

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 difrifol arall, a fyddai'n gwneud cam ag anrhydedd neu enw da'r awdur.

Teitl y darn: **Virginity and Chastity Tests in Medieval Welsh Prose**

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Virginity and Chastity Tests in Medieval Welsh Prose

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According to a Middle Welsh proverb: 'E gont a del yw frowi hwyr e daw yw friodi' (A tried and tested cunt marries late).¹ This saying not only highlights the importance of virginity in medieval Welsh society, but also implies, in a rather threatening tone, that the value of a young girl entering the marriage market was considered to be significantly impaired – even irrevocably damaged – if she had already lost her virginity. Officially, early medieval Welsh law recognized nine different kinds of marital union (including gift by kin, rape and elopement), and in each case sexual intercourse rather than a marriage ceremony marked the *rite de passage* necessary for a *morwyn* (maiden) to become a *gwraig* (wife).² The most respectable form of union seems to have been *uniad o rodd cenedl* when a girl was given to a man by her kin, and she was, of course, expected to be a virgin – pure, inviolate and not yet pregnant. While the most in-depth treatment of medieval chastity tests to date – Kathleen Coyne Kelly's *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* – discusses 'a wide assortment of texts in English, French, German, and Latin', it does not provide much detail on the Welsh material.³ While there is a clear overlap in some of the material, in particular the medical texts, my work focuses on the legal as well as mythological and theoretical implications and functions of the chastity test.

In the above proverb the verb *profi* (*frowi*) implies that the girl who encounters difficulty in finding a marriage partner is sexually experi-

enced, but the literal meaning of *profi* is to test. Numerous medieval texts (in Welsh as in other languages) refer to various means of verifying virginity or testing chastity. The girl could be subjected to a physical examination; she could be given a potion or medicinal drink; made to wear a chastity-testing object; subjected to an ordeal; or her chastity could become the subject of a prophecy.⁴ Since virginity, ultimately an invisible entity, was difficult to locate in the body, it was often depicted metaphorically in legendary material and visualized as an object – a flower, a clean white shirt, an untainted mirror.⁵ The testing of female virginity and chastity is a common literary motif,⁶ and, as one might expect, this popular misogynist theme is not confined to the Christian west or to the medieval period. Here the aim is to examine a selection of tests which occur in Middle Welsh texts, some of which are native and original, others of which are vernacular translations into Middle Welsh. The range of texts studied is diverse and, whilst some texts are specific to Wales, for example the legal texts, and may be seen to represent a distinctively Welsh culture, others, such as the medical texts, reflect much broader ideas and practices current in the medieval and even classical periods. The aim, therefore, is to shed light upon the mental landscape of medieval Wales and its broader context (geographical and temporal) which both facilitated the generation of the texts discussed and was influenced and reinforced by the concepts expressed in writing. The chapter moves thematically across this landscape visiting a variety of nodes within its discursive structure. The objective is to elucidate the wider terrain rather than imposing one, inevitably simplistic, interpretation upon the significance of virginity and chastity tests within the medieval Welsh discourse. At the same time it is recognized that the meanings (be they literal or metaphorical) and uses (be they real or ideal) of the tests can begin to be elucidated, albeit as elements within a complex and multiple discourse which ranges from moral to economic concerns and may even be seen to contain an undertow of subversion.

The tests demonstrate not only the desires to uncover whether a woman is a virgin and to control female sexuality, but also the tendency to doubt a woman's word. Even the paragon of all virgins, the Blessed Virgin Mary, has her physical virginity put to the test in the apocryphal infancy gospels. *Buched Meir* (the Life of the Virgin Mary) was translated or adapted into Welsh sometime before the end of the thirteenth century, and relates how Mary and Joseph's chastity was subjected to doubt. They were required to drink the bitter waters of the

