

<sup>5</sup> Another poem which could have been included in the group is Dafydd ap Gwilym's 'Pererindod Merch', *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (GDG), edited by Thomas Parry (Cardiff, 1952), no. 99. The purpose of the poem seems to be a description of the journey rather than a love-suit addressed to the nun, so I have omitted it, though it does provide further evidence that poems to and about nuns were not uncommon in the *cywydd* tradition. There is also a *cywydd* attributed to Dafydd ab Edmwnd (or Bedo Brwynllys in some of the manuscripts), beginning 'Gwenonwy gown y wennol' ('Gwenonwy of the swallow's gown'), which apparently describes a nun although she is not named as such. The poem does not appear in Thomas Roberts's edition, *Gwaith Dafydd ab Edmwnd* (Bangor, 1914), and the earliest manuscript version is BL Add. 14999, fol. 104<sup>r</sup> (c. 1600). Another possible contender is the Iolo Goch *cywydd*, 'Caru'dd wyf, caruaid yw', in *Gwaith Iolo Goch*, edited by D. R. Johnston (Cardiff, 1988), no. XXIV, which Gilbert Ruddock has suggested may be addressed to a nun ('Cywydd i Grefyddes?', *Llên Cymru*, 12 (1972-73), 117-20).

Wales, Peniarth 49 (1577, though this poem is in a section added in a later hand, probably that of John Davies of Mallwyd, in the early seventeenth century). I have based my edition on these two manuscripts and followed their line order, which varies slightly from Parry's edition. The most significant effect of this comes at the end of the poem, where it is possible to read the line 'Cais frad ar yr abades' as 'try a trick on the abbess'—that is, deceive the abbess in order to get the real object of the poet's interest, the *clochyddes* or chantress from the choir. I do not think the poem means 'Get the sexton, or failing her, the abbess herself', which is how the poem is often understood, as a piece of irreverence typical of Dafydd's attitude to clerical authority. In fact, the language of the penultimate line is far more suggestive than anything else in the poem—'un a'i medr', 'one who knows how', 'one who can do it'—which I take to refer to the chantress and her familiarity, indeed skill, concerning the practice of love. This seems to me by far the most overt line of the poem, and it is much more appropriate to have it at the end of the poem rather than two-thirds of the way through, as Parry has it, where it loses all its impact.

Reading the poem in this order, we can see a distinctive movement from the general to the specific. The poet begins by sending the *llatai* to the convent to find some nuns, in the plural, using plural nouns such as *santesau*, 'saints', and *gwenoliaid*, 'swallows'. It is only in the last third of the poem, from line 23, 'O caf innau rhag gofal' ('if I get from custody'), that the language noticeably changes from the plural to the singular. The poet says, if a nun from the refectory will not come, get the chantress from the choir, the one who knows how, and it suddenly becomes obvious that this is where the poem has been leading all the time, to one specific nun who is practised in love and who therefore by implication is not as virginal as the other nuns. So this perceptible movement from the plural to the singular, from images of innocence to one of experience, creates a much more shocking impact than any implied threat to the abbess.

The next two poems are included in Parry's list of apocryphal poems which formed part of his introduction to the first edition of GDG. (This is a list of 177 poems which were attributed to Dafydd ap Gwilym in some of the manuscripts but which Parry rejected from the canon for various reasons.) Both these poems have been edited and published in modern anthologies, to which I have given references: *Cywyddau Dafydd ap Gwilym a'i Gyfoeswyr*, edited by Ifor Williams and Thomas Roberts, second edition (Cardiff, 1935) [DGG]; *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*, edited by Thomas Parry (Oxford, 1962) [OBVW]; and *Barddoniaeth yr Uchelwyr*, edited by D. J. Bowen (Cardiff, 1959) [BU]. I hope to explain in full elsewhere the editorial method I have adopted. In the meantime readers might

wish to consult the texts printed in OBWV and DGG as well as mine, since they might find them in some respects more satisfactory as well as more familiar.

'Caru dyn lygeitu lwyd' is dismissed by Parry as being very simple in its style, which has very little ornamentation such as *torymadrodd* or *cynghanedd sain*, and certainly seems to be characteristic of a fifteenth-century composition. It is found in seventeen manuscripts, all of which attribute the poem to Dafydd, but none of them is very early. I have based my edition on Bangor, University College of North Wales, MS Gwynedd 2 (sixteenth-century), which is the earliest extant version.

The next poem, 'Dal neithiwyr, delwi a wneuthum', is also found in modern anthologies and is perhaps more poetically skilful than the previous one, certainly in terms of length and the *dyfalu* description of the girl's face. Although the poem is commonly given the title 'Wyneb Lleian', 'A Nun's Face', it does not specifically state that the girl is a nun, and in fact this is fairly irrelevant to the point of the poem, which is to give a detailed and ornate description of her face. However, the references to the tailor who has dressed the girl in black all round her face, and to the *mwrrai du* ('black murrey'), a kind of cloth originally dyed a deep purple, do suggest a nun's habit and it seems reasonable to consider the girl as a nun.

The poem is quite well attested, occurring in twenty-four manuscripts, including Cardiff, Hafod 26 (c. 1574) and Cardiff 7 (c. 1565). However, three of the manuscripts, including Cardiff 7, attribute the poem not to Dafydd but to Hywel ap Dafydd ab Ieuan ap Rhys, a poet of the mid-fifteenth century, and this was sufficient for Parry to doubt Dafydd's authorship. Parry also points to the couplet style as typical of fifteenth-century poems, and to the name Gwenonwy, which is not used by Dafydd at all.

With regard to the couplet style as one of Parry's main tests of fifteenth- rather than fourteenth-century composition, Saunders Lewis, in his review of GDG, pointed out that many examples of simple couplets can be found in the poems accepted by Parry (for example, GDG 114, 'Yr Ehedydd'), and similarly that the present poem, 'Dal neithiwyr', which was rejected on the grounds of its couplet style, in fact contains a great deal of *torymadroddi* as well.<sup>6</sup> Saunders Lewis was not arguing for the inclusion of 'Dal neithiwyr' among the genuine poems, merely making the point—a valid one, I think—that a couplet style provides only negative evidence: without it, a poem is likely to belong to the fourteenth century, but with it a poem could belong either to the fourteenth or to the fifteenth century.

<sup>6</sup>See *LIC*, 2 (1952–53), 200.

As for the name Gwenonwy, this seems to be quite unusual in medieval poetry. It is not mentioned by Melville Richards in his article on personal names,<sup>7</sup> and it does not occur once in any of Bartrum's genealogies. However, it is used by Dafydd ab Edmwnd in two of his poems, including one which is supposed to be about a nun, and this seems to suggest that it was a name popular in the fifteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Gwenonwy may be attested as early as the twelfth century as the eponym of a *villa* in the Book of Llandaf.<sup>9</sup>

There is also some evidence for an early tradition—at least seventeenth-century—that Gwenonwy was the daughter of Ifor Hael. Two of the five poems discussed here, nos 3 and 4, are given a heading in some of the manuscripts to the effect that they are addressed to 'merch Ifor Hael'. This enabled early critics to construct a story about Dafydd ap Gwilym going to Ifor Hael's court and falling in love with his daughter Gwenonwy, who was promptly sent off to a nunnery. After addressing a few sad poems to this nun, says the story, Dafydd ap Gwilym met Morfudd and forgot all about Gwenonwy.<sup>10</sup>

The last two poems also occur in Parry's list of apocrypha but have not been edited or published since the 1789 edition of *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym*, which is a pity as they are both fine poems, especially the first. This poem, 'Y ferch o'r fynachlog faen', was obviously very popular. It occurs in thirty-six manuscripts, including some very early and reliable ones: NLW Peniarth 49 (1577, but the poem occurs in the seventeenth-century section); NLW Peniarth 76 (1525, though the poem may be a later insertion); Cardiff, Hafod 26 (c. 1574) and Cardiff 49 (c. 1575). All of these attribute the poem to Dafydd.

