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GENRES

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IN this paper I wish more to raise points for discussion than to list exhaustively all early genres and their representatives in the poetic corpus. Much work remains to be done. Some works in the more poorly-studied genres have only recently been edited, while others were done very long ago. The more obscure types are not usually classroom pieces, and do not attract the attention of general studies on the *hengerdd*. We are all aware of the different types present in the corpus, but often that knowledge is rather passive. It is very easy to forget less important works when making generalizations although they would sometimes invalidate or modify conclusions if borne in mind. It is hopeful, however, to turn to Old English scholarship for signs for the future. With all the major poems studied to death, scholars have increasingly turned to study the minor poems of the corpus, often with results significant for the much-studied major poems as well. Welsh has certainly not been over-quarried, not even as regards the most important works, but it may well be time to widen our interests before returning to vexed questions raised by the classics of *hengerdd*.

The genres represented in the *hengerdd* are surprisingly extensive, more so perhaps than for any other period until the twentieth century. This means that little evidence can be drawn from later periods for which more poetry survives, but in limited genres. Most genres of comparable European poetry are found, although few if any seem to have arisen from foreign influence. Native analogues generally explain expansion into new areas. For the purpose of study of relationships and authorship I would like to divide these genres into two groups.

The first is the main 'bardic' compositions, that is, works composed directly in their primary functions as defined by classical descriptions, Indo-European tradition, and surviving material elsewhere — particularly later periods in Wales. The accepted bardic genres are:

- I. Praise poetry, both to living patrons and to newly-dead ones in the formal court *marwnad*. This class of *hengerdd* is less well-represented in the surviving material compared to the next period of Welsh verse. Obviously this was the bards' most essential function. They could and did do other things, but praise poetry could not be dispensed with.
- II. Satire. This opposite side of the bardic coin is virtually unattested in *hengerdd*, although undoubtedly composed. We may have echoes in other types of poetry, such as the formal and public curse found in *Canu Heledd*:

As clywo a Duw a dyn,
As clywo ieueinc a hyn,
Meuyl barueu madeu Hedyn.¹

Some surviving satire, too, may not be by the highest bardic orders; cf. the two scurrilous verses in the Red Book of Hergest found at the end of *Canu Heledd*.² Fourteenth-century bardic grammars consign the three-line *englyn* to this sort of low-toned satire. The satire of the *Gogynfeirdd*, however, is not very elevated in tone either.

- III. Bardic flyting/contests. No bardic contest (*ymryson*) survives, but the existence of the genre in early poetry is again suggested by echoes in other sorts of material, such as *Buarth Beird* in the legendary poems of Taliesin (BT 7-8) in which the poet *par excellence* boasts of having silenced the other bards. Flyting is also implied in lines alluding to bardic standards, such as *ny dyly kelenic ny wyppo hyn* from *Etmic Dinbych*.³ The same poem alleges superiority: the poet laboured *yny uwyf tauawt ar veird prydein*. A similar idea is no doubt behind the medieval epithets of Taliesin and Aneirin, Taliesin Pen Beirdd and Aneirin Mechdeyrn Beirdd, and perhaps has implications for the poetic 'scores' in the Book of Taliesin and Book of Aneirin. The poems appear to have varying innate worth according to the status of the poets as much as the composition as the rubric to *Gwarchan Maelderw* suggests.⁴
- IV. Prophecy represents a continuation of the poet's mystical powers, and is well attested in the *hengerdd*. The convention of ascribing the predictions to a powerful figure of the past is often used, but the poet also feels confident to call on his own *awen*.

These four classes, with the exception of religious poetry in the manner of praise poetry, comprise those genres universally accepted as bardic in function and composition. The second group consists of poetry less directly linked to the bard's primary social function, and for each type authorship has been ascribed by some commentators to lesser bards, bardic pupils or even sub-bardic popular poets. Before moving on to these genres, therefore, it is helpful to note some accepted bardic activities not carried on in verse, but rather reflected in it. These are: story-telling,⁵ keeping of historical traditions, keeping of genealogies, and preservation of other lore such as triads. These activities are also frequently reflected in the more disputed genres of the second group, and can provide an important indication of authorship since some genres by their nature preclude the vocabulary and treatment of praise poetry. The main classes in this second group are:

- V. Religious poetry. Much of this is accepted as bardic because it is so similar to praise poetry with the patron replaced by God or his saints. This type of religious praise poetry is also well-represented in the works

of the *Gogynfeirdd*. Other types are closer to more disputed genres. Since this class is so large and varied it benefits from discussion under sub-sections.

A. Praise poetry to God and the saints. This is virtually the only type found in the *Gogynfeirdd* corpus. It is not as dominant in the *hengerdd*. Representatives are some seven of the religious poems in the Black Book of Carmarthen, part of *Kyssul Adaon* (the *Llyfr Coch Talgarth* version),⁶ the nine Juvenius *englynion*. The subjects range from address to praise, direct prayers, and pleas for reconciliation reminiscent of the secular bardic *dadolwch*.

B. Doctrinal/Learned poetry. Biblical and doctrinal knowledge could also be used in religious praise poetry, but in this class it is the major element of the poem, with elements such as praise or prayer minor. The best representatives of this class are found in the Book of Taliesin; poems such as *Marwnat y Vil Veib*, 'Armes Dydd Brawd', *Plaeu yr Eifft*. The only closely comparable poem in the *Gogynfeirdd* corpus is the poem concerning the fourteen signs before the day of judgment (RB col. 1388-9). Nevertheless this type of poetry is probably bardic. It is closely related to other poems in the Book of Taliesin which display arcane native, classical and biblical knowledge in order to exalt the poet and his role.⁷ This would seem to rule out amateur clerics as the composers, although this is far from certain. It is easy to imagine the *clas*, in so many ways run exactly like a secular court, sending postulants for bardic training so as to have the equivalent of a court poet,⁸ or trained bards following the examples of dark-age kings and retiring to a monastery.⁹ The knowledge shown here, however, is not really very deep, and it need not be assumed that all the authors of these poems were deeply involved with religion. The Book of Taliesin poems suggest that from an early period the poets took their status as a learned class seriously, and expanded the definition of learned from strictly native knowledge to Latin book learning, whether acquired directly or through clerical transmission.¹⁰

C. Practical/Instructional. Of all the types of religious poetry this group looks least like what would be expected of the bards. These poems consist of rather simplistic instructions on how to gain salvation: attend mass, give alms to the poor, beseech the saints, etc. Many of these are in *englyn* metres, and analogues with other genres in *englynion* suggest bardic origin despite the oddities of the class and lack of similar pieces in later bardic works. As suggested for group B, in this period of limited literacy there may have been more overlap between the activities of the learned classes than later when greater specialization could prevail. These poems appear to be just the sort of work for which a rise in literacy would eliminate the need. Their successors may possibly be found in translated foreign devotional works.

D. Dramatized. These are moving religious lyrics using a narrator persona, not to give authenticity to the information as in the instructional class, but to give lyric immediacy to religious experience. Broad hints of the narrator's story, like the use of a persona, indicate close links with the saga *englynion* with which these are sometimes classed. There are close analogues in the dramatized Old English religious lyrics such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*, but they are undoubtedly a native development from saga. Poems in this class are relatively rare, perhaps because of the more complex nature of their evolution. The chief examples are 'Claf Abercuawg' and 'Cyntefin Ceinaf Amser'.¹¹

VI. Gnostic poetry. This is one of the biggest and best-studied of classes in the second group, although many of the later poems are as yet unedited. The gnostic is a common genre in many literatures, and there are many excellent comparative studies of the nature and function of gnostic material.¹² It is an example of an important genre relatively neglected because it is not to modern taste, and often misinterpreted. Because gnostic observations are by their nature simple and obvious gnostic poetry is often perceived as the product of folk poets rather than court bards. While later gnostic poetry on metrical grounds does seem to be sub-bardic, the early works conform in metrical practice and have many links with accepted bardic genres. There are minor gnostic elements to be found in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*, although pure gnostic poetry was not written. The authorship of the gnostic poetry will be returned to below since it makes a good case in point for the authorship of many of these disputed genres.