temple and turn around seven times; had they lied, they would have risked sudden death.⁷ Joseph, who had been suspected of raping Mary, is vindicated and the crowd fall at Mary's feet 'y erchi madeueint ydi am eu dryctyp' (to request forgiveness from her for their suspicions). Later in the *buchedd* Mary, having just given birth to Jesus in a cave, comes under suspicion again when the midwife Salome, famously also represented in the Middle English N-Town and Chester mystery cycles, notices that there is no blood or afterbirth. She subjects the Virgin to a physical examination with unexpected results: her hand, which dares to probe the Virgin's body, withers and becomes deformed.⁸ The apocrypha confirm Mary's virginity *in partu* and *post partum*, and all who doubt her purity are punished accordingly. In the Middle Welsh Life of St Collen, the saint is given a lily by the pope which had previously regenerated from a withered stem in front of the pagans as proof that the Virgin had borne a son.⁹ The lily, used frequently as a symbol of Mary's purity and often depicted in medieval annunciation scenes, here furnishes miraculous confirmation of Mary's unique physical condition – pregnant but paradoxically still a virgin, fertile but untainted by original sin. While the Marian virginity-tests humiliate the accusers and vindicate the virgin, in other medieval sources it is often the accused who is subjected to public ridicule, and the women who pass the tests are few and far between.

The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi: Aranrhod and Goewin

Virginity and the power associated with virginity are of primary importance to the events of the *Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*. Math son of Mathonwy, lord of Gwynedd, has an unusual affliction:

Ac yn yr oes honno, Math uab Mathonwy ny bydei uyw, namyn tra uei y deudroet y[m]mlyc croth morwyn, onyt kynwryf ryuel a'y llesteirei.¹⁰

And at that time Math son of Mathonwy might not live save while his two feet were in the fold of a maiden's lap, unless the turmoil of war prevented him.¹¹

Goewin ferch Pebin acts as his virgin foot-holder, but her beauty attracts the unwanted attention of Gilfaethwy (Math's nephew). Gwydion (Gilfaethwy's brother) hatches a cunning plan in order to

remove Math from his court at Caer Dathyl and arrange for Gilfaethwy to sleep with Goewin in Math's bed. Her handmaidens are driven from the chamber and she is brutally raped.

Although rape, at least in the early period, was considered to be one of the nine forms of legal union, it was also regarded as a punishable offence for which a number of fines were payable, including *amobr*, which was payable to the virgin's territorial lord/king.¹² The lord, to a certain extent, appears to have been responsible for defending the virginity of the maids who lived within his territory, and *amobr* was paid to the lord whenever a virgin was raped, given to a man by her kin or whenever the girl herself committed a sexual act which was deemed inappropriate. In the case of sexual promiscuity, *amobr* appears to have been extracted from the girl's family until she was declared a common prostitute. In 1336, for example, three women were declared prostitutes in Bromfield and were given white rods symbolic of their sexual transgressions: 'so that their kinsfolk would not henceforth be troubled for *amobr*'.¹³ According to Robert Rees Davies, the Marcher lords in particular were keen on exploiting the financial benefits of *amobr*. By the fourteenth century *amobr* 'had deteriorated into a sordid pretext for increasing the lord's revenue', and it was not abolished by the English crown until the sixteenth century.¹⁴

In the magical world of the *Mabinogi* no fines are levied, although Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are punished for their crime. Math uses his magic wand to transform the brothers into animals and, for a period of three years, they reproduce; each year they are transformed into different animals and bring forth offspring. As Roberta Valente points out, the punishment fits the crime: since they have committed a sexual assault, they are punished sexually.¹⁵ Math, Goewin's lord, has failed to protect her virginity, but now he acts honourably towards her and makes her his wife. She is thus saved from the humiliation of becoming Gilfaethwy's wife, and rescued from her ambivalent position in society. Following the rape Goewin can no longer be classified as a *morwyn* (virgin), but nor is she anyone's *gwraig* (wife): "Arglwyd", heb y Goewyn, "keis uorwyn a uo is dy draet weithon. Gwreic wyf i."¹⁶ ('Lord', said Goewin, 'seek now a maiden to be under thy feet. I am a woman.')¹⁷