However, there are some other attributions, and it is mainly these which caused Parry to reject the poem from the canon. Nine manuscripts attribute the poem to Bedo Brwynlllys, including one important early manuscript, BL Add. 14880 (J. G. Evans's 'BM MS 36', late-sixteenth or early-seventeenth-century). Another three manu-

<sup>7</sup>Gwŷr, Gwragedd a Gwehelyth', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1965, pp. 27–44. <sup>8</sup>'Gwenonwy gown y wennol'; see n. 5 above. The name also occurs in the *awdl* by Dafydd ab Edmwnd, 'Dafyr byd y gyd y gog', printed in T. Roberts's edition of *Gwaith Dafydd ab Edmwnd*. See also the *marwnad* for Catrin ferch Forgan by Lewys Môn (*Gwaith Lewys Môn*, no. 39), in which the name also occurs. <sup>9</sup>In *The Lives of the British Saints*, edited by S. Baring-Gould and J. Fisher, 4 vols (London, 1907–13), Gwenonwy is mentioned at III, 198–99, but the information is based on genealogies invented by Iolo Morganwg. See *The Text of the Book of Llan Dâw*, edited by J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Oxford, 1893), pp. 179 and 191, for the name *Guennonoe* or *Guinnonui* as the eponym of a *villa*. <sup>10</sup>For one version of this story, see Charles Wilkins, *The History of the Literature of Wales 1300–1650* (Cardiff, 1884), p. 38. The creator of the story was almost certainly Iolo Morganwg in his introduction to *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ap Gwilym* (London, 1798).

scripts attribute the poem to Hywel ap Dafydd ab Ieuan ap Rhys, who (like Bedo Brwynllys) flourished in the mid-fifteenth century. Again, there is one early manuscript, BL Stowe 959 (J. G. Evans's 'BM MS 48', late-sixteenth-century), which names Hywel ap Dafydd as the author. So these two attributions cannot easily be dismissed and, taken together with the language and style of the poem, suggest a fifteenth- rather than fourteenth-century date of composition.

It is perhaps worth mentioning at this point that it is not unknown for Parry to include in the canon poems which are attributed to other authors. An important example is 'Tri Phorthor Eiddig' (GDG 80), which is attributed to Bedo Brwynllys in seven of the manuscripts, including the quite early NLW Llanstephan 6 (c. 1525). So it is not impossible for a poem to have other attributions and yet still be regarded as a genuine Dafydd ap Gwilym poem, though in the case of 'Y ferch o'r fynachlog faen' there are other reasons for rejecting it.

With regard to the content of these five poems, we find all the conventions of *cywyddwyr* love song, with the additional tension arising from the fact that the women were nuns. Conventional images of a girl's beauty, the poet's declarations of love, the motif of love in secret, the *dyfalu* description of a girl's face, the use of a *llatai* or love-messenger, the lament of unrequited love—these are all themes shared by the poems to nuns and the general corpus of medieval Welsh love song.

On the other hand, each of the poems makes an individual and specific use of the girl's identity as a nun. In the Dafydd ap Gwilym poem, a nun is to be enticed from a particular nunnery, Llanllugan; in the second, the poet tries to persuade the nun to renounce her vows, something that was impossible in medieval times. Nuns had to run away from a convent if they wanted to leave, and the local authorities were sent out after any errant nuns to capture them and bring them back. As if this was not a great enough disincentive, the penalty for leaving a convent completely and casting off the nun's habit and returning to secular life was excommunication, which was also the penalty for any man who seduced or attempted to seduce a nun.<sup>11</sup> So the poet who tried to persuade the nun to give up being a nun and celebrate love with him in the birch grove was presumably

<sup>11</sup>See Angela M. Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages* (Brighton, 1983), pp. 52–58; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500–1100)', in *Medieval Religious Women*, 1, *Distant Echoes*, edited by John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, Cistercian Studies, 71 (Kalamazoo, 1984), pp. 51–86. Andreas Capellanus recommended that loving nuns should be 'utterly avoided as the plague of the soul . . . because such love involves the death-sentence in this world and the next'. See P. G. Walsh, *Andreas Capellanus on Love* (London, 1982), pp. 210–13.

aware that this was a sin of the gravest kind and that they were unlikely to acquire *enaid rhydd*, 'a shriven soul', in the process.

The third poem, to the nun's face, is a fairly standard description of a girl's beauty, working down from the top of the face to the chin and neck, the conventional descriptive practice in medieval literature. Naturally the girl's features also conform to the highest standards of feminine beauty, so her forehead is white, her brows are dark, her eyes are large but her nose is not, her cheeks are red, her neck is long and slender, and so on. However, the poet also makes a point of lamenting the ugliness of the dark clothes and the fact that the girl's forehead is almost completely hidden by her headdress. This was in fact the correct practice for medieval nuns, who were meant to have their foreheads hidden under the band of their wimples.<sup>12</sup>

But since a high pale forehead was supposed to be a girl's best feature, it was not surprising that many nuns managed to reveal most if not all of their foreheads. This is the significance of the reference to *dyn eglur dâl*, 'a girl with forehead revealed', in the Dafydd ap Gwilym poem: the point is that a nun was not supposed to reveal her forehead, so in asking for one who does, the poet is well on his way to finding *un a'i medr*, the one who knows how. This is also the significance of Chaucer's famous description of the Prioress in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*: having established how elegant and excessively refined she was, Chaucer says:

But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;  
It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe.<sup>13</sup>

This kind of ironic reference is typical of Chaucer's description: the Prioress has a wide forehead, hallmark of a lady, but she was not supposed to be displaying it because she was a prioress; and this of course is the whole point about Madame Eglantyne: her careful attempts to appear genteel and well born, such as her clothes and jewellery and the dogs she kept as pets, are all inappropriate to her life as a nun.

The fourth poem, 'Y ferch o'r fynachlog faen', depends on the rhetorical device of *occupatio*, that is, asserting a negative in order to imply the positive. The device is used a number of times by Dafydd ap Gwilym, for example in 'I Wahodd Dyddgu' (GDG 119) and 'Gwadu Iddo Fod yn Fynach' (GDG 35). The more the poet

<sup>12</sup>G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Panorama* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 276–77. <sup>13</sup>'General Prologue', lines 154–55, in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, edited by F. N. Robinson (Oxford, 1957), p. 18. For a discussion of the significance of the Prioress's description, see Muriel Bowden, *A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (London, 1973), pp. 92–106.

insists that he did not meet the nun and put his arm round her and so on, and the more hyperbolically he declares his innocence, the more likely it becomes that he was in fact her lover. And of course the penultimate line—'Ni weddai'r hyn a wyddyt' ('this would not conform with what you know')—more or less admits that the girl knows the truth of what happened.