VII. Saga poetry. These poems, primarily in the three-line *englyn* metres, are usually supposed to be the verse elements of a story told in prose and verse, although the prose in no case survives. The poems are clearly related to a narrative background, and have first-person narrators purported to be figures of story. The classic examples are edited in *Canu Llywarch Hen*, but many of the poems classified as *englynion chwedlonol* here and elsewhere belong to other genres. As shall be seen below the use of a figure of story as narrator does not guarantee that the poem belongs to this class since the device was borrowed by other genres. Unlike the gnostic poems, these poems have found an enthusiastic modern public, but this has not ensured critical acceptance of their bardic status. The assignment of authorship is mixed. Even Ifor Williams is inconsistent. In 'The Poems of Llywarch Hen' he pictures occasions for their recitation in terms taken from the legal description of the *bardd teulu*, and asserts they were learned in bardic schools.¹³ Nevertheless because of their supposed narrative function he denies they are the works of the highest class of bard, the *pencerdd*, stating of their authors: 'Nid penceirddiaid mohonynt, ond cyfarwyddiaid'.¹⁴ The validity of this argument is obviously tied up with the ongoing debate as to whether the *pencerdd* could function as a *cyfarwydd*, and if so was he

performing a function of lower status than composition of poetry. Opinion is now swinging towards story-telling being an activity of the highest bards at least for the early period,¹⁵ but this may be irrelevant for the *englynion chwedlonol* which have a very different type of tale than those of the medieval prose works associated with the name of the *cyfarwydd*. For further discussion of the role and authorship of the saga *englynion* see Jenny Rowland, 'The prose setting of the Early Welsh *Englynion Chwedlonol*', *Ériu* xxxvi (1985), 29–43. The best evidence for authorship of the saga *englynion* comes from study of their relationship to other genres, and will be returned to below.

Saga poetry not in the *englyn* metres is rare and not well-studied. Most poems about characters of story in the *awdlau* metres do not have a narrator persona or dialogues between two characters, and many of those which do would seem to be using the device for other purposes. An exception to this are the poems connected with the saga of the legendary Taliesin. But although the persona alludes to the narrative events of his legend, unlike other saga poems the narrator is a poet and to some extent serves as an alter-ego for the entire bardic order. They seem to preserve antiquarian lore as much as serve as entertainment.

VIII. Antiquarian poetry. This is the widest group and contains many of the poems hardest to classify. It is my personal ragbag class and would undoubtedly benefit from subdivision. Many of the poems are scarcely studied, or if studied, their function has barely been alluded to. I suspect a thorough examination of the purpose of the poetry classified here would have the greatest significance for the interpretation of other, better-known genres.

In the broadest sense I define antiquarian as any verse whose prime purpose is to preserve and/or to display knowledge. Some of it is clearly bardic; the information is that which appears in learned allusions in bardic praise poetry. Other types are less obviously connected with bardic activity; for instance, the doctrinal/learned poems discussed above with religious poetry could also be classed here (depending to some degree on what sort of social role we imagine them to have filled). There are many possible ways of presenting information, and no poem is purely informational. The manner in which the information is presented can make for a superficially different type of poem, as in the case of a dialogue between two saga-type figures to elucidate the career of one discussed below. The narrative interest is illusory. *Englynion y Beddau* is another example of a mixed genre poem which is primarily antiquarian. Even the information is varied between the listing of heroes and preservation of onomastic lore. This lore is enhanced by effective use of techniques from saga and praise poetry, so that in some verses we seem to have elegiac poetry for its own sake. The collection is further complicated by hints of a frame tale validating the lore by attributing it to the mystic knowledge of Taliesin.¹⁶ The boasting poems of

the legendary Taliesin also use his persona to lend weight to the arcane knowledge alluded to in them, but here as seen above there is even a stronger saga element. The seemingly straight lists of information in highly formulaic fashion, *Dinas Maon* and *Mi a uum lle llas*, may have a similar rudimentary saga background.¹⁷

The antiquarian genre, more speculatively, may help to explain the purpose of poems which seem to mimic bardic praise poetry. Since many are to heroes dead long before the date of composition or to legendary figures deliberate forgery must be suspected, casting some doubt on ascriptions to early poets which scholars have accepted as genuine. These quasi-bardic praise poems may be less forgeries than one of the ways in which the poets could present antiquarian material. Welsh poetry is non-narrative to a high degree. Accounts of events are rarely sustained for very long, never throughout a poem, and allusion to events is far more common than recounting. The poems containing biblical knowledge use it in much the same way as a praise poet uses the events of his patron's career: some narration, much allusion and generalizing. The Alexander poems in the Book of Taliesin make similar use of the story of Alexander. There would appear to be no question of an implicit ascription to Alexander's bard, making these excellent texts for establishing the differences between bardic poems to living patrons and antiquarian poems.¹⁸ Native lore may have found similar expression in bardic-type poems such as the group of 'false' *marwnadau* in the Book of Taliesin to legendary figures such as Cu Roí and Dylan, and historical figures such as Cunedda and Owain. Until the purpose of the compositions is established and their special features, if any, it is impossible to be completely sure of those praise poems commonly accepted as bardic and contemporary.¹⁹

It is also necessary to consider what purpose antiquarian poetry in general served although this is largely speculative. Like the triads we can assume that such verse was a means for the poets themselves to memorize useful data which could be used in other sorts of composition. Some of the examples, however, if correctly classed as antiquarian, appear to be unnecessarily elaborate for this role. Catalogue poems like *Englynion y Beddau* may have been made palatable in part to serve as a prompter of the poet's audience as well as himself. After recitation one could well imagine the poet being asked to display his knowledge further on one or two names or places which caught the patron's fancy. Antiquarian information in poetic form may have also helped to educate princes who to a lesser degree were expected to know the traditions of their people, and would show genuine interest in ancestors and their deeds. Figures such as Owain and Dylan were known from other sources, and therefore isolated facts and allusions concerning them could well hold the attention of a courtly audience. Because so much of the background is lost to us we tend to underestimate the charm of a bare allusion, whether to a battle fought last

month or one from the past known in legend. The audience could be relied upon to fill in the details from memory, and also to unite around a shared experience or knowledge.²⁰ Some of these poems such as the Alexander ones are fairly full of brief narration and allusions, and may function as a sort of quasi-narrative poem for a society which had no true narrative verse. The poem provided the framework of allusions for the audience to recall the story, and as such it would have been as entertaining as prose story-telling or the personified saga poem taken from its narrative context.

- IX. Rarities/Oddities. This last group is not a class in itself, but contains poems which might be the only survivors of larger classes — it is impossible to be sure. *Peis Dinogad* preserved in the *Gododdin* is an artistic nursery rhyme.²¹ It is quite likely that poets composed more than once to please younger nobles or their mothers in bardic rather than popular style, but the chances of survival would be infinitesimal. The riddle on the wind (BT 36-8) is the only example in Welsh, but riddles are a common genre in many early literatures. There are also stylistic links in the poem with the gnomic and boasting poems. 'Dadl y Corff a'r Enaid' is the only religious poem with a definite international model, although it is by no means a translation (the usual pattern of the debate is much changed). There may have been other attempts at paraphrase of devotional pieces or hymns.²²

Many poems fall between these classes, and certainly arguments could be made for other classes or sub-groups. The range of *hengerdd*, however, is clear. Common international genres which are missing are mainly those which would not be expected because they were not in the Celtic poetic tradition, and because even in later periods there was a strong resistance to adopting them from external sources. These would be such genres as narrative epic, verse drama, and personal lyrics. Other genres which are lacking seem to be so because they were sub-bardic or popular, either inherently by the subject matter or on the evidence of later periods. These are genres such as working songs, drinking songs, humorous songs, and dance ditties. They are not the sort of poetry one would expect to be preserved in bardic memory or on parchment. Bards might occasionally compose such pieces, but only by stooping to a popular style; their status could not be elevated by the application of bardic art.

One genre is not found which might be expected, love poetry. It is found in Europe at an early date and snatches remain in early Irish poetry. In Welsh the first examples are found in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*. The more courtly poems seem to have originated from the extension of

praise poetry to women patrons, while the earthy pieces may have a popular origin. Love poetry may be an example of a genre treated both by the bards and popular poets. It may have arisen as an interaction between the groups in the twelfth century, but the lack of early poems may also be an accident of survival.²³

A problem which arises from even the most cursory examination of the genres of *hengerdd* is the wide range of poetic material in this period with relatively little in the chief function of praise poetry as opposed to the nearly complete dominance of praise poetry in the next period. We can only speculate why, yet the question has important implications for the authenticity of early praise poetry and the authorship of those genres not fully accepted as bardic. Much has been lost from both periods, but the differences in distribution are so striking that it cannot be ascribed to the accidents of manuscript survival alone. Two reasons for the difference can be suggested: that for the early period one would expect certain types of poetry other than eulogy to be preserved, and that with the *Gogynfeirdd* there was a genuine shift in emphasis by the poets, a reaction to cultural change which led to greater specialization in praise poetry.

By material preserved I mean both poems committed to writing (as traces of Old Welsh orthography suggest existed) and those memorized by the bards themselves. Presumably both were available when the first Middle Welsh codices were made. Also it should be stressed that whether the poems were preserved by writing or oral tradition the very fact of their survival is a strong *a priori* argument for their bardic origin. I can see no means that a substantial body of sub-bardic poetry could find manuscript space — there were no ninth-century Cecil Sharpes collecting the airs of the peasants. The popular poetry of the high Middle Ages is virtually unrecorded, and there is no reason to suppose the situation in the Dark Ages was radically different.