In this unusual case, not only is Math responsible for protecting the virgins in his territory; his sovereignty is completely dependent upon the physical purity of one of the maidens of his realm. The protective role played by Math's virginal foot-holder may be compared to the role

of the king's foot-holder in the Welsh laws of court. According to *Llyfr Iorwerth*, the *troedyavc* (foot-holder) was responsible for offering protection to the king, and would hold the king's feet in his lap, with his back to the fire, until the king retired to his chamber.¹⁸ While the courtly foot-holder's power is associated with his privileged position within the court, Goewin's power is associated exclusively with her virginity. The notion that a virgin (or even a chaste wife) possesses supernatural powers is a common motif in folk literature as well as hagiography.¹⁹ The virgin is frequently attributed with protective powers or healing properties. For instance, in the Life of Melangell, the Welsh patron saint of hares, a hare takes refuge under Melangell's skirt and the pursuing hounds, presumably aware that Melangell's body radiates sanctity, cower and refuse to go near the animal. Brochwel Ysgithrog witnesses the scene and offers Melangell lands upon which she founds a sanctuary and nunnery.²⁰ Although other Welsh saints offer protection to animals, it is undoubtedly significant that the hare seeks protection under Melangell's skirt: the power of her virginity protects the creature, since feminine sanctity and virginity are inextricably linked.

In the case of Goewin, when the maid loses her virginity she also loses her protective powers. Math has to seek another virgin to hold his feet and thus protect his realm. Gwydion, having served his penance, is consulted and suggests that Math choose Aranrhod. Rather than emphasize his own relationship with Aranrhod (she is his sister), he focuses on Math's familial relationship with her (she is his niece).²¹ When asked to confirm that she is a virgin Aranrhod gives Math an ambiguous answer: 'I know not but that I am'. Since Math's life hangs in the balance, he subjects Aranrhod to a virginity test:

Yna y kymerth ynteu yr hutlath a'y chamu. 'Camha di dros honn,' heb ef, 'ac ot wyt uorwyn, mi a ednebydaf.' Yna y camawd hitheu dros yr hutlath, ac ar y cam hwnnw, adaw mab brasuelyn mawr a oruc. Sef a wnaeth y mab, dodi diaspat uchel. Yn ol diaspat y mab, kyrchu y drws a oruc hi, ac ar hynny adaw y ryw bethan ohonei. A chyn cael o neb guelet yr eil olwac arnaw, Gwydion a'y kymerth, ac a droes llen o bali yn y gylch, ac a'e cudywad. Sef y cudyawd, y mywn llaw gist is traed y wely.²²

Then he took the magic wand and bent it. 'Step over this,' said he, 'and if thou art a maiden, I shall know.' Then she stepped over the magic wand, and with that step she dropped a fine boy-child with rich yellow hair. The boy uttered a loud cry. After the boy's cry she made for the door, and

thereupon dropped a small something, and before anyone could get a second glimpse of it, Gwydion took it and wrapped a sheet of silk around it, and hid it. The place where he hid it was inside a small chest at the foot of his bed.²³

The wand, quite obviously a phallic symbol, demonstrates not only that Aranrhod is not a virgin, but that she has also concealed two pregnancies. Math has already used his wand to punish Gwydion and Gilfaethwy for their sexual misconduct; now he employs the wand again to determine whether or not Aranrhod is a virgin. Her failure to pass the test results in her public humiliation and she flees the room ashamed, perhaps expecting to be punished for being a *twyllforwyn* (false virgin).

Stith Thompson and John Arnott MacCulloch record erroneously that the virginity test in the *Mabinogi* involves passing *under* a rod; the fact that Aranrhod steps over the wand, and, in the process, opens her legs as she straddles the phallic symbol, is important to the sexual imagery of the test.²⁴ Thomas Gwynn Jones proposes a connection between the virginity test and the folk custom of *priodas coes ysgub* – an informal marriage ceremony which involved stepping over a broom handle. He suggests that there is a linguistic connection between the Welsh word for wand (*llath*) and the legal term for a marriage which involved elopement or abduction without the consent of the girl's kin (*llathlud*): 'one wonders whether the element *llath*, "wand, staff" in the term *llathlud* in the Welsh Law, may refer to the practice of stepping over a rod, especially a bent rod as a chastity test in the tale of Math'.²⁵ The white rod, as we have seen, was also symbolic of sexual transgression: it was given to sexually promiscuous women and, according to some law texts, a silver rod was given to the king when a virgin in his territory was raped.²⁶ In the *Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi* Math's wand reveals publicly that Aranrhod's reputation is no better than a prostitute's. She is scorned by her brother Gwydion who reminds her that on only one occasion can a maid lose her virginity: 'ni'th elwir bellach byth yn uorwyn' (Never again shalt thou be called maiden!).²⁷