Finally, the fifth poem is a fairly conventional expression of unrequited love, except that the poet's case seems even more hopeless than usual since he is pursuing a nun. His request to God at the end of the poem that he should get both the girl and heaven for his soul—in other words, that he should escape the usual penalties attached to such a pursuit—is typical of the attitude of *cywyddwyr* love poetry in general: an optimistic assurance that God supports earthly love, however adulterous or otherwise inappropriate it may be.

In order to understand more clearly the significance of these poems in the whole corpus of medieval Welsh poetry, we need to consider the historical circumstances of nunneries in Wales at the time. In the first place, it is interesting to note that there were very few nunneries compared to monasteries. In *The Monastic Order in South Wales*, Cowley notes that only four religious houses for women were established in Wales during the Middle Ages, compared to nearly forty for men.<sup>14</sup> This reflects a general attitude throughout the western Christian world that the spiritual needs and contribution of women were of far less importance than those of men.

The four Welsh nunneries were at Llanllyr, on the south bank of the Aeron in Ceredigion, founded sometime before 1197 by the Lord Rhys (at that time he was a great patron of the Cistercian monastery of Strata Florida, and the convent was established as a daughter house of that abbey); Llanllugan, mentioned in the Dafydd ap Gwilym poem, founded before 1236 by Maredudd ap Rhotpert, lord of Cydwain in the south of Powys near the March; Llansanffraid in Elfael, also in Powys, founded between 1170 and 1174 as a daughter house of Strata Marcella (a Cistercian monastery established in 1170 on land supplied by Owain Cyfeiliog); and, finally, the Benedictine priory of Usk, founded before 1236 by the lords of Clare, who owned the land around Usk.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>F. G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales 1066–1349* (Cardiff, 1977), p. 38. See also D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses, England and Wales*, second edition (London, 1971), for a full list. <sup>15</sup>Information about the nunneries is not plentiful; some details are given in Cowley, *Monastic Order in South Wales*, pp. 37–38; J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, third edition, 2 vols (London, 1939), II, 603; Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1962), pp. 19, 228, and 392; Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses*, pp. 220 and 224; and Morris Charles Jones, 'Some Account of Llanllugan Nunnery', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 2 (1869), 301–10.

Of these four nunneries, three survived until the general dissolution of monasteries in the sixteenth century. The exception was Llansanffraid in Elfael, which only lasted for about a year. The reason for its short life was a great scandal involving Enoch, the first abbot of Strata Marcella, who was responsible for establishing the daughter house of Llansanffraid. The incident is recorded regretfully by Giraldus Cambrensis, and with scholarly restraint by J. E. Lloyd in his *History of Wales*, where he says:

Enoch, its first abbot, and, no doubt, a Welshman, was a zealous and earnest worker, who threw himself with energy into the task of establishing a Cistercian nunnery for Welshwomen at Llansanffraid in Elfael. The enterprise led him into temptation; he allowed himself to be carried away by a violent passion for one of the inmates, a lady of birth and beauty, and finally eloped with her, deserting his abbey and his order and exposing both to the ridicule and scorn of the whole country. Enoch repented of his sin and returned to the abbey, but Ystrad Marchell must have stood the strain of this catastrophe with difficulty, and nothing further is heard of the ill-starred nunnery.<sup>16</sup>

So as a punishment for the unfortunate couple, and presumably as a warning to the rest of them, it was the women who were deprived of a much-needed convent. This incident gives us some insight into the historical reality of nuns as people with emotional lives: unlike the literary convention of women as the passive recipients of male ardour, in real life nuns, like other women, took decisions on their own account and responded actively to love pursuits; no doubt the results were often disastrous, as in this case, but at least the incident calls into question the literary presentation of women as passive nonentities. The fact that in every account of the story Enoch the abbot retains his name and his status while the nun remains anonymous and sinks without trace is unfortunately a very typical example of the way historical accounts are biased towards the activities of men. But the story also points to the great hopes placed in the Cistercian order as a vehicle for monastic reform in Wales, hopes that were dashed by such a scandal, to the extent that the nunnery was closed down altogether rather than being allowed to remain as a reminder of Cistercian fallibility.

I would like now to consider the significance of these poems in the context of medieval Wales and to suggest reasons why they may have been composed. There are two main factors to be taken into account: first, the aristocratic status of the great majority of nuns and, second, the importance of the Cistercian order in Wales.

The first point concerns medieval nunneries in general, not just

<sup>16</sup>*History of Wales*, II, 599.

those in Wales. Convents were for women of the aristocratic or wealthy bourgeois classes. Younger daughters without a dowry, older sisters left at home after their siblings were married off, recalcitrant daughters who fell in love with unsuitable men, young women left without close male relatives, and widows of any age could all retire honourably to a convent, or be forcibly sent there, in default of the only other occupation available to them, which was marriage. Since convents were endemically poor—seldom attracting the sizeable endowments made to men's abbeys—women who could bring some money or land with them to the convent were especially welcome, and preferment was usually given to those of the highest birth and with the best connections.<sup>17</sup>

Women of the lower classes virtually never became nuns, not only because they had no money to contribute to the convent, but because they actually had more options than noblewomen. Marriage was not the only course of life open to them. Ordinary women who did not marry—as well as most of those who did—worked on the land or in the towns at a trade, and so could live respectably without a husband if necessary; in fact, among the peasant and artisan classes women's labour was nearly as important as the men's.

As well as taking nuns, convents usually offered shelter on a temporary basis to wealthy or well-born women who needed somewhere to stay for a while, as a sort of guest-house arrangement.<sup>18</sup> Monastic authorities tended to disapprove of such visitors because they disrupted the daily routine of the convent and exposed the nuns to worldly temptations such as fine clothes and rich food and material possessions. The convents, however, usually encouraged such visitors because they needed the money.

Convent life was strictly organized and quite hard in terms of daily routine. Convents were usually self-supporting and the nuns had to run a farm and look after estates to produce the food and income essential to their survival. The Cistercian foundations were particularly rigorous because it was part of the religious philosophy of the order that monks and nuns should be primarily engaged in agricultural production in remote areas well away from other habitation.

This was one reason why the Cistercian order was particularly hostile to the idea of women members during the twelfth century,

<sup>17</sup>See Eileen Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275–1535* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 4–5, and eadem, *Medieval Women* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 89. Other useful accounts of medieval convent life can be found in L. Eckenstein, *Women under Monasticism* (repr. New York, 1963); *Medieval Religious Women*, edited by Nichols and Shank; and Margaret Wade Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life* (London, 1986). <sup>18</sup>Glanmor Williams describes how nunneries often fulfilled the function of boarding schools for well-born young women: *Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation*, p. 394. See also Power, *Medieval Women*, p. 91.

because it was felt that the weaker sex could not uphold the severe way of life imposed upon members of the order.<sup>19</sup> However, during the thirteenth century the number of unofficial Cistercian convents—that is, convents following the principles of the Cistercian order but not officially recognized by the administration—multiplied enormously until, in Germany and the Low Countries, they actually outnumbered the men's abbeys. So the Cistercian administration was reluctantly forced to acknowledge the convents, although they were persistently excluded from any of the decision-making processes of the male-dominated hierarchy.