Since lay literacy would have been extremely limited for this period we must ask ourselves what the church and the bards themselves would have been interested in preserving, both on vellum and in memory. The church is somewhat problematical. Judging from the evidence from early Ireland it is quite possible that there was no major difference in their outlook, that secular literature was both appreciated and sometimes written down. The clerical role in preservation could explain in part the predominance of a wider range of religious poetry than in later periods. As for the bards the clue may lie with the relatively limited appeal of praise poetry. Despite the fact that praise poems to a patron was the basis of their bread and butter, such poems had both temporal and geographical bounds. The finest

examples of craftsmanship or expressions of stereotypical ideas would interest other bards, and were no doubt also memorized as part of their apprenticeship. For a courtly audience, however, praise poetry was only of burning interest if it concerned the ruler and his ancestors. It would be boring in the court of an ally, and anathema to an enemy. And since the ruler so clearly represents his kingdom the opposing reactions of loyal followers and sworn enemies would continue in later times. A medieval court in Ceredigion smarting from a Gwynedd invasion would be in no mood to hear the praise of Cadwallon, although in some sense he was also a national hero. Much ink has been spilled in recent years trying to establish Welsh dynastic links with the northern British kingdoms in order to explain the preservation of northern heroic poems. These links are fairly tenuous, particularly as regards the Gododdin heroes, but the theory rests on the generally sound assumption that only the family involved would be interested in preserving its praise poetry. In this case, however, there are good reasons why the poetry could be spread by the bards and accepted by their patrons, not because of dynastic links but because of the absence of any close association with warring factions in Wales. The northern heroes were ideal, fellow-countrymen with no unpleasant overtones of contemporary political struggles, so that stories and poems about them would be as welcome in Powys as in Deheubarth. So a poet given a choice of adding to his repertoire a praise poem to a ninth-century Gwynedd king or a sixth-century Rheged one would be expected to more often choose the poem he could take on his travels. When considering the authenticity of the Taliesin and Aneirin corpus this factor may help to explain the apparently anomalous survival of early northern poetry as opposed to the near absence of Welsh praise poetry for the period c. 600-1050.

The useful repertoire for a poet, then, what he learns, collects, transmits and maybe even records is: (1) praise poetry, mainly *hengerdd* for his own qualifications and as an example for his work. Such poetry would also have some interest to his patrons since figures like Owain and Cynon would also be familiar from other sources so that even genuine praise poetry could fulfil antiquarian functions. (2) Largely apolitical poems, that is poems from all genres listed above apart from praise poetry and prophecy. However the repertoire was preserved, either orally or in earlier manuscripts, this is the type of *hengerdd* available when the medieval codices were put together.

This does not, however, explain the lack of genres from the second group in later bardic poetry. While largely speculative, it is possible to allude to some factors which could have led to change in the bardic

repertoire as part of the defence of the bardic origin of these abandoned genres. Increase in literacy may have affected the record in two ways. With the secular ruler either literate or with greater access to literacy through his court officers manuscripts may have been compiled to preserve the praise poetry of a single family like the Irish *duanaire*. By the Middle Welsh period literature was clearly accepted as both a written and oral activity, and the importance of praise poetry as part of the dynastic record had always been recognized, if previously difficult to exploit. The rise in literacy would also affect the bards themselves. From being virtually the only secular learned class they became one of several. This may have led to greater specialization in the only function which only they could perform, formal praise poetry. As we have noted almost all of the wisdom literature in poetry was lost — the religious instructional genre, those displaying biblical and classical knowledge, and pure gnomic poetry. Their functions could be performed better by translated international tracts, and read aloud without the medium of the composer. No one, however, could find an *awdl* for a particular patron or occasion in a book — it had to be composed by the court bard.

Other social changes may also have pushed the bards towards specialization in praise poetry almost exclusively. The consolidation of the larger kingdoms meant that the courts could support both a bard and other entertainers and men of literature. There were perhaps fewer wandering poets, or at least the most skilled whose work would survive could be assured of stable positions. In Gwynedd there is evidence that to assert the position of the prince of Wales the court was run with greater ceremony on the European pattern, but with Welsh adaptations.²⁴ Such ceremonial provided an even better platform and greater dignity to the formal praise poem. Many of the *awdlau* and *marwnadau* from this period are extremely long (this may again be related to the rise of literacy), and would certainly take up the major portion of *pencerdd*'s time if one were produced for every court festival. This may have given a chance for lower bards and others to take over previously bardic entertainment functions. Certainly at this period the poets express complaints against untrained, lesser songsters.²⁵ They were jealous of their dignity, but by this time the dignity of office was tied to the praise poem and they were content in their claims for it as the centre of court ceremonial rather than trying to snatch back other functions.

At any rate, genres not represented in later bardic works cannot automatically be condemned. As stated before, the very fact of survival argues for their status. Since many of these genres, however, have been dismissed in the past it is worth looking at other evidence of their status.

The term bard must first be defined. I prefer to take it in its broadest sense of a trained poet using his training to compose for an audience which values its special qualities, even if not all the nuances are appreciated. Not enough is known to distinguish at this distance of time between the various classes of bards despite the limited evidence of the law tracts and late bardic grammars. Similarly it is impossible to say a bard, yes, but one working in a minor court. It is quite likely, as the legal information about the *bardd teulu* suggests, that certain genres were the product of certain classes, but in light of our ignorance the only important distinction which can be made is between bardic and non-bardic. The internal evidence of the poetry itself gives no grounds for sharp divisions between classes of poets and their compositions.

Metrics There is no great difference between the metrical practices of the first and second group of *hengerdd* genres, nor between *hengerdd* and later poetry except for such changes and developments which would be expected over a long period of time. The three-line *englyn* metres, short-line *awdlau* and *awdl-gywydd* were later downgraded, but this does not deny their earlier bardic status. The various types of bardic four-line *englynion* are clearly successors of the earlier type. The *englyn*, it is true, is best represented in non-praise poetry genres. There is no evidence that it was restricted to these originally since so little praise poetry from the period survives. One of the two *englynion* in the *Gododdin* has been accepted as genuine,²⁶ and the successor four-line *englynion* are used for praise poetry. J. Lloyd-Jones detects a different use for the *awdl* and *englyn* sequence in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*, but both are composed by the highest classes of bards.²⁷ The short-lined *awdlau* are simply too common to dismiss. They are represented both in praise poetry and the disputed genres. These poems tend to be rather simple metrically, and perhaps the type was abandoned because it allowed less scope for ornamental elaboration.

Cymeriad geiriol heavily used in the early *englyn* has analogues in folk poetry, and has therefore formed part of the basis for the argument that the *englyn* poetry is the work of popular poets or lesser bards.²⁸ Repetition, however, is also a feature of art poetry, and is generally used with great sophistication in the saga *englynion*.²⁹ In other poems it looks clumsy since the device is simply used as a mechanical feature to link several *englynion* into a poem. *Cymeriad geiriol*, too, is not unheard of in the *englyn* sequences of the *Gogynfeirdd* although generally they prefer *cyrch-gymeriad* which is rare in the early *englynion*.

Positive evidence of metrical continuity can be found in the overall metrical skill of these poems, again with allowance for elaboration over a period of time. Very few lines, apart from the short lines, lack additional ornamentation of alliteration, assonance and internal rhyme, although these are not required in the manner of later more rigid practice. The early *englyn* is simpler in that there is freedom to suspend rhyme on the *gwant* of an *englyn penfyr* and omit metrical linking of the *gair cyrch*. Nevertheless, nearly every poem contains some verses which are metrical *tours-de-force*. The gnomic verses in particular because of their relative freedom of subject matter are often very complex. The patterns of internal rhyme, alliteration, assonance and parallelism of the more elaborate early *englynion* are comparable to the *englynion* of the *Gogynfeirdd*; Myrddin Lloyd's study of the seven-syllable line of the latter offers a convenient body for comparison.³⁰ Much of what was formerly taken as unskilled padding in the *englyn* is now seen by critics as relevant and effective. Early poems in all genres and metres tend to be relatively short and uncommonly tight as regards structure. Unity, however, is not always dependent on the logical unfolding of an argument, but through application of metrical devices and fugue-like repetition of theme and mood.