According to the Welsh law of women, the girl's close family, her *cyfneseftiaid* – that is, her parents, brothers and sisters – may be called upon to vouch for her physical purity, especially, as we shall see below, if she were found to be a *twyllforwyn* (false virgin) on her wedding night. In medieval Wales there was a close bond between brother and

sister. The girl's legal status in society was closely linked to that of her brother and the fines payable for insulting a girl (*sarhaed*) or murdering her (*galanas*) were equivalent to half of her brother's *sarhaed* and *galanas*. Gwydion is thus an obvious candidate to vouch for his sister's virginity. However, as Christopher McAll notes in his discussion of the false virgin:

Obviously if the *cyfneseftaid* are to be reliable witnesses in such a case, it is essential that they should have had the opportunity of observing the behaviour of the girl from close quarters over a considerable period of time, or at least, from the age of twelve onwards.²⁸

First impressions might lead one to assume that Gwydion offers his sister to Math in an attempt to trick him and thus take revenge for the punishment inflicted upon him and Gilfaethwy. Nevertheless, it is also possible that his sister became pregnant during his three years absence, and that he genuinely believed her to be a virgin. He certainly seems disappointed by her actions and rears her youngest son in order to remind her permanently of her shame and humiliation.

According to a legal triad in *Llyfr Cyfnerth*, a pregnant woman wishing to identify the father of her child should swear an oath in front of a priest and vow that she will give birth to a serpent if she lies about the paternity of the child.²⁹ Whilst it is possible that the oath was meant to be taken literally, it is more likely that the woman in question was intended to fear an abnormal or premature birth. Despite the lack of textual references to contraception and abortion in Welsh sources, these must have been real issues which concerned the Welsh community. The virginity test in the *Mabinogi* appears to act almost as an abortifacient – dispelling any ‘foreign bodies’ from the female body tested. Medieval medical recipes designed to increase the flow of menstrual blood and clean out the womb may in fact have acted as abortifacients.³⁰

Aranrhod's ‘culpability’ makes her a more interesting and credible character than Goewin, Math's virgin foot-holder. While Goewin disappears from the legend, and no further mention is made of whether Math succeeds in finding another virgin to replace her, Aranrhod remains one of the main characters. By foregrounding Aranrhod and developing the analysis of her character the author is, at least implicitly, acknowledging the greater interest in transgression and the social reality of such behaviour. Such a weighting of the narrative

structure opens up a potentially subversive space and therefore lends the legend literary complexity. Ultimately, however, the message implicit in this branch of the *Mabinogi* is that virginity and fertility were not personal, private matters, for they were of extreme importance to the kin group as a whole.

Twyllforwyndod: ‘false’ virginity and the Welsh law texts

If a young woman was discovered to be a false virgin on her wedding night, that is, if she had misled her partner into believing that she was a virgin and he discovered that she was not, then the Welsh laws recommended that the girl be subjected to a public shaming ritual in which the wedding guests were called into the room and the girl's nightshirt was severed to reveal her genitalia:

Os hitheu ny mynn y diheura6, lladher y chrys yn guu6ch a'e gwerdyr, a roder dinawet bl6yd yn y lla6 g6edy ira6 y losg6rn. Ac o geill y gynhal, kymeret yn lle y ran o'r argyfreu. Ac ony eill y kynhal, bit heb dim.

If she does not wish to be vindicated, let her shift be cut off as high as her genitals and let a year-old steer with its tail greased be put into her hand. And if she can hold it, let her take it in place of her share of the *argyfrau*. And if she cannot hold it, let her have nothing.³¹

Since she had deceived her husband as to her sexual inexperience, the laws prescribed that she be punished by means of sexual humiliation. Another version of the law texts suggests that candles should be lighted and ‘her shift cut before her as high as her pubes, and behind her as high as her buttocks’.³² Once again it is clear that to medieval Welsh society (at least in theory) a girl's sexual and reproductive organs were not considered to be private parts, but were very much of concern both to her own kin group and to her husband's family. If the girl had already entered into sexual relations then there was a chance, of course, that she could be pregnant with another man's child.