Throughout the thirteenth century and into the fourteenth the Cistercian order experienced great difficulty in imposing its authority on the convents. Most of the convents were run by aristocratic women accustomed to managing large establishments and unwilling to be told what to do by male authorities; there are cases of visiting abbots being refused admittance at certain convents, where the doors would be firmly barred against them.<sup>20</sup>

Because of a general erosion of monastic standards during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there were constant demands for the stricter containment of nuns and abbesses, many of whom took to wearing their own clothes and jewellery, keeping pet animals, and going beyond the convent walls, just like Chaucer's Prioress. The Cistercians were among the stricter orders but even they were unable to stop standards slipping, particularly since a proportion of the women had not wanted to be nuns in the first place and greatly resented the restrictions imposed on them.

In 1284 Archbishop Peckham visited a number of convents in England and Wales, including the Benedictine nunnery at Usk, which he found in a parlous state, both financially and spiritually. His remedy was to appoint 'two provident and discreet nuns' to handle the money, and to issue an injunction which begins:

For the purpose of obtaining a surer witness to chastity, we ordain that nuns shall not leave the precincts of the monastery save for necessary business which cannot be performed by any other persons. Hence we condemn forever by these present (letters) those sojourns which were wont to be made in the houses of friends for the sake of pleasure and of escaping from discipline.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup>On the hostility of the Cistercian order to women, see J. A. Nichols, 'Medieval Cistercian Nunneries and English Bishops', in *Medieval Religious Women*, pp. 237–49; Sally Thomson, 'The Problem of the Cistercian Nuns in the 12th and Early 13th Centuries', in *Medieval Women*, edited by Derek Baker (Oxford, 1978), pp. 227–52; and R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London, 1970), pp. 315–18. <sup>20</sup>C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism* (London, 1984), p. 185. <sup>21</sup>Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 223 and 348.

Against this background of nobility and restriction, the Welsh poems to nuns seem slightly more explicable. They are, in fact, merely a variant form of the kind of secular love poems addressed to women of noble birth by the *cywyddwyr*, with the primary function of eulogy. At a time when chastity was strictly imposed on all aristocratic women, there seems little difference between praising a nun's beauty and inviting her into the woodland, and doing the same thing to any other well-born girl, as Dafydd ap Gwilym does in 'Penwisg Merch' (GDG 44), where he describes the girl's forehead beneath her headdress, or in 'I Wahodd Dyddgu' (GDG 119), where he invites Dyddgu to a woodland tryst. The poems to nuns function in much the same way as other love poems, that is, primarily as praise poems to noble women who represent the values of *uchelwyr* society, women whose beauty and accomplishments serve to enhance the prestige of the men who own them.

The fact that the nuns in Wales belonged mostly to the Cistercian order is also significant. J. E. Lloyd has described how Welsh interest in monastic life was greatly revived with the arrival of the Cistercian movement in the twelfth century, and this was indeed an important change in the religious life of Wales.<sup>22</sup> After the comparatively dissolute Benedictines, the Cistercians appeared advantageously Spartan and far more in keeping with the simple and non-materialistic life attributed to the earliest Celtic monks.

But there was another reason why the Cistercian order became so firmly entrenched in Wales, and that was political rather than spiritual. Unlike the Benedictines, who were closely allied to the Normans, the Cistercians came from Champagne and were quite independent of the powerful barons who had taken over so much land in south Wales and the Marches. Benedictine monasteries were usually built close to a baronial castle, from which they received gifts of money and food and reciprocal hospitality. The Cistercians, however, were not interested in baronial support; they wanted to live away from society, not within it, and to be as independent as possible. When the Cistercian order was taken up and patronized by the Lord Rhys, prince of Deheubarth, in the middle of the twelfth century, it was an overt recognition of Welsh support for the order. The Cistercian house at Strata Florida, originally under the patronage of Robert fitz Stephen, a Norman lord of Ceredigion, passed into the control of the Lord Rhys in 1165 and so became the foremost abbey of Welsh Wales. Its abbots and most of the monks were Welsh rather than English or Norman, and it provided a sanctuary and burial ground for those Welsh princes who were not allied to the Anglo-Normans.

<sup>22</sup>*History of Wales*, II, 593–604. See also David H. Williams, *The Welsh Cistercians* (Tenby, 1984), especially the chapter 'Involvement in Wales (1200–1277)', pp. 32–42.

This perception of the Cistercian order as a specifically Welsh foundation must have persisted into the fourteenth century. It was particularly appropriate, then, that poems composed in Welsh for the native nobility, the *uchelwyr*, should include praise poems to Cistercian nuns, most if not all of whom would have come from the ranks of the *uchelwyr* and represented an important part of the native Welsh culture. These nuns were Welsh rather than English, and praise of them would imply affirmation of *uchelwyr* society in general, which was the main function of *cywyddwyr* poetry. It is more than likely that many of the poems to nuns, both the formal eulogies and the love poems, were addressed to specific individuals known to the audience, corresponding to the praise poems addressed to Cistercian abbots. Of course, whereas the abbots were praised according to the traditional male values of the *uchelwyr*—nobility, generosity, and so on—the nuns were praised according to *uchelwyr* standards of female virtue, that is, beauty, purity, and total passivity.

But there is undoubtedly an extra dimension to the love poems to nuns. The main source of humour or wit or tension in each poem is that the woman is not just an unattainable noblewoman but is actually a nun. It seems obvious that the kind of audience most likely to appreciate the humour of such poems, or to be stirred by the dilemma of this particular kind of unrequited love, would be an audience of clerics and monks. Saunders Lewis has already suggested that the Dafydd ap Gwilym poem 'Cyrchu Lleian' was sung at the monastery of Strata Marcella, where the story of the unfortunate Enoch who ran off with a nun would still be remembered, adding to the appreciation of the joke.<sup>23</sup> It seems probable that all these poems to nuns were composed for a similar audience, members of religious communities, for whom nuns would be of particular interest. It is very likely, however, that the less ribald poems were also recited to non-clerical audiences, especially families who may have sent female members to one of the convents and who would be flattered by a praise poem to a nun.

If the love poems to nuns had a definite social and political function—to support the position of the *uchelwyr* as the native Welsh aristocracy—and a specific audience, it remains to consider the question of why so few of these poems exist, out of the total corpus of *cywyddwyr* poetry. There is evidence of a fairly flourishing tradition of what Jeanroy called 'chansons de nonnes',<sup>24</sup> nuns' songs, in French, German, and Latin popular song of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and yet almost nothing comparable exists in either English or Welsh. The Continental tradition seems to be a variant

<sup>23</sup>*LIC*, 2 (1952–53), 205–6. <sup>24</sup>*Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au moyen âge* (Paris, 1925), pp. 189–92.

of the 'woman's lament' type of song, since nearly all the poems are spoken directly or indirectly by a woman lamenting her fate at being locked up as a nun.

Eileen Power gives some examples of popular songs about nuns in her *Medieval English Nunneries*, and they clearly form part of the mainstream vernacular tradition in their tone and style. A fourteenth-century German verse, for example, has a young nun saying: 'God send to him a lean twelve months who against my will put on me this black mantle and white cassock. And if I must become a nun, let me find a young lad, and if he is willing to cure my pain, I will assuage his'.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, a thirteenth-century French song describes a nun's grief at being incarcerated. She begins: 'May Jesus curse the one who made me a nun. I hate to say vespers and compline. I would love much more to lead a good life where I could be carefree and loving'. Then there is the refrain, 'I feel the tender pains beneath my breast; the curse of God on the one who made me a nun', and then the song goes on to describe the nun's plan to escape by sending for her lover to come and steal her away.<sup>26</sup> Other kinds of vernacular songs to nuns are in the form of dialogues between mothers and daughters—the mother insisting on sending her daughter to a convent and the daughter strenuously resisting—or dialogues between clerks and nuns; and there is also a thriving tradition of ribald verse concerning pregnant abbesses and fallen nuns, often containing a fairly forcible moral warning at the end. The vernacular tradition, then, expresses two opposing views about nuns: the secular view which deplores the incarceration of women, and the clerical view which warns women of the dangers of sexual activity.