Vocabulary Naturally some genres presuppose a different vocabulary from that of praise poetry which can obscure similarities. Religious poetry of all types, however, does sometimes use heroic phraseology or even cunning variations on it such as calling Christ *colofn ced* or a variation on the classic bitter mead in which the wages of the sin of drunkenness make the drink bitter.³¹ Heroic vocabulary is more common in the saga *englynion* and antiquarian verse. Typical heroic epithets and set phrases are found frequently such as *gwaed ar wallt*, *mad-ddodes forddwyd*, *pellynnog ei luydd/glod*, *cywlad rwyd*, *rhuthr eryr yn ebyr*, *amherawdyr llywiawdyr*, etc. Typical expressions of heroic commonplaces are also found such as the broken, shattered shield, paying for mead, feeding birds of prey by battle, fulfilment of vows, inviability of the hero's borders, etc.³² Stylistic differences between the *hengerdd* and the works of the *Gogynfeirdd* tend to mask some of the verbal similarities, and the comparative syntactical fullness gives the impression of simplicity.³³

The *Gogynfeirdd* also borrow from early non-praise poetry, sometimes even complete lines. Some sixteen putative examples are listed in the appendix. Some of these may be due to common use of a stereotypical bardic phrase such as those listed above, but others are incontrovertible. Further examples including some from gnomic verse can be found in Gwyn Thomas, *Y Traddodiad Barddol*, (Caerdydd, 1976), pp. 119-23. The

beddau stanzas are twice imitated by the later poets,³⁴ and similarities to the saga *englynion* have been detected by such scholars as Myrddin Lloyd and Rachel Bromwich.³⁵ It seems reasonably clear that non-eulogistic *hengerdd* formed part of their training and that it held a high, i.e. fully bardic, status. The poets of the princes were constantly aware of their dignity as supreme bards, and it is difficult to imagine them ever stooping to quote or imitate the works of any poets of lower status, even those sanctified by age.

I would like to examine the status of these non-eulogistic genres in more depth by considering one seemingly easiest to dismiss, the gnomic. While many critics have accepted the bardic authorship of the gnomic poems, for those who have not, the highest possible status accorded to the genre is that the poems are the work of lower-class bards composing in minor courts. Jackson, if anything, favours an even more plebeian origin: 'The virtues inculcated are not those admired in heroic poetry . . . [They are] the virtues of a later stage of society and perhaps a lower class . . . In short, it seems that these . . . gnomic collections are a kind of folk-philosophy adapted by poets in touch with folk-ideas and given a literary cast . . .'³⁶ He comes to much the same conclusions about the saga *englynion* as is inescapable given their many similarities. He calls the genre ' . . . a semi-popular genre, analogous to the Border Ballads', not the work of 'the bards of high rank.'³⁷ N. J. A. Williams goes to the furthest extreme stating that 'the popular nature of *Canu Llywarch* needs no underlining', and that 'the originator, or rather, originators, of the *englynion* may well not have been far removed from peasant themselves.'³⁸ As noted above the presumed status of the saga *englynion* depends on the interpretation of the *cyfarwydd* for those who see their function as primarily narrative entertainment.³⁹ The gnomic are condemned by subject matter, but it is also guilt by association since there are so many links between the saga and gnomic *englynion*, as will be discussed further below. The metrical and verbal evidence cited above are against distinguishing either type from bardic works. Additional points may also be cited in favour of the bardic origin of early gnomic poetry.

I have already noted that gnomic literature generally holds a high position in early cultures, despite modern disinterest. The compilers of the Book of Aneirin show no hesitation in including a partially gnomic poem in the *Gododdin* and giving it the higher status of one of the *gorchanau*.⁴⁰ The ascription of *Englynion y Misoedd* to Aneirin is much later, but again suggests no incongruity was seen in the same poet composing heroic praise poetry and gnomic poems. The boasting poems of the legendary Taliesin also bear many affinities with gnomic knowledge.⁴¹

No pure gnomic poetry survives written by the *Gogynfeirdd*. This is not surprising given the limitations of their repertoire and the undoubted continuation of the genre by lesser poets. However, they do quote gnomes now and again including some found in earlier poetry. There are some examples of use of the gnomic manner in sustained passages such as a list of things which are *aduwyn* in H 39, closely similar to the gnomic poem *Aduwynneu Taliessin* BT 8-10. Two examples are even somewhat innovative, using gnomic formulae to refer to the habitual actions of a specific individual, as in 'Breuddwyd Gwalchmai':

gnawd om gwawd gwychrann y valchlann vebin.
 gnawd o drin dres aele.
 Gnawd wedi ryserch ryse.
 selwet gwyth gwrth y dwyre.
 Gnawd erof hiraeth edgyllaeth echen.
 ac ucheneid vore.
 Gnawd march o veirch rabire.
 yn varch dewr yn warch dyre.
 Gnawd gwreic gwell genthi a wo gwaeth iti.
 vy adas ny debre. (H 23)

Compare also H 55, an *awdl* by Einion fab Madog. Reworked proverbs are fairly common in the work of Dafydd ap Gwilym, some again from early poetry. In *Y Bardd a'r Brawd Llwyd* he pictures Ystudfach, to whom a medieval proverb list is attributed, quoting a proverb *gyda'i feirdd*, suggesting wisdom literature formed part of bardic training.⁴²

In fact, it would appear that the bards contributed to the store of proverbs and gnomes, and did not merely content themselves with versifying folk-sayings. The extensive medieval proverb lists consist in part of manifestly popular sayings, a few in simple sing-song rhymes, but most in prose, and proverbs of international and biblical origin. In a list such as that from NLW Peniarth MS 17 some 20% either come from extant gnomic and saga poems, or are arguably of metrical origin on the grounds of their length and patterns of internal rhyme and alliteration.⁴³ Some examples of this group are:

- 51. Aghall mal dall a dwyllir (7)
- 63. Agheu aghen diheu dir (7)
- 94. A llygrws Duw / llygrwys den (7) parallelism
- 98. Arwyd drwc / mwc yn diffeith (7)
- 128. Byrrhoedlawc digassauc seint (7)
- 143. Callon ny gynnyd kysgit (7)
- 179. Digaun Duw da y unic (7)
- 224. Detwyd douit ae ryd rat (7)

In the Peniarth 17 list numbers 54, 78, 124, 164, 176, 230, and 265 come from extant saga poems, and more could be found if the gnomic poems were compared. The indebtedness of the lists to the poets is not always recognized. Jackson, for instance, calls a proverb in one of the Red Book of Hergest gnomic poems:

bei traethei dauawt a wypei geudawt
 ny bydei gymydawc neb rei.

a 'rather unsuccessful attempt to versify a saying' which appears in the Black Book of Chirk proverb collection.⁴⁴ The only significant difference in the Chirk version is that it reads *bei dywetey tauawt*. These two 'unsuccessfully' versified lines have no fewer than eight rhymes, plus alliteration — surely the saying is metrical in origin. The compilers of lists, in fact, combed poetry including most probably some poems now lost. In some cases purely descriptive lines have been mistakenly lifted as proverbs, or errors in manuscript transmission repeated.⁴⁵ I would argue that a study of proverbial material and gnomic poetry is essential for understanding the works of the early periods, both praise poetry and other types, if only because it was an important sphere of activity for the bards.

Comparison then with other works helps to establish the bardic standing of gnomic poetry, and underlines the value of dealing with a genre on its own terms. When Jackson says of gnomic poems, 'they do not read like court bard work' he can only be applying the standards of completely different genre to this poetry and basing his conclusions upon it.⁴⁶ Another former critical treatment of gnomic and saga poetry also gives warning against using an external genre definition and expecting poetry to conform. Nature description and imagery are fairly extensively used in both gnomic and saga poetry, and while some of it is purely utilitarian, much is pleasing or even subtle. Nevertheless these poems were until recently dismissed as debased by scholars looking for 'pure' nature poetry of a Wordsworthian sort. These standards long obscured the true use of nature imagery, and poems which validly used elements of other genres such as those discussed below were dissected into proper and improper elements in the critic's view.⁴⁷

This brings us to a central problem in genre study: on the one hand, when successful genre definition can provide the key to interpretation, while on the other hand when genres are examined closely sharp divisions between them appear artificial. Poets either failed to distinguish or deliberately blurred distinctions between types of poetry. To use genre definition with any success, then, the points of overlap between genres must be sorted out and put into a quasi-chronological or primary usage order to determine both the basic genre and the effect of variation on it. I

would like to look at some of these points of overlap in the various genres using the *englyn* metres which provide particularly clear examples of borrowing from one genre to another producing a sort of intermediate hybrid.

Part of the overlap in the *englyn* genres is largely metrical, but its effects can pull a genre out of a pure type. The gnomic poets quickly recognized the possibilities of *cymeriad geiriol* in the form of a largely meaningless tag to unify several stanzas with basically disparate material. With a tag such as *eiry mynydd* or *glaw allan* at the beginning of every verse the essential unity of the poem was maintained in a fairly non-distracting manner. (This device was all the more welcome in that it is clear that poets felt some unease with the *englyn* as the only stanzaic Welsh metre and sought wherever possible to link stanzas.) The convention of using a tag to give *cymeriad geiriol* opened the way to borrowing of other features, apparently from the saga *englynion*. The tag is usually followed by a brief nature description to fill out the line, immediately changing the poem from gnomic to quasi-gnomic.