The laws do not shed any light on how the girl's partner is to detect *twyllforwyndod*. Presumably he was expected to doubt her purity if she did not bleed when they first had intercourse. This would explain why the *neithiorwyr* (wedding guests) were called into the bedroom: to examine the sheets and thus act as witnesses to the husband's

accusations. Yet, as Kelly has argued, the hymen is largely a social construct and although the presence of hymeneal blood was taken as one of the important signs of virginity in the Middle Ages, it was also acknowledged that not all virgins bleed when they first experience sexual intercourse.³³ The fact that a girl's physical intactness may be damaged accidentally during sport or a physical examination is also explicitly acknowledged in the work of the early church fathers.³⁴ In a relocation of virginity from the individual body to the community, the Welsh laws point out that it is difficult to determine whether a woman is a virgin or not once her body has reached physical maturity. For this reason, an opportunity was given to the girl's close family to defend her honour and argue that she was a virgin prior to her wedding night. If the *cyfneseftiaid* were unwilling to vouch for her virginity then the girl was ostracized by her kin and rejected by her partner. She forfeited her right to her *cowyll* (payment for her virginity) which was usually promised to the girl by her husband on their wedding night.³⁵ Nor was she entitled to *agweddi* or *argyfrau*, the usual payments required when a couple separated within the first seven years of marriage.³⁶ Instead the girl was given a year-old steer if she could hold on to its tail, which had been deliberately greased to make it slippery. This derisory form of compensation was obviously meant to mock rather than reward the *twyllforwyn*. The same kind of punishment was also meted out to the deserted mistress who had voluntarily entered into a clandestine relationship with a man and then been rejected. As Nerys W. Patterson has argued, there is a strong element of burlesque in the treatment of the false virgin and the deserted mistress and the symbolism implicit in grasping a bullock's greased tail is overtly sexual.³⁷

According to the letter of Welsh law, women could not inherit land. Although there were exceptions to this rule, it seems that generally the principal attributes a Welsh woman brought with her to a marriage were her status, beauty and reputation. Her kindred were expected to contribute moveable goods in the form of a dowry (*argyfrau*), but were not legally bound to contribute wealth in the form of lands. In this respect, a woman's body (her physical purity and fertility) was perhaps her most important contribution to the marital contract, a contract which depended primarily on sexual union. One could argue that the virginity of the bride was even more important to medieval Welsh society than it was to a society which allowed women to inherit land and wealth in the absence of male heirs.³⁸ The law texts may be seen as reflecting a set of ideals laid down by the society which produced them.

The extent to which these ideals reflect social reality is an extremely complex problem. As Davies points out: 'They were written by law-men for law-men and are thereby more concerned to display the subtlety of legal argument rather than to provide an insight into actual social situations.'³⁹ Dafydd Jenkins has shown that although the law texts were continuously rewritten and adapted, they persisted in preserving archaic elements, and it is extremely difficult to use the Welsh texts to date specific practices or punishments.⁴⁰ The law texts describe an elaborate, burlesque punishment for the false virgin, but whether Welsh women who deceived their husbands were actually punished in this way is not clear. Although it is not known to what extent female virginity and chastity were put to the test in medieval Wales and whether false virgins were punished as recommended in the Welsh law texts, a similar form of punishment involving public exposure of the 'private' parts crops up elsewhere in legendary material.