Latin songs of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries imitated the vernacular tradition of nuns' songs as well as other types of love song and lament. This kind of popular song in Latin did not survive in the same quantity as the more formal school poetry and religious verse, but there is at least one example of a twelfth-century nun's lament in Latin, beginning 'Plangit nonna fletibus' ('the nun weeps with tears').<sup>27</sup> There were other more pedantic and moralizing poems to nuns in Latin, including one which warns nuns not to waste their time reading Ovid, which is not one of their 'set texts' in the convent<sup>28</sup>—an interesting reference in view of the mention of *llyfr Ofydd*, 'the book of Ovid', in some versions of the Welsh poem 'Caru dyn lygeitu lwyd' (see OBWV 60), where the poet is giving the opposite injunction, to remember Ovid's words. There are also Latin poems in praise of nuns, and dialogues between clerks and

<sup>25</sup>Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 505. <sup>26</sup>*ibid.*, p. 506. <sup>27</sup>P. S. Allen, *Medieval Latin Lyrics* (Chicago, 1931), p. 74. <sup>28</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 75–76.

nuns which are similar to the pastourelle type of verse, where the clerk attempts to make an assignation with a nun but is sternly refused.

In general, then, a nun's life is regarded very negatively in the popular vernacular verse of the Continent, especially compared to the Latin prose tradition disseminated by the Church, which exalted the ideal of virginity, both spiritual and physical, and instructed nuns on how to keep their vows and on the importance of their role as brides of Christ.

Eileen Power suggested that the negative attitude of popular song reflected the contempt of the common people for the follies of the aristocracy, who incarcerated their superfluous women instead of making good use of them. She argued that ordinary people had little sympathy for a way of life which excluded their own women because it was reserved for the noble and the wealthy, and which affirmed the futility of the leisured classes, for whom convent life was the only alternative to marriage.<sup>29</sup>

While there is some truth in this view, it also seems clear that the nuns' laments expressed a genuine antagonism towards the close claustration of women, and it is this, rather than convent life in general, which is the real focus for complaint. The Church did not encourage the forced incarceration of women, preferring they should choose it for themselves, and many did, for religious reasons and as a means of acquiring some control over their lives and their financial affairs. The nuns' laments may to some extent be a reaction against attempts by the Church to impose stricter controls on nuns. At the same time, however, many of the laments express a definite dislike of the life of a nun, and in some of the poems women are advised to marry rather than enter a convent.<sup>30</sup>

This message represents a secular contradiction of the Church's view of women. For the Church, virginity ranked highest as the ideal state for women, followed by widowhood, with marriage as a poor third, the only resort for poor souls who could not control their lustful urges.<sup>31</sup> Marriage was made to seem unattractive in order to reassure nuns and other chaste women that they had made the right choice.

<sup>29</sup>Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 503–4. <sup>30</sup>For an example of such a poem, see Jeanroy, *Origines de la poésie lyrique*, p. 190. It is interesting that in the *cywydd* 'Caru dyn lygeitu lwyd' some of the seventeenth-century manuscripts give line 22 as 'a gwerdd wisg, gwra oedd well' ('and a green gown, it were better to marry'), advocating marriage as the preferable alternative to convent life. <sup>31</sup>On the genre of 'virginity literature' and the superiority of virginity, see Lucas, *Women in the Middle Ages*, pp. 19–29. For some examples of Middle English songs in praise of the 'treasure' of virginity, see R. L. Greene, *The Early English Carols* (Oxford, 1977), nos 397 and 398.

But from the point of view of secular society, especially the power-holding classes, women were needed to generate heirs, and chastity was a threat to that function.<sup>32</sup> There were powerful social and political reasons why convent life should not be presented as an attractive alternative to marriage. The message of the secular poets, composing largely for the wealthy and ruling classes, was therefore at odds with that of the Church: women should marry and not remain celibate. As an incentive to part with their virginity, against the stern advice of the Church, women were offered the bait of courtly love. Romantic love tended to be celebrated in literature as an ideal of freedom in direct opposition to types of imprisonment, whether by marriage or in a convent. In fact, this ideal of individual freedom in love was largely an illusion, fostered by the literary construct of courtly love in order to conceal the economic necessity of noble marriage alliances, which themselves necessitated the compliance or coercion of women.

Like all types of woman's lament, including the *chansons de la mal mariée*, the nuns' songs overtly give voice to women's lack of choices while under parental and patriarchal control, but implicitly they are expressing secular patriarchal concerns about women who are sexually active, as wives or lovers. The Church had an unambiguous line—ideally women should not be sexually active at all—but the secular world needed women to bear children, preferably legitimated by the institution of marriage. Even the *chansons de la mal mariée* do not advocate celibacy instead of marriage; they in fact suggest that marriage is the best option for women as long as romantic love is involved. What the women are lamenting in the women's lament is the enforced imprisonment of their sexual selves within a convent or an unhappy marriage, even while the poets are encouraging them, through the mechanism of courtly love, to be sexually active.

So there was always an implicit tension between the teaching of the Church and the actual needs of society, and this tension finds an expression in love poems to nuns and other virginal women, where the poet tries to entice his beloved into the woodland, or fantasizes about idyllic trysts, or suggests in various other ways the notion that women should become sexually active rather than remain chaste.

The ambivalences implicit in such a message—since Church and

<sup>32</sup>Eleanor Searle makes the same point about English women immediately after the Norman Conquest, saying that women were sought as marriage partners by the Norman knightly class as a way of establishing themselves in England, to the point where women in nunneries who had not taken vows were sent home 'because they were wanted at home as peace-weavers and channels of inheritance' ('Women and the Legitimation of Succession at the Norman Conquest', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies*, 3 (1980), 165).

society tended to deny women's sexuality, or to punish it, as in the popular songs—are revealed through the contradictions present in most secular love songs: the girl is pure and yet consents to woodland trysts; the woodland is an escape from the trappings of courtly society and yet the trappings are reproduced there in the tree-house mansion and the birdsong; God approves of these trysts even though they may be adulterous or involve a nun or may be inappropriate in some other way. So the poets, like society in general, are saying one thing—come and enjoy free love in the woodland and forget the nunnery—while endorsing another, that women should be chaste and asexual except for producing children. Inevitably, no solutions are offered as to how women are to make the transition from Chaucer's Emelye, the courtly love object of *The Knight's Tale*, to Dorigen, the noble wife of *The Franklin's Tale*, without ending up like the Wife of Bath.

This ambivalence about women's behaviour is expressed even more strikingly through the language of the nuns' poems in Welsh because it is here that the tension is at its most explicit and irreconcilable. So in the Dafydd ap Gwilym poem the nuns are 'convent choir-girls' but are also beautiful with exposed foreheads, symbolic of sexual availability. They are also 'godsisters to Morfudd', almost a contradiction in terms, since one implies a spiritual bond and the other represents sexual experience.