The use of the same metres also enabled the gnomic poets to borrow freely from the gnomes used in saga poems. This borrowing could extend to include more than the pure gnomic. In one case an entire verse was adapted from 'Claf Abercuawg', with a few changes to bring it in line with gnomic practice:

Gorwyn blaen neint; deweint hir;
keinmygir pob kywreint;
dyly bun pwyth hun y heint. EWGP VI. 2

Gwyn gwarthaf neint deweint hir
keinmygir pob kywreint.
Dylywn pwyth hun y heneint. CLIH VI.12

The adapter took the trouble to change the first singular verb in the last line, forming a meaningless but general statement. It seems not all borrowers from saga poems were so careful to adapt; if so, this could explain additions of descriptive material and saga-type personal statements. The occasional personal statements in the gnomic poetry such as *eidunaf na bwyf gannmlwyd, och rac hiraeth vy mrodyr*,⁴⁸ may have entered the genre in this fashion, through the facility of metrical interchange.

It is also possible that once the two genres were slightly mixed, such personal statements were deliberately incorporated to add a bit of enigmatic interest to the genre, or at the very least the personal was not so scrupulously avoided. At any rate, the metrical contribution to 'contamination' seems fairly clear — those gnomic *englyn* poems with

purely gnomic opening formulae, such as the *Bidiau* or the Red Book poem beginning *Gnawd* — , are free of non-gnomic elements.⁴⁹ This is also generally true of gnomic poems in *awdlau* metres which had no need of the metrical device of *cymeriad geiriol* to assert unity over separate stanzas.

Other types of fluidity between genres may have been encouraged by identical metres and similar metrical conventions. The gnomic-descriptive element worked its way in turn into at least two other different types of poems. In *Ymattrec Llywelyn a Gwernerth* the gnomic-type tag *eiry mynyd* in the first section has given a good deal of gnomic sayings and nature descriptions to what is basically a religious poem of a type to be discussed below.⁵⁰ It can hardly be coincidental that a gnome in the first stanza of the gnomic poem *Eiry Mynydd* concerns sleeping, as does the last line in the first stanza of the religious dialogue.⁵¹ Perhaps the poet of *Ymattrec* was reminded of the gnomic poem as he formed the first question of his dialogue, and this led to his adaptation of the gnomic tag. The collectors at any rate saw the connection; the poem precedes the gnomic *englynion* in the Red Book and comes immediately before *Eiry Mynydd*.

In the Black Book of Carmarthen poem *Llym Awel* the use of nature description and gnomes lies basically within the normative usage of the saga poems. The winter description, however, is found in several gnomic poems, such as *Eiry Mynydd* and *Kalan Gaeaf*.⁵² In this case the subject matter seems to have collected extraneous gnomic verses to it, again by the facility of identical metre and some overlap of techniques and subject matter. Accretions of interpolated material are atypical in the saga *englynion*, but recognition of the gnomic pull justifies trying to sort this poem into original verses and additions.⁵³

Another natural blur occurs when gnomes about God and morality become predominate, and the poem slips towards the religious-preceptual class, sometimes even borrowing floating verses found in that type of verse. The gnomic-religious mix is found in two of the *Duad* gnomic poems,⁵⁴ and in a gnomic poem in an *awdl* metre (although it has some *englyn*-like features such as 7 to 8-syllable lines and *cymeriad geiriol* linking some sections), *Gossymdeith llefoet wynebclawr* in the Red Book (col. 1055-6). The religious element is more pronounced than the gnomic, as might be guessed by the ascription (see below).

Other borrowings from one genre to another in *englyn* metres add interest to a drier type, and as in the case of first-person statements in the gnomic poems the extraneous matter may be deliberately added. A good example is *Englynion y Beddau* in which elegiac and heroic material give poetic life to what is basically an antiquarian catalogue. Comparing the more straightforward lists with strict formulae to fill in the non-

informational parts of the stanza, such as *Dinas Maon* and *Mi a uum lle las* in the Black Book of Carmarthen, or the versified catalogues of Llywarch's sons and Heledd's sisters, shows just what a difference these additions make.⁵⁵

In some cases so many elements are present that at this remove it is difficult to place a poem in any one category. An example is *Englynion Cadwallon* which appears to be basically antiquarian, listing battles and showing strong onomastic interest.⁵⁶ There is, however, a possible persona to the first-person narrator, suggesting that the poem could have been used in saga, and also some similarity to bardic eulogy which also had battle-listing as a stock-in-trade. Without knowing the identity of the narrator (the persona could be a bard if antiquarian forgery or a figure of story if the poem is from a saga) we cannot be certain of the status of the poem, although the antiquarian function looks most likely.

This brings us to the use of persona, also a fertile ground for interchange of elements between genres. The use of persona, the poet speaking not as a poet but in the identity of another character, or in the case of a dialogue, two characters, is one of the primary features of the saga *englynion*. Nevertheless the use of persona does not in itself define the genre, even when the character is one who might be expected to appear in saga, since the device is found in several other genres. It probably originated in the saga *englynion* where the use of a narrator is both essential and has most effective poetic usage. The device appears to have been adapted for use in other genres to serve different specific purposes. Like metrical exchange, the device often brings in other saga features in its wake which again obscure sharp definition of genre.

In his study of Old English wisdom literature T. A. Shippey notes that gnomic literature, because it is so obvious, is rarely attributed to higher authority, but for other types of instructional verse there is a strong tendency to use a device which will give the poet's work more weight by ascribing the knowledge to a noted figure.⁵⁷ This is equally true for early Welsh poetry. Gnomic poems show no trace of persona, despite the occasional first-person statements discussed above. This is in sharp contrast to all other types of instructional literature. Prophecy is a case in point. Presumably the poet could call on his own inspiration or divinatory rites, but it is more usual and convincing to attribute the vision to a famous prophet of the past — with the added advantage of being able to describe historical events up to the poet's own day as accurate prediction. Antiquarian information can also be disputed: thus in *Englynion y Beddau* we see a tacit ascription of the information about past heroes and their graves to that miraculously-informed figure, Taliesin.⁵⁸

Authority is even more of a burning issue in the religious-preceptual poems. With the exception of the two *Duad* poems which are partially gnomic not one omits some sort of validating device. In three poems this consists solely of an ascription in the manuscripts: *Gossymdeith llefoet wynebclawr*, *Kyssul Adaon* and *Cyngogion Elaeth*. Nothing is known for certain about any of these figures,⁵⁹ but given the overall tendency of this group and the fact that otherwise authorial ascriptions are unheard-of in the *englyn* poetry, I think we must assume that the ascriptions are fictitious with the intention of validating the religious pronouncements by assumed saintly authorship. (In passing, the general absence of names for authors of these genres could suggest significant difference between this sort of poetry and bardic eulogy. It may, however, be explained in many cases by the fact that the poet's true identity is subsumed in that of his persona, and the rubrics are interested in maintaining the fiction if his pose is authoritative or identifying and placing the speaker if the poem is part of a saga cycle. Many poems, too, of impeccable primary bardic eulogy do not have authorial ascriptions. An overall study of ascriptions in the *hengerdd* might be useful and revealing, especially in the light of the strong authorial tradition for Aneirin and Taliesin).

In one poem in the Black Book of Carmarthen a neutral voice merely proclaims that he has done his research with greater authorities:

Mi ae gowinneis y offereid bid.
ae hesgip ae higneid
ba beth orev rac eneid.⁶⁰

The most common device, however, is a dialogue, a feature common to other informational genres. There are international analogues for this device, particularly in the catechism, but the primary source for the *englyn* poetry is probably the saga *englynion* dialogues. Despite their strong similarities to the saga dialogues there are also distinct differences. Unlike most saga dialogues interest lies in one character only, the one with the information. The dialogue is less a conversation than a question and answer session. In the briefest an unidentified questioner asks St. Tysilio about the virtues of attending mass. The noted saint serves to give authority to these rather commonplace responses.⁶¹

Two longer poems, however, are closer to saga types in that a rudimentary background tale can be detected showing how the informed character got to be so authoritative and how he gets together with his inquirer. The tale is nearly the same in both, based on the idea that the best informant on how to get to heaven is a successful candidate. The Red Book poem already mentioned, *Ymattrec Llywelyn a Gwrnerth*, is the more complex. It

has two sections. In the first Gwrnerth visits Llywelyn's hermit cell and is told slowly and obliquely that the hermit is about to die. This section has the *eiry mynyd* opening formula, with heavy padding from the gnostic-nature school as well as the more typical padding of these didactic dialogues. In the second part Llywelyn's spirit returns from the dead and answers Gwrnerth's questions, primarily on practical matters of religious observance. The emphasis on imparting authority to these pronouncements is made even clearer by the postscript in the manuscript which adds that the poem was taught to St. Tysilio who handed it down to posterity.