Tegau Eurfron and the three chastity tests

Numerous medieval legends, usually associated with King Arthur's court, describe a magical chastity-testing mantle which will not fit false virgins or women who have been unfaithful to their husbands. When placed on an unchaste wife the mantle rises up above the woman's genitalia and exposes to all those present the nature of her sin. If the wife has only thought unchaste thoughts then the mantle will merely crinkle to reveal a toe. However, in the vast majority of different versions of this legend the mantle rises well above the pudenda, usually to the neck. All of the noblewomen at Arthur's court (except one – in Welsh tradition, Tegau Eurfron) are humiliated in a burlesque ritual which is similar to the treatment of the false virgin in the Welsh law texts. The mantle resembles a garment that has been cut with shears or scissors in an incomplete thirteenth-century German poem and a fifteenth-century Scottish ballad, 'The Boy and the Mantle'.⁴¹ In the anonymous twelfth-century *Lai du Cort Mantel* and Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet* a brooch on the mantle bursts open and the ladies' buttocks are also revealed for comic effect.⁴² Other versions of the legend, including Robert Biket's twelfth-century French *Lai du Cor* and Heinrich von dem Türlin's thirteenth-century German *Diu Crône*, refer to a chastity-testing horn or goblet from which no cuckold can

drink without spilling his beverage.⁴³ As Kelly has noted, the women are rarely punished for their infidelity, since the test has a tendency to rebound on the men: it is frequently the men who have insisted on the test who are humiliated, not the women.⁴⁴ Many of the medieval European versions of the legend locate the chastity tests in Wales: in *Lai du Cor*, *Lai du Cort Mantel*, *Le Livre de Caradoc* and *Huth Merlin* the chastity tests take place at Arthur's court at Caerleon (the location of Arthur's court in Geoffrey of Monmouth's influential *Historia Regum Britanniae*); in *Lanzelet* the tests occur at 'Kardigan' (Aberteifi) and at the end of the *Lai du Cort Mantel* the author states that Caradoc left the mantle at an abbey in Wales where it had recently been discovered. Nevertheless, there is no extant medieval Welsh version of the legend.

A summarized Welsh version of *Chwedl Tegau Eurfron* is preserved in an eighteenth-century manuscript in the hand of Gwallter Mechain.⁴⁵ In the Welsh legend Arthur's sister (the wife of Urien Rheged) sends three magical chastity-testing objects to the court: (i) a mantle which could not be worn by an adulterous wife, since it would crinkle around her neck, (ii) a drinking horn which would stick to the lips of a cuckold and (iii) pork chops which would choke any husband who had been deceived by his wife.⁴⁶ None of the women of the court dare to try on the mantle except Tegau Eurfron, and her husband is the only knight to succeed in drinking from the horn and eating the chops. Even Gwenhwyfar, Arthur's queen, refuses to try on the mantle and attempts to discourage Arthur from drinking from the horn. Her noncommittal response to Arthur's request for assurance is reminiscent of Aranrhod's ambiguous affirmation of her virginity: 'Fe ofynnodd y brenhin Arthur iw frenhines Gwenhwyfar, a allai fe yfed? Hithau a atebodd, "Gwnewch o's mynnwch."' ⁴⁷ (King Arthur asked his queen Gwenhwyfar if he could drink. She answered, 'Do so if you wish.')

Although the Welsh legend of Tegau Eurfron is preserved in a late manuscript, a version of the tale involving a chastity-testing mantle was certainly current in late medieval Wales. Numerous Welsh poets from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries refer to Tegau Eurfron (Tegau of the golden breast) and she is frequently used as a paragon in Welsh courtly love poetry and formal praise poetry.⁴⁸ The element *Teg* in her name (meaning pretty) provided the poets with plenty of opportunity to emphasize the beauty of the women they were praising and the combination *Teg/Tegau* was also convenient for the purposes of the Welsh *cynghanedd*.⁴⁹ Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl. 1315/20–1350/70)

compares his lover Morfudd to Tegau and on another occasion when complaining that Dyddgu has refused his affections he refers to her as 'ail Degau' (a second Tegau).⁵⁰ Other poets, including Tudur Penllyn, Lewys Glyn Cothi and Dafydd ab Edmwnd, refer to Tegau's mantle, and Guto'r Glyn (c. 1435–c. 1493) praises his patron's wife's chastity by suggesting that Gwenhwyfar, the wife of Siôn Edwart from Chirk, could quite confidently wear Tegau's mantle since it would adequately reach the floor.⁵¹ Thus it seems that Tegau Eurfron, a character belonging to myth (where a wife's chastity could be tested with magical objects), was employed by medieval poets and compared to real Welsh women. The aim here was not to doubt the wife's chastity or humiliate any of the real women present, but rather to flatter and praise their fidelity. The chastity-testing objects could quite easily have been used for comic effect in Welsh erotic or satirical poetry, but I have not yet come across any examples which refer to Tegau's mantle in this context.⁵²