In 'Caru dyn lygeitu lwyd', the poet explicitly contrasts convent life and love in the woodland and says that God will grant the nun a pardon, that is, release her from her vows, which is a vain hope. 'Dal neithiwy'r' maintains a constant tension between the beauty of the girl's face and the black cloth around it, while in 'Y ferch o'r fynachlog faen' there is a balance between images suggesting the nun's purity and those suggesting her sexuality. Finally, 'Y lleian ddoeth' ends with the totally unrealistic desire of the poet to have the girl *and* heaven for his soul, two options which in this case are mutually exclusive. In all the poems, there is a degree of contrast between the colours of black and white, symbolic of the two aspects of the nuns, chaste and therefore potentially fallen. Tensions and oppositions of language are present throughout the whole corpus of *cywyddwyr* love song, and they are symptomatic of a deep ambivalence towards the women who are the objects of the poems. Their virginity is highly prized by the Church but is also highly prized by noble secular society, which needs to produce healthy heirs. As a result, their vows are not taken seriously by secular poets and they are wooed with offers of romantic love into abandoning their virginity, abandoning what amounts to a separatist position, and serving the patriarchy instead.

The whole genre of popular nuns' song in Europe, with its

women's voices, laments, dialogues, desires to escape, and moralizing overtones, is not reflected at all in the surviving Welsh poems. The Welsh poems are spoken entirely by male subjects—that is, the 'I' of the poem—and are addressed primarily to male audiences; the female figures are so nebulous and passive as to be virtually non-existent except as extensions of the male ego, a female ideal existing only to be possessed by a man. The subject-position of the Welsh poems, the position from which the reader or listener must receive the message of the poem, is specifically male, whereas the subject-position, and hence the implied readership, of the Continental nuns' songs is largely female.

The Welsh poems, then, do not belong to the same kind of popular tradition as the Continental examples. Medieval Welsh verse is dominated by *uchelwyr* poetry, and the nun poems belong within this tradition of praise poetry and love song composed by educated men for noble and clerical audiences. The Continental nuns' songs, on the other hand, are part of a wider literary tradition of moralizing and didactic lessons directed specifically at women as a means of controlling their behaviour, in particular their sexuality.

The fact that so few Welsh poems to nuns survive in the dominant *cywyddwyr* tradition suggests that not many were composed in this style in the first place. This was probably due to a general lack of demand by *uchelwyr* audiences. With only four nunneries in Wales, possibly only three containing Welsh-speaking nuns if we exclude Usk, not many families would be directly connected with nuns, and poets would only eulogize nuns who were related to paying patrons.

Those audiences who would have appreciated nuns' songs as something other than formal eulogy, namely monastic and clerical audiences, were probably treated to the more irreverent and ribald kind which tended not to survive. It is more than likely, in fact, that Dafydd ap Gwilym's poem about the nuns at Llanllugan represents the mere tip of a veritable iceberg of nuns' songs composed mainly by the lower grades of poets and not considered suitable for wider circulation or preservation. I am suggesting, then, a kind of two-tier system of nuns' song in Wales, corresponding to the different levels of secular love song, comprising *cywyddau* composed by court bards as part of the dominant tradition of eulogy, and an informal verse composed by lower grades of bards or at a consciously lower level of tone and technique, as part of a comic and satirical literature intended for clerical audiences. This type of ribald verse certainly has parallels in both Continental and English vernacular poetry, but nowhere in the Welsh poetry do we find the type of moralizing and minatory verse directed specifically at women which is so characteristic of Continental literature. Again, this presumably reflects the small numbers of women who became nuns in Wales; but it also

reflects the fact that the intended audiences of medieval Welsh love song were men rather than women.

In the absence of a well-established native courtly tradition, popular verse in Middle English was able to survive, in some measure, alongside the French courtly tradition, whereas popular Welsh verse was almost entirely extinguished by the dominant courtly tradition. The Middle English lyrics and carols include a number of moralistic 'women's laments', which implicitly warn women against the dangers of losing their virginity and becoming sexually active, and there are also examples of ribald songs presumably addressed to clerical audiences.<sup>33</sup> Such poems suggest the kind of oral verse which is likely to have circulated in Wales without being preserved.

In England as in Wales, however, there is no evidence for a tradition of nuns' song comparable to that of the Continent. The Middle Welsh poems to nuns belong to the native tradition of eulogy, not to the Continental tradition of the woman's lament, while the Middle English love songs and laments do not specifically refer to nuns. This suggests that whatever Continental influences found their way to Wales came through the medium of English rather than French: the kind of ribald verse on the topic of lost virginity which may have entertained clerical audiences in Wales was likely to have come from the Middle English tradition of women's song rather than from the Continental tradition of nuns' laments.

The few nuns' songs which survive in Welsh draw attention to the fact that the whole genre of the woman's lament, of which nuns' songs form such a significant part in Continental literature, is entirely absent from the dominant literary tradition of medieval Wales. Women are simply not given a voice in *uchelwyr* society, whether as nuns or wives or mothers or lovers. They appear in all these roles as defined for them by male poets and writers, but they are never allowed to speak for themselves. Their silence surely speaks volumes about the control of women's voices and women's behaviour in medieval Welsh society.

#### APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIVE TEXTS

1. DADLITIA'R DIWYD LATAI  
(based on NLW MS Peniarth 49, and Cardiff, MS Hafod 26. See GDG 113)

<sup>33</sup>See, for example, *Early English Carols*, nos 453 and 457. On the latter poem, Greene comments: 'No secular carol could more plainly be of clerical origin than this one' (p. 494).

- Dadlitia'r diwyd latai,  
Hwnt o'r mars dwg hynt i'r Mai.  
Gedaist, ciliaist—myn Celi,  
4 Arnaf y mae d'eisiau di.  
Dof holion, difai helynt,  
Da fuost lle gwyddost gynt,  
Peraist im fun ar ungair:  
8 Pâr im weled merched Mair.
- Dewis lun, dos i Lan falch  
Llugan lle mae rhai lliwgalch;  
Cais yn y llan ac annerch  
12 Y sieler mawr, selwr merch.  
Dywaid, glaim diwyd y glêr,  
Hon yw'r salm, hyn i'r sieler  
A chwyn maint yw'r achwyn mau  
16 A chais im fynachesau.  
Saint o bob lle a'm gwaheirdd  
Santesau hundeiâu heirdd,  
Gwyn eiry, arial gwawn oror,  
20 Gwenoliaid, cwfeiniaid côr,  
Chwiorydd bedydd bob un  
I Forfudd, araf eurfun.
- O caf innau rhag gofal  
24 O'r ffreutur dyn eglur dâl,  
Oni ddaw er cludaw ðlod,  
Hoywne eiry, honno erod—  
Da ddodrefn yw dy ddeudroed—  
28 Dwg o'r côr ddyndeg i'r coed,  
Câr trigain cariad rhagor:  
Cais y glochyddes o'r côr—  
Cais frad ar y Abades—  
32 Cyn lleuad haf, ceinlliw tes,  
Un a'i medr, einym adail,  
Â'r lliain du, i'r llwyn dail.

Be reconciled, trusty love-messenger: yonder from the march, take a journey in May. You left, you flew off—by Heaven, I need you! Obedient pleas and a faultless pursuit, you were good once in a place you know, you arranged a girl for me with a single word: arrange for me to see the girls of Mary.

One of choice appearance, go to proud Llanllugan where there are some lime-coloured ones; seek in the church and greet the great jailer, the girl's minder. Say this—unfailing claim of the *clêr*, this is our psalm—to the jailer and bemoan the extent of my complaint and request some nuns for me. Saints from everywhere forbid me the beautiful bedrooms of girl-saints, snow white, like gossamer of the March, swallows, convent choir-girls, god-sisters every one to Morfudd, gentle golden girl.