Perhaps the most typical dialogue of this class is 'Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr' in which Arthur questions his dead nephew, Eliwlod, who has returned to earth in the shape of an eagle. The opening section characterizes Arthur to a degree as a rough warrior, goodhearted, but totally ignorant on religious matters. This characterization is completely lost in the long spiritual catechism which follows. As is usual the respondent has the only good lines, and the other figure exists merely to feed him the questions. The dialogue is very clumsy, with extensive padding used to fill out the inessential parts of the questions and answers. This is most clearly seen in Arthur's verses. All begin with the address *yr eryr*. Such lavish addresses by name between the two speakers of the informational dialogues is typical although in the saga dialogues the speakers address one another only sufficiently to establish the identity of the characters and the sequence in which they speak. The line after the address is filled out with fairly meaningless epithets, sometimes continued in the second line, although it often consists of an unnecessary affirmation that he is asking a question, such as *ytyhun y gofynnir, a dywedy di wrth arthur, ys llwyr y gofynnaf ytti*, etc. Finally the question comes.

The eagle has two types of stanza. Those with a short answer have padding similar to Arthur's verses: the address 'Arthur', followed by epithets and/or brief descriptions. These are in the heroic vein; cf. stanza 22:

Arthur nyt segur lafneu
rudyeist ongyr yggwaetfreu
crist yw cret vi nam amheu.

While the usage is clumsy and mechanical, these heroic commonplaces found throughout 'Arthur a'r Eryr', used here in a religious-instructional poem because of the choice of a warrior as one of the characters, provide a reminder of the essential unity of the bardic tradition. The eagle's other

type of verse consists entirely of religious-instruction. These verses are totally impersonal and some are found in other religious-preceptual poems as a body of floating verses.

The same sort of question and answer dialogue is found in other genres whose aim is to put across information with greater fictional authority. Strikingly similar in technique, though not in content, is 'Cyfoesi Myrddin â Gwenddydd ei Chwaer', a prophetic poem cast as a dialogue in *englynion*. Gwenddydd raises the questions, and Myrddin, the authoritative figure, answers. Some incidental references are made to the story of Myrddin, but the poem would not seem to have had either a narrative setting nor intent. The same sort of clumsy padding is found; Gwenddydd's verses in particular resemble the most stereotyped forms in 'Arthur a'r Eryr': formula, epithet, description, and question as in this stanza:

Kyuarchaf ymclotieu llallawc
an[u]ynnawc yndyd gawr.
pwylwedy wedy mab rodri mawr. (RB 579)

As in 'Arthur a'r Eryr' the padding elements are heroic epithets, expressed in traditional terms. As might be expected, Myrddin's replies are more varied, consisting both of fully-developed stanzas, and padded ones with the reply in the last line.

Some antiquarian poems also use the dialogue to convey information, and more incidentally to give credence to the facts presented. Because this information consists of tid-bits on the career of the more interesting character in the dialogue the didactic purpose is not so clear as in the other genres using this technique. Nevertheless the poems more closely resemble the didactic poems discussed above than the saga *englynion*, despite the saga figures who feature in them. In these antiquarian dialogues the authoritative figure is merely replaced by an interesting one. Like the others there is a rudimentary narrative setting showing how the characters got together, but no real narrative intent. Brynley Roberts in his edition of these poems from the Black Book gives them the suitable term 'Ymddiddan Cyfarch', stressing the non-developing, non-interacting nature of these dialogues as opposed to true saga ones. Two of the poems are in *englynion*, 'Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwyddno Garanhir' and 'Taliesin and Ugnach'.⁶² Gwyddno, although himself a figure of story, plays the straight man in the first poem, with Gwyn ap Nudd the figure questioned; the otherwise unknown Ugnach pumps the ever-interesting Taliesin in the second.

Two dialogues are in *awdlau* metres and show some distinct differences. *Pa gur yv y porthaur* is probably the most successful of these informational dialogues because the short lines allow for quick give and take without

extra padding. The poem, however, quickly settles down to monologue on the part of the more interesting character, Arthur.⁶³ 'Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin' is exceptional in having two interesting characters, both of equal weight, and so is not carried on through question and answer.⁶⁴ It resembles more a performance in turn than a dialogue. In fact, the *englyn* dialogues, for all their clumsiness, make much more of an attempt at a continuous exchange, perhaps because of their debt to the dialogues of the saga *englynion*.

The two antiquarian dialogues in *englyn* metres both have a rudimentary narrative device to bring the character together and begin the questions. Neither poem is as mechanical throughout as 'Arthur a'r Eryr' or the 'Cyfoesi'. The chief padding to fill out stanzas of address or response is again a series of epithets and descriptive phrases; for instance, the first stanza in 'Gwyn ap Nudd' consists of five of these before the essential question, *a'm oes nawt?* The stanzas move forward in fits and starts as in the other poems because of repetition of the gist of the previous verse; in 'Gwyn ap Nudd' the second line of the second stanzas assures Gwyddno *a'th vit naut canys erchit*, and Gwyddno's next question is preceded by *canis naut im a rotit*. Also frequent are numerous statements that the speaker is asking or answering a question, such as seen in the 'Cyfoesi'. There is some needless identification or naming of the speakers, but not to the lavish degree of 'Arthur a'r Eryr' or the 'Cyfoesi'.

These poems have rather minor interest in themselves, although they are important in highlighting the links and differences between genres. As noted before, realization that these dialogues serve no narrative function helps to distinguish the use of dialogue in the saga *englynion*. On a more purely literary level the clumsy padding shows a difference in poetic skill or technique in functional verse. This is important since gnomic statements and nature description in the saga *englynion* are often seen as more or less acceptable padding and evidence of lower bardic origin.⁶⁵ Recent critical opinion has defended the use of both elements,⁶⁶ and the very different and obvious type of padding in these functional dialogues supports this judgement. In fact, only the late Trystan *englynion* and Ymattrec Llywelyn a Gwrnerth with its gnomic contamination make any use of nature description or gnomes for filling out stanzas, and both of these poems unlike the saga *englynion* also use the type of padding found in the informational *englynion*.

Also noteworthy is the degree to which one genre fades into another by virtue of borrowing various aspects. The saga *englynion* appear to be the original sources and inspiration of techniques found in other genres using the *englyn*; many an element works best and makes the most sense in the

saga poems. The borrowing ranges from the inspired as in the *beddau* and dramatized religious lyrics, to the unexceptionable as in the gnomic *englynion*, to the strictly utilitarian in the poems just discussed. The poet's aim, particularly with the utilitarian group, must be kept in mind if once again we are not to assume that these uninspiring works cannot be of the same authorship as the great works of bardic praise poetry or even the best of the saga poems. It is difficult to be didactic about early poetic standards. Perhaps neither the poet nor his audience made much distinction between totally relevant stanzas and stanzas in which the wheat had to be separated from the chaff.⁶⁷ What is more likely is that different standards applied to the functional, as is often the case in all aspects of life. It must be admitted that there is a fall-off in metrical standards in these poems corresponding to some of their other mechanical features.⁶⁸ Against this the fully bardic subject matter of the antiquarian poems must be balanced, as well as the bardic heroic epithets found in many of the functional dialogues.

To close, I would like to examine briefly some of the implications of genre on the final product. These go beyond the obvious points of expected subject matter and the language used to express it. The most important point is that in virtually all of the genres outside formal praise poetry the poet is writing from a different stance from that of the official court poet, and often under a totally different persona. The stance in the gnomic poems or religious instructional, for instance, is fairly neutral, but still broader and more general than that of a poet working for a specific lordly patron. Not surprisingly, the interests dealt with are those of a wider if still primarily aristocratic society. It includes matters which do not enter into the restricted scope of eulogy. If these poems are accepted as bardic they may be used to fill in a picture of society and its values only hinted at or ignored altogether in eulogy.

Far more serious implications for interpretation are found in those poems in which the poet speaks through a persona, particularly in the saga *englynion*. Here it is vital to recognize the difference in content and point of view given by the use both of a narrator voice and a narrative background. The differences between the earliest extant praise poetry and the saga *englynion* have long been noted, and perceived as due to a development in society. These distinctions and their implications have been thoroughly argued by Professor Jarman, with such persuasiveness that it is fair to say by now the theory has reached almost the status of doctrine.⁶⁹ In the light of genre study, however, it is necessary to call for a re-examination of the question, although clearly such arguments as can be presented here will not prove or disprove the assertions. Jarman argues

that the *englynion* show a moderation of the old heroic code in its full purity as seen in the earlier *hengerdd*, a questioning of heroic values unthinkable in the true heroic age. If so, this suggests a change in society which can be used to support the assumed relative chronology between the Taliesin and Aneirin poems and the *englyn* cycles. Quite apart from my doubts about the moderated heroic stance of the *englynion*, this chronological argument raises obvious problems. In the praise poetry of the *Gogynfeirdd* the heroic ethic can be seen with the same burning purity as in the *Gododdin*. Despite stylistic changes, the poetry deals with the same concepts in a traditional manner; at least on the level of literary conventions there is no detectable change in heroic aims.⁷⁰ Despite sophisticated developments on all fronts, the poetic conventions admit almost no hints of the changing face of society and warfare. There is no mention of such matters as strategic alliances, princely diplomacy, systematic fortification and tactical withdrawals — all attested in contemporary historical sources. In fact, bardic praise poetry remained static almost to the point of ridicule in the age of the *cywyddwyr*, with peaceable country squires mechanically lauded for their ferocious deeds of heroism.