Tegau's chastity is contrasted with Gwenhwyfar's (Guinevere's) infidelity in the Welsh triads, for in Aberystwyth, NLW MS Peniarth 47, the triad 'Teir Aniweir Wreic Ynys Prydein' (Three unfaithful wives of the island of Britain) follows hard on the heels of 'Teir Diweirwreic Ynys Prydein' (Three faithful or chaste wives of the island of Britain).⁵³ The two women represent extremes of sexual behaviour which correspond to the Eve/Mary dichotomy that permeated medieval discourse. However, while Tegau is named as one of the three faithful wives of the island of Britain, Gwenhwyfar's reputation excels all three unfaithful wives, since 'she shamed a better man than any of the others'. The triads appear to have acted as mnemonic aids to professional storytellers in Wales and they often preserve remnants of medieval tales that are no longer extant. Tegau's reputation as a model of chastity in medieval Wales is here confirmed, although no extant Middle Welsh tale relates her legend. Nor are there extant stories relating how Hemthryd daughter of Mabon (who is named in the same triad) became known as the paragon of female chastity, and excelled even Tegau Eurfron's reputation.⁵⁴

The chastity-testing mantle is included in some of the lists which describe the magical properties of the Thirteen Treasures of the island of Britain.⁵⁵ Here Tegau's mantle detects cases of false virginity as well as adultery, although the former is not specifically mentioned in Gwallter Mechain's eighteenth-century summary of *Chwedl Tegau Eurfron*. Many of the other treasures listed are otherworldly objects

capable of testing a man's courage, his social standing, or other attributes considered important in the idealized world of medieval chivalry. The Coat of Padarn Beisrydd, for example, would fit a well-born man, but would go nowhere near a churl. The treasures represent a medieval male fantasy; just as a nobleman might have wished for a magical mantle that would make him invisible on the battlefield (the mantle called *Llen Arthur*), so he might also have desired a magical mantle that would reveal to him whether his wife had been faithful to him during his absence. Although it is perhaps impossible to prove that the tale is of Celtic provenance, it is quite obvious that the central motif – the magical chastity-testing object that could automatically read a woman's body – was extremely popular in many different cultures over a wide period of time. Whilst it is possible to discern lines of transmission and affiliation between many of the continental versions of the tale, it is also possible that a motif as popular and comically rewarding as the chastity-testing mantle could occur in other guises in other genres completely independently.⁵⁶

The humour in the tale works on various levels: it is bawdy, visual and slapstick, but it is also quite subtle in its criticisms and may be read in more than one way. On one level it functions as a misogynist warning to all husbands that they should not trust their wives and a sharp reminder to all 'loose' women that they will be publicly humiliated if their sexual deceptions are uncovered (as in the Welsh laws regarding the false virgin). Male fidelity is never an issue and the virtuous wife, symbolized by Tegau Eurfron, is a rarity. Gwenhwyfar/ Guinevere, as R. Howard Bloch points out, 'far from an exception, is the figure of everywoman [and] the vehicle of universal guilt'.⁵⁷ Yet the hundreds of ladies who fail the test and the cuckolds who are ridiculed for expecting better of them all belong to the upper classes, and the humour is all the more effective since it mocks the privileged and satirizes Arthurian chivalric ideals. Thérèse Saint-Paul argues that the humour in the tale is used for conservative purposes. Through the medium of laughter the story both acknowledges and reinforces the desired norms of social behaviour: 'a satire of the abnormal which thereby reinforces the norms'.⁵⁸ Kelly is also of the opinion that the test simultaneously upholds and undermines medieval ideas of chivalry. The testing object

functions metonymically here, pointing as it does to a breakdown of societal norms. Both women and men have transgressed their (assigned) roles . . . The scene in which men choose to ignore or nullify the results of

the chastity ordeal effectively functions to deny the knowledge of such a failure in the homosocial system.⁵⁹

As in the *Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*, when the perceived norms of society are subverted, chaos and disorder result and one of the symptoms of a dysfunctional society is seen to be sexual deception by women. Exactly how to identify that deception was not only a pre-occupation of legendary material, but was also an issue that cropped up in medical and scientific treatises.