If I get from custody a girl, her forehead revealed, from the refectory, if that one, snow's beauty, will not come for you in exchange for heaping

praise—your feet are fine accoutrements—bring a fair girl from the choir-stall to the wood, a friend of sixty more sweethearts: fetch the chantress from the choir—try a trick on the Abbess—before the summer moon, fair colour of sunshine, one who is skilful, in black linen—a bower will be ours—to the leafy grove.

2. CARU DYN LYGEITU LWYD  
(based on Bangor, MS Gwynedd Davies 2. See DGG 3, OBWV 60, BU 30)
- Caru dyn lygeitu lwyd  
A'm gwnâi i yn ddifwyd.  
Os myfi a'th gân i arall,  
4 Myn Duw gwyn, mi nid wy' gall.  
Dy garu yn faith a wneuthum,  
Dy gasau nid agos im';  
Os dy golli, gwae fi Fair,  
8 Ni bu golled heb gellwair.
- Ai gwir, y ferch a garaf,  
Na fynny fedw hoywdw haf  
Ac na thewy'n y tŷ tau,  
12 Wythliw sêr, â'th laswyrâu?  
Crefyddes o santes wyd,  
Caredig i'r côr ydwyd;  
Er Duw, paid â'r bara a'r dŵr  
16 A bwrw ar gasau'r berwr.  
Er Mair, paid â'r paderau main  
A chrefydd mynaich eryfain.  
Na fydd lân yn y gwanwyn,  
20 Gwaeth yw lleianaeth na llwyn,  
Gwarant Morwyn, â mantell  
A gwerdd wisg, a urddai well.
- Dyred i'r fedw gadeiriog,  
24 I grefydd y gwŷdd a'r gog—  
Ac yno y'm gogenir—  
I ennill Nef yn y llwyn ir.  
Minnau a gawn yn y gwinwydd  
28 Yn neutu'r allt enaid rhydd.  
Duw a fyn, difai annerch,  
A saint roi pardwn i serch.

Loving a pale dark-eyed girl has made me unable to eat. If it is I who loves you on behalf of another, by holy God, I am not sane! I have loved you for a long time, I'm not close to hating you; if I lose you, woe to me Mary, there was never a loss without derision.

Is it true, girl whom I love, that you do not want summer birches of lively growth and that you will not desist, in that house of yours, eight colours of the stars, from counting your beads? A saint of a nun are you, a beloved

of the choir are you; for God's sake give up the bread and water and strive to hate cress. For Mary's sake, dispense with stone beads and the religion of carousing monks. Do not be chaste in the spring-time, a nun's life is worse than the grove: the Virgin's guarantee, with mantle and green gown, would confer greater honour.

Come to the spreading birch trees, to the religion of the trees and the cuckoo—and I will be slandered there—to win Heaven in the fresh grove. Among the vines on both sides of the hill, I would have my soul shriven. God and the saints will want, perfect greeting, to give a pardon to love.

3. DAL NEITHIWYR DELWI A WNEUTHUM  
(based on Cardiff, MS Hafod 26. See DGG 25, OBVV 59, BU 36)

- Dal neithiwyr, delwi a wneuthum,  
Drem o bell, yn drwm y bûm,  
Yn nhâl—och na thariai'n hwy!—  
4 Ac yn wyneb Gwenonwy.  
Anfodlon fûm, gorfûm ged,  
I'm golwg am ei gweled,  
Dal eurddrych dwyael eurddrem,  
8 Deuwell oedd bedd, diell em.  
  
Daroedd, ni bu wisgoedd waeth,  
I daeliwr o hudoliaeth,  
Deuliw Nef, ni dyly neb,  
12 Duo hon yn ei hwyneb;  
A'i thâl, mi a ddyfalwn—  
Och, Dduw Tad, na chuddut hwn!—  
Megis o liw, megais lid,  
16 Mŷr eiry neu faen mererid.  
  
Mwyn y cyfodes Iesu  
Am aur dâl y mwrrai du;  
Dwyael geimion, delw gymwys,  
20 Du rwym loer am y drem lwys;  
Diliau yw ei haeliau hi,  
Dail sabl fal dwyael Sibli,  
Mor aelfain mwyar elfydd:  
24 Am arlais hon, morlo sydd,  
Muchudd, deurudd a'i dirwyn,  
Main y troed ym môn y trwyn,  
Mwyalchod teg amylich ton,  
28 Mentyll didywyll duon.  
  
Dwy ffynnon wirion warae,  
Dwyn am ei meindrwyn y mae,  
Du ddrem, fawrlem fwyarliw,  
32 Drychau rhwng ffroenau a ffrîw;  
Amrant du ar femrwn teg  
Fal gwennol ar fol gwaneg.  
Dau afal aur difai lun,

- 36 Dwy nobyl aur wyneblun,  
Diliau rhos, dail o aur rhudd,  
A dorred yn ei deurudd;  
Grynnau cŵyr mewn grannau calch,  
40 Grawn gwingoed ar groen gwyngalch,  
Ceirios addfed, cwrs addfwyn,  
Cwrel traeth, crafal trwyn,  
Dwy sêl o liw grawn celyn,  
44 Dagrau gwaed ar deg eiry gwyn,  
Dail ffion grynon eu gwraidd,  
Dwy gyfoenen deg fwynaid.  
  
Dyfelais bryd fy myd main  
48 A'i deurudd fal y dwyrain.  
Dwys oedd ei dwyweus heddiw  
Ar enau llen o'r un lliw,  
Yn gweini claer ddidaer ddadl,  
52 O'i ffroenau a'i phêr anadl;  
Ac aelgaeth, liw ffrwd gweilgi,  
A gyrraidd hyd ei grudd hi,  
Hoyw ar fwnwgl hir feinwyn:  
56 Golud deg fydd gweled hyn.  
  
Dug fy nau lygad o ŵyll,  
Do, gennyf, fal dwy gannwyll.  
Gwyliais wyneb, glwys waneg,  
60 A phen dyn, rhyw ffynnon deg:  
Ni weles neb wyneb iach,  
Drud fydd deigr, droedfedd degach.

Last night, at a distance—I stood stock still—I caught sight (I was wretched) of the brow and face of Gwenonwy—alas that she would not stay longer! I was dissatisfied with my eyes for seeing her, [although] I won a favour, catching a golden reflection of the two brows of she of the golden glance, a faultless gem—twice better were a grave!

A tailor has succeeded by witchcraft (never were there worse garments)—two colours of Heaven, no one ought to—in blackening the girl round her face; and her forehead, I would compare it—alas, God the Father, that you would not hide it!—as if its colour (I nurtured passion) were that of oceans of snow or of a precious stone.

Gently did Jesus raise around a golden forehead the dark purple cloth; two curved brows, a fitting image, a black crescent band for the comely face; her brows are honeycombs of sable leaves, like the two brows of a Sibyl, eyebrows so slender, like blackberries; around her temple, there is sea-coal [or] jet, it winds around the two cheeks, narrowly is the base of her nose curved round. Blackbirds in the fair breaches of a wave, black yet glistening mantles.