This unity of bardic tradition clearly suggests that any differences between the saga *englynion* and praise poetry arise not because there was a sudden and brief-lived period of enlightenment around the ninth century, but because of the essential difference in genre. If this difference in genre is allowed for, I believe the supposed change in heroic outlook disappears. When we look at bardic praise poetry it is clear that the scope of subject matter, treatment, personal input and innovation is extremely limited. In effect, the first person of praise poetry is also a persona, that of the court bard, a public spokesman upholding the traditional values of society. The scope is further limited by the traditional avoidance of any sustained narrative, the preference for the general over the particular, and the tendency to present the patron as already fulfilling the ideal as an encouragement to greater achievements. Some idea of the effect of these limitations can be seen by comparing the Old English *Battle of Maldon* with the *Gododdin*. There are strong similarities in heroic ethic and situation, but the Old English poem is narrative, and also not primary praise poetry. In recounting the events of the battle the English poet is free to explore such concepts as whether the leader's strategy was adversely affected by too much desire for glory, and to contrast the heroes' behaviour with that of warriors who failed to stand fast and fled. Both these matters are impossible in the non-narrative praise poem: the first is irrelevant in terms of personal heroism and the second a subject for satire, not praise. Such subjects can be and are explored in the semi-narrative *englyn* poems; we

have the background to Gwên's heroic stand and not just praise of it. In this underlying narrative material we see questionings not so much of the heroic life itself, but how it is to be properly lived. In this case Llywarch's too great desire for glory leads him wrongly to incite Gwên to unreasonable vows, and moves him from bravery to foolhardy courage. The *marwnad*, not a public one, is also broader ranging, acknowledging amidst the praise and grief that Gwên was improperly forced into overly-ambitious behaviour. Ultimately, however, the glory of a warrior remains, however wrongly impelled. This sort of exploration of the reasonable limits of heroism is normative in heroic literature of a non-primary sort, and serves to reinforce heroic values, not to reject them.⁷¹ In early Welsh literature such exploration appears only obliquely except in the narrative saga *englynion*, making them appear superficially both more sophisticated and moderate. Perhaps they are — the poems are introspective and meditative — but this is a function of genre, not chronology.

The other point in which the *englyn* cycles appear to show moderation of pure heroic ideals can be explained by another aspect of the genre, the use of a narrator persona. Although *Canu Llywarch Hen* and *Canu Heledd* concentrate on grief and the personal cost of heroism, in both cases the narrator according to the fictional conventions of the genre is not speaking publicly. This side of heroic sacrifice is well expressed in the *Gododdin* — glory is not a complete panacea for grief — but ultimately the bard's public, official role is to uphold the lasting value of heroism to the society. The private characters of the *englyn* cycles also assert the positive aspects of heroism and fame, but in inverse proportion as suits the immediate concerns of the persona.

This implication of genre is not one which can be dealt with in detail here; it requires the corroboration of a detailed study of the texts involved and analogues in other heroic literatures as well as genre study. I would just like to note in the context of this colloquium that the *Gododdin* itself is largely *sui generis*, both in format and subject matter. The poem turns a crushing defeat into a heroic victory. The result is so successful that perhaps it has too strongly influenced our notions of heroic ideals. These were obviously evolved to be of benefit to a warlike society for which fighting to the death could be neither the norm nor the ultimate virtue.⁷² However hidden by bardic conventions we can detect less extreme heroic virtues to the greatest public good such as using sense, compromise and strategic withdrawal. Praise poetry is for several reasons the least revealing of genres dealing with these matters. The more expansive narrative sources of the *englyn* saga are more helpful, but these concepts can also be found in the more neglected gnomic poetry. For instance, the

gnome quoted in one of the Red Book poems, *ys da pwyll gyt a nerth*,⁷³ sums up the heroic theme of *sapientia et fortitudo* developed in such works as *Beowulf* and *Chanson de Roland*. It is also precisely the principle which eludes Llywarch. I have argued that the whole range of early genres is bardic in origin, and as such it is relevant in interpreting the classics of *hengerdd*. This body of poetry contains much which is far from interesting to modern taste, but because of its variety we can hope to find some new aspect in each genre which might be excluded from another. While giving full respect to differences each genre possesses, we must treat the tradition as a unity.

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APPENDIX

Echoes of non-praise poetry in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*

heit heb uodrydaf hu byd	CLIH III.32c, RB 1391
nyt oed uagaud meirch mechit ny bu uagawd meirch morgan	CLIH VII.20c H 172
nyt atwna duw ar a wnel	CLIH VI. 30c, H 303 (also GDG 94.23-24)
ny chel grud kystud callon ny chut uy grut uy grituan	CLIH VI.28c H 157
gwiw callon rac hiraeth gwyw callon can hiraeth	CLIH VI.14c. RB 1406
kan kat a thorri can kaer	<i>Cadwallon</i> 10c
can cad tec torreist dreic aer a gwedy can cad can caer	H 307
hiraeth am damorth vrodyrde	CLIH IX.81c
hiraeth am ry wnaeth rewin braint broder gwellwyr gollewin broder de braw aele elin	MA 240
divryt diuro bart diuro dyuryd heb arglwyd	CLIH VI. 13b H 91
Eryr Eli gorelwi heno ygwaet gwyr gwynn novi	CLIH IX.35bc
Gwyach rut goruut goralwei ar donnyar gwyar gonofyei	H 94
A chyd del dydd brawd nim tawr	CLIH III.15 (b)
mi nym dawr ken del dros eluyt llanw o uor a llif o uyny	H 61
kadir yscuit ar yscuit glev aduwyn uyt ysgwyd ar dewr ysgwyd	CLIH VII.4 H 39