Virginity and the medical texts

In his *Historia* Herodotus (c.490–25 bc) describes how King Pheros, who had been blind for ten years, received an oracle informing him that he would regain his sight if he washed his eyes in the urine of a faithful woman who had never slept with any man other than her husband. Eventually he found a woman who cured him and married her.⁶⁰ It is possible that the woman Herodotus had in mind was meant to be a virgin, and that her physical purity lent special healing powers to her urine. Certainly uroscopy, the analysis of a patient's urine, was one of the most common methods of diagnosing illness in both the classical and the medieval periods. According to Galenic theory, an imbalance in the four humours led to physical illness and this imbalance could be detected in the urine and subsequently corrected. Medieval medical treatises – including the Middle Welsh texts – were heavily dependent upon classical medical theory. As Morfydd E. Owen has shown, although some of the Welsh texts are associated with the native physicians of Myddfai, medieval Welsh medical lore is very much a part of wider European medicinal inheritance.⁶¹

Welsh treatises on uroscopy refer to using various kinds of urine to heal afflictions as well as to identify the causes of disease. Cardiff, Central Library, MS 3.242, for example, refers to using human urine to heal a wound and a mixture of ram's urine and breast milk to heal deafness; it does not, however, note any afflictions which can be cured by washing in a virgin's urine.⁶² Urine analysis could be employed not only to detect illness but also to identify pregnancy, determine the length of pregnancy and differentiate between a sexually active woman and a genuine virgin. In Aberystwyth, NLW MS Mostyn 88, a small hand sketched in the margin occurs three times as though pointing to

particularly important or interesting sections of the text: on one occasion the example given is a means of verifying virginity, the second, pregnancy, and the third indicator highlights the range of different colours of urine and emphasizes that the liquid should be collected in a clean glass receptacle, allowed to settle and held up to the sun's rays for examination.⁶³ The colour of the virgin's urine is likened to an unripened apple:

Dwr morwyn ieuangk lan a ddyly uod ual aual heb adduedu. Ac o hynny dwr du las ual lliw plwm a arwyddoka gleindyd morwyndod.⁶⁴

The urine of a pure, young virgin should be like an unripened apple. And silvery black urine, similar in colour to lead, signifies purity of virginity.

The choice of colour here (black) is somewhat unexpected, since other medical texts state that a virgin's urine should be white in colour.⁶⁵ The Welsh urine test is perhaps meant to indicate that the virgin's urine should be silver or translucent, rather than cloudy. Mostyn 88 (like *De secretis mulierum*) also confirms that the presence of seed in the bottom of the urine may be taken as a sign of intercourse between a man and a woman: 'a ddengys daruod i choreptio sef yw hynny torri i morwyndod'⁶⁶ (which demonstrates that she has been corrupted, that is that her virginity has been broken). According to the Welsh text, bloody urine in which the blood had coagulated like milk indicated that the woman was with child, and subsequently her urine would alter as her pregnancy progressed.⁶⁷ Thus, the colour and appearance of urine could be used to determine whether or not a girl was telling the truth about her sexual (in)experience.

Another recipe for verifying virginity, which also involves urine, is found in one of the medical texts associated with the physicians of Myddfai. According to *Llyfr Coch Hergest*:

Or mynny wybot g6ahan r6ng g6reic a mor6yn. nad uaen muchud y my6n d6fyr. a dyro idi oe yuet. ac os g6reic byd yn diannot hi a y bissa6. os mor6yn, nyt a m6y no chynt.⁶⁸

If you wish to differentiate between a [sexually active] woman and a virgin sharpen jet stone into water and give it her to drink. And if she is a woman she will go and urinate immediately. If she is a virgin she will not wish to go [and urinate] any more than usual.

Although this diagnostic appears strange at first, it is in fact completely consistent with medieval medical theory concerning virginity and the female body. When examined in the context of other medical treatises and lapidaries it confirms medieval concepts relating to