There are two fountains, innocent their play, leading to her slender nose, dark eyes, large and sharp, blackberry-coloured, mirrors between nose and forehead; a black eyelid on fine parchment like a swallow in the hollow of

a wave. Two golden apples of spotless form, two gold nobles shaped for a face, rose petals, leaves of red gold, were imprinted in her two cheeks; ridges of wax in cheeks like chalk, fruit of vine-trees on lime-white skin, ripe cherries, a fine course, coral from a strand, rowan-berries for a nose, two seals the colour of holly berries, drops of blood on fine white snow, fox-gloves, rounded their roots, two rose-hips fine and tender.

I have described the beauty of my slender darling, with her two cheeks like the east. Pensive were her lips today, on a mouth [like] a sheet of the same colour, serving up clear tender conversation, and her sweet breath from her nostrils; and a chin, colour of ocean flood, which reaches to her cheek, lively on a slim white neck: to see it would be a fine enrichment.

She stole from me my two eyes through enchantment, yes, like two candles. I watched a girl's face, lovely wave, and head, like some fair fountain: no one saw a pure face—tears will be costly—fairer by a foot.

4. Y FERCH O'R FYNACHLOG FAEN  
(based on NLW MS Peniarth 49)

- Y ferch o'r fynachlog faen,  
Ddifai orchwyl ddiweirchwaen,  
Ai gwir bod pobl a gwerin,  
4 A gair meth ar gwr eu min,  
Yn haeru ym, yn nhor allt,  
Dy gael, ddyn ruddael rwyddwallt?
- Od ydyn' hwy'n dywedyd  
8 Arnom hyn, er na wnaem hud,  
Er bod sôn drygddynion draw,  
Herod wyf i'th ddiheuraw,  
Mi a roddaf yma rwyddair,  
12 Mawr llw grym, a'r llaw ar grair,  
Na'th gefais, mewn iaith gyfun,  
Ac na'th geisiais, lednais lun.  
Ac och ym, rhag mor iach wyd,  
16 O gwn, pam y'n goganwyd!  
Ni'n gweled yn un gwely,  
F'enaïd deg, nac o fewn tŷ,  
Na than frig, wyrennig wedd,  
20 Coed irion yn cydorwedd.  
Ni wnawn oed, neu fynudiaw  
Arnad â llygad na llaw  
(Moliant oedd i'th wallt melyn)—  
24 Ym glwys Duw, ni'm gweles dyn!  
Dibech, diodech ydym:  
Dieithr, ferch, fal d'ewythr fûm.  
Ni ddanfonaist, ddyn feinael,  
28 Latai ym, ddyn lwyty ael;  
Ni bu ymddiddan o'r byd  
Na rhwym, hoywferch, rhôm hefyd;  
Ni chaem serch, ni chemais i

- 32 Yn chwimwth un braich imi  
Amdanad, grair ddiwair ddoeth,  
Hoff Eigr feingorff hoywgoeth.
- Ni 'wyllysiais i geisiaw  
36 Dy gorff main, dro elain, draw.  
Pa wedd, eithr rhyfeddod,  
Y'th gawn, loer eglurwawn glod,  
Heb fod un, ddyun ddeall,  
40 Gerllaw i garu y llall?  
Ni bu, garu gywiroed,  
Fy min wrth eich min ermoed,  
Na'th anadl, gwan pêr annerch,  
44 Na'th wyneb wrth f'wyneb, ferch.
- Hyn i gyd, cymain' un gair,  
A dyngaf myn y Dengair,  
Myn Arglwydd yr Arglwyddi  
48 (Cul yw'r ais na'm coelir i!):  
Ni ddodais, un weddusael,  
Fy mryd i gyd ar dy gael—  
Ni weddai'r hyn a wyddit—  
52 Ni chawn fod yn ordderch it.

The girl from the stone nunnery, blameless her occupation, innocent the event, is it true that people and folk, with a false word at the corner of their lips, are accusing me of having you in a hillside clearing, red-browed girl with flowing hair?

If they are saying this about us, though we would not make magic, despite the rumour of wicked people yonder, I will be a herald in acquitting you. I'll give here a free word, an oath of great authority, with my hand on a holy relic, that I did not win you, in consistent language, and that I did not seek you, modest form.

And woe to me, since you are so pure, truly, why we have been slandered! We haven't been seen lying together in the same bed, my fair soul, or within a house, or beneath the tips, in flourishing condition, of fresh trees. I would not make a tryst or solicit you with eye or hand (there was praise for your yellow hair), by the Holy God, the girl did not see me [do that]! We are innocent, not furtive: I've been as distant, girl, as your uncle. You did not send, slim-browed girl, a love-messenger to me, girl with grey-black brows; nor was there any conversation or bond at all between us, lively girl. We did not find love, I did not bend impulsively one arm of mine around you, wise faithful treasure, desirable Eigr, slim-bodied, lively and refined.

I did not intend to ask for your slender body, with a doe's movement, yonder. How, except for a marvel, could I win you, clear gossamer moon of praise, unless one was nearby, united in understanding, to love the other? Faithful tryst of loving, my lips were never against your lips, nor was your breath—faint sweet greeting—or your face against my face, girl.

All this, every single word, I swear by the Ten Commandments, by the Lord of Lords (thin is the frame because I am not believed): I did not set

my whole heart on getting you, fine-browed one—this would not conform with what you know—I was not permitted to be your lover.

5. Y LLEIAN DDOETH A'I LLUN 'N DDA  
(based on BL Add. MS 14997 (J. G. Evans's 'BM MS 24') )

- Y lleian ddoeth â'i llun 'n dda  
A lliw Non a llun Anna,  
Aeth y gair im o'th garu  
4 A gwir, ferch, yw'r gair a fu.  
O'th guriais i, o'th gariad  
Caru am garu a gad.  
Fy mun, on'd da fy 'mynedd  
8 Am dy gael, em deg o wedd?  
Och ym, on'd hwy no chwemis  
Am 'y mun—gwae im'—un mis?  
Fy swydd i yw gweddïaw:  
12 Ferch wen, pa ddiben a ddaw?  
Nid hawdd cael diben gennyd,  
Ni chair gan wen ben o'r byd!  
Gwna, f'annwyl, gwan wyf finnau,  
16 O gwnai ddim, gwna un o ddau:  
Ai fy mynnu, em annwyl,  
Ai rhoi nâg, fy rhaiin wyl,  
Ai canwn, rhag hir gyny,  
20 Yn iach, wen: anwyh wyf i.  
Gwedd ewyn, cyd gweddiwy',  
Gadu ar Dduw rannu'r wy';  
Ac yn niwedd fy ngweddi  
24 Yn ôl ni ddymunwn i  
Ar Dduw hael ond cael, pe caid,  
Fy mun a Nef i'm enaid.

Wise nun, with her fine form and Non's colour and Anna's shape, a word went abroad that I loved you, and the word which went, girl, is true.

If I pined for you, from your love there was had loving for loving. My girl, is it not commendable, my patience in waiting to have you, gem of fair form? Alas for me, is not a single month longer than six months—woe is me—because of my girl? My task is to pray: fair girl, what will be the outcome? It's not easy to get a resolution from you, no resolution at all is to be had from the fair one. My dear—I am weak—do, if you would do anything, do one of two things: either have me, dear gem, or give a refusal, my modest maiden, or else let us say goodbye, fair one, to save long anguish: I am wretched.

Image of foam, although I pray I leave it to God to dispense; and at the end of my prayers, finally, I would beseech merciful God only to get, if it can be had, my girl and Heaven for my soul.