- ¹ Edited by Ifor Williams, CLIH, p. 45.
- ² Col. 1049
- ³ Edited by Ifor Williams, BWP, p. 164.
- ⁴ Ed. Ifor Williams, CA, p. 55.
- ⁵ The role of the highest classes of poets in actively telling stories is not completely accepted; present consensus argues tales were learned more for allusions in poetry. Nevertheless the conflation of *pencerdd/cyfarwydd* in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi* suggests at an earlier period the situation was different. For discussions see: Rachel Bromwich, 'The Character of the Early Welsh Tradition', *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 128-35; Patrick K. Ford, 'The Poet as *Cyfarwydd* in Early Welsh Tradition', SC x/xi (1975-6), 152-62; Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Learned Tales of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1980), pp. 132-41.
- ⁶ Ed. Ifor Williams, 'Dwy Gân o Lyfr Coch Talgarth', BCS ii (1924), 118-34. The poem is edited with verses conflated from a Black Book poem, but these are floating verses found in other religious instructional poems and the two poems should probably be taken separately.
- ⁷ Marged Haycock, LITARA, pp. 49-68, and 'Preiddeu Annwn and the Figure of Taliesin' SC xviii/xix, 52-78.
- ⁸ E. Anwyl, 'Prolegomena to the Study of Old Welsh Poetry', THSC 1903-4, 66, notes: 'The ruling families of the monasteries and the ruling families of the courts were most closely related, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the ecclesiastical literary centres of early times from the secular.' The role of the church in encouraging and preserving early Irish literature can also be compared.
- ⁹ There is at least one example of this in early medieval Ireland: Colmán son of Lénéne was a *fili* before he became a cleric.
- ¹⁰ Marged Haycock, 'Early Welsh Poetry', *Memory and Poetic Structure*, ed. Peter Ryan (London, 1981), pp. 98, 102-5.
- ¹¹ Ed. CLIH VI. For *Cyntefin* see R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'Cyntefin ceinaf amser o Lyfr Du Caerfyrddin', YB IV (1969), 12-26.
- ¹² See in particular Hector Munrow Chadwick and Nora K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* Vol. I (Cambridge, 1932), chapter XII; K. H. Jackson, *Studies in Early Celtic Nature Poetry* (Cambridge, 1935), chapter III; P. L. Henry, *The Early English and Celtic Lyric* (London, 1966), chapter V.
- ¹³ BWP, pp. 129, 142.
- ¹⁴ CLIH, p. lxxxviii.
- ¹⁵ See above, n. 5.
- ¹⁶ Ifor Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1944), p. 26.
- ¹⁷ Ed. A. O. H. Jarman, *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd, 1982), pp. 24, 72-3.
- ¹⁸ See forthcoming edition by Marged Haycock, and LITARA, pp. 391-411.
- ¹⁹ As David Greene, 'Linguistic Considerations in the Dating of Early Welsh Verse', SC vi (1971), p. 6, notes, given the lack of conclusive indications from language and history, judgment about authenticity often rests on stylistic considerations. To have as broad a base as possible in this consideration less well-studied genres must be included.
- ²⁰ You have only to listen to conversation between friends to notice that allusions such as 'remember that fancy dress party last summer' are as common and as satisfying to the group in the know as narration of the events concerned.
- ²¹ CA, p. 44.
- ²² Ed. Jarman, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11. The version in *Llyfr Coch Talgarth* may also be an early poem, *op. cit.*, 127-30. There are also medieval versions in Welsh of this popular theme; for a complete bibliography see Jarman, p. xlvii
- ²³ On the whole question of love poetry in Welsh see J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Cerddi'r Gogynfeirdd i Wragedd a Merched, a'u Cefndir yng Nghymru a'r Cyfandir', *Llên Cymru* xiii (1974/79), 3-112.
- ²⁴ Ceri W. Lewis, 'The Court Poets: Their Function, Status and Craft', *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, Vol. I, ed. A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym Rees Hughes (Swansea, 1976), pp. 125-9.
- ²⁵ J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Beirdd y Tywysogion: Arolwg', LIC xi (1970), p. 37.
- ²⁶ CA, p. 48. The place-name *merin iodeo* in it is often raised as a point in favour of authenticity.
- ²⁷ 'The Court Poets of the Welsh Princes', PBA xxxiv (1948), pp. 7-8.
- ²⁸ Kenneth H. Jackson, 'Incremental Repetition in the Early Welsh Englyn', *Speculum* xvi (1941), 304-21.
- ²⁹ See Kathleen Lea, 'The Poetic Powers of Repetition', PBA lv (1969), 51-76.
- ³⁰ 'Some Metrical Features in Gogynfeirdd Poetry', SC iii (1968), 39-46.
- ³¹ Both examples are from *Cyntaf Gair a Ddywedaf*, Black Book of Carmarthen, 82-4, ed. Jarman, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.
- ³² Examples drawn from the whole range of *hengerdd* and the works of the *Gogynfeirdd* can be found in T. J. Morgan's study of two of these motifs, 'Dadansoddi'r Gogynfeirdd', BCS xiii (1948), 169-74; xiv (1950), 1-8.
- ³³ The saga/antiquarian poems about the legendary Taliesin also feature a technical vocabulary concerning the poet and his craft; see Marged Haycock, LITARA, pp. 615-55.
- ³⁴ Thomas Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen Stanzas of the Graves', PBA liii (1967), p. 105.
- ³⁵ 'Barddoniaeth Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr', *Y Llenor* xi (1932), p. 173; *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. lxxiv, cxix.
- ³⁶ ECNP, p. 138.
- ³⁷ 'Incremental Repetition', *op. cit.*, p. 317.
- ³⁸ 'Canu Llywarch Hen and the Finn Cycle', AH, p. 249.
- ³⁹ This causes Gwyn Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, to retreat from the conclusion that the *canu englynol* could be the work of the *penceirddiaid* despite the evidence he marshals for the *Gogynfeirdd* drawing on this branch of *hengerdd*.
- ⁴⁰ CA, p. 52.
- ⁴¹ I am indebted to the observation made by Marged Haycock during the discussion of this paper. The arch poet, of course, claims to know the reason for natural facts which the gnomic poets content themselves with noting.
- ⁴² Ed. Thomas Parry, *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym* (Caerdydd, 1963), pp. 364, 540-1.
- ⁴³ Ed. Henry Lewis, 'Diarhebion ym Mheniarth 17', BCS iv (1927), 1-17. The numbers refer to his edition.
- ⁴⁴ Ed. Kenneth Jackson, *Early Welsh Gnostic Poems* (Cardiff, 1961), p. 26, commentary from ECNP, p. 142.
- ⁴⁵ See ECNP, pp. 142-3.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- ⁴⁷ A prime example is a poem from the Black Book edited in part in EWGP as a gnomic and nature poem, and in CLIH as a saga poem with the nature verses omitted. Other poems are figuratively dissected into 'padding' (the nature and gnomes) and relevant bits, such as 'Claf Abercuawg'.
- ⁴⁸ EWGP III, 26, III, 21.
- ⁴⁹ EWGP VII, VIII, IV.
- ⁵⁰ Ed. Kenneth Jackson, 'The Colloquy of Llywelyn and Gwrnerth', ZCP, xxi (1938), 40-53 and EWGP III.

- 51 EWGP III. 1 Eiry mynyd, gwynn pob tu;
kynneuin bran a chanu;
ny daw da o drachyscu.
- Ymattrec 1 Eiry mynyd gwynt am berth.
cans creawdyr nef am nerth
ae kysgu a wna gwrnerth?
- 52 Ed. in part in EWGP I and CLIH VII; the full text is edited by Jarman, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-5.
- 53 The question of interpolations has been dealt with by the author in 'A Study of the Saga Englynion' University of Wales, Ph.D. thesis, 1982, Vol. II, pp. 511-31.
- 54 *Duad* I and II, ed. Jenny Rowland, 'Englynion Duad', *Journal of Celtic Studies*, iii (1981), 59-87.
- 55 Ed. Jarman, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-3, p. 24; CLIH I.40-8; XI.107-9.
- 56 Ed. R. Geraint Gruffydd, 'Canu Cadwallon ap Cadfan', AH, pp. 34-41.
- 57 *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 10.
- 58 See Ifor Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1944), p. 26.
- 59 Llefoed's epithet might suggest a link with the *wynebclawr* who had his sight restored by Saint David; see *Buchedd Dewi*, ed. D. Simon Evans (Caerdydd, 1965), pp. 4, 35. Addaon (var. Afaon) may be the son of Taliesin named in the triads and elsewhere; see Rachel Bromwich, *Triodd Ynys Prydein*, p. 269. There is an Elaeth found in 'Bonedd y Saint'; Peter C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff, 1966), p. 62.
- 60 Ed. Jarman, *op. cit.*, p. 58. It is given the title 'Kysul Adaon', but although this poem shares many verses with the Red Book of Talgarth poem of that name, most of these are floating verses found in other examples of the genre. I therefore prefer to treat them as two separate poems; see above p. 181.
- 61 Ed. Ifor Williams, 'Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr', BBCS ii (1925), p. 279.
- 62 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', AH, pp. 284-5.
- 63 Ed. Brynley Roberts, *ibid.*, pp. 296-309.
- 64 Ed. A. O. H. Jarman, *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin* (Caerdydd, 1967).
- 65 Ifor Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry*, pp. 21-2. He is not totally consistent, and earlier argues for the relevancy of some of these features in certain poems, p. 16.
- 66 Gwyn Thomas, *Y Traddodiad Barddol*, pp. 92-6; P. L. Henry, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-83, 125-32.
- 67 This is how Ifor Williams viewed the irrelevant material; *ibid.*, p. 22.
- 68 The poems are all in *milur* verses unlike the saga poems which have a mixture of types, with the *penfyr* tending to predominate in the later period. They have little or no additional ornament.
- 69 'Y Delfryd Arwrol yn yr Hen Ganu', LiC viii (1964-5), 125-49; transl. by the author, 'The Heroic Ideal in Early Welsh Poetry', *Beiträge zur Indogermanistik und Keltologie*, ed. Wolfgang Meid (Innsbruck, 1967), pp. 193-212; also 'Saga Poetry — the Cycle of Llywarch Hen', *A Guide to Welsh Literature*, Vol. I, ed. A. O. H. Jarman and Gwilym Rees Hughes (Swansea, 1976), pp. 98-117; and *The Cynfeirdd* (Cardiff, 1981), pp. 85-7.
- 70 The unity may be seen in the heroic commonplaces studied by T. J. Morgan cited above, found equally in the earliest *hengerdd* and the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*.
- 71 See Shippey, *Old English Verse*, chapter 2 'The Argument of Courage'; Harry Berger, Jr. and H. Marshall Leicester, Jr., 'Social Structure as Doom: the Limits of Heroism in *Beowulf*', *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. Robert B. Burlin and Edward B. Irving, Jr. (Toronto, 1974), pp. 37-79; N. F. Blake, 'The Battle of Maldon', *Neophilologus* 49 (1965), 332-45; R. E. Kaske, *Sapientia et Fortitudo* as the Controlling Theme of *Beowulf*, *Studies in Philology* 60 (1959), 423-56.
- 72 See Rosemary Woolf, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in the *Germania* and in the *Battle of Maldon*', *Anglo-Saxon England* v (1976), 63-81.
- 73 EWGP VI. 30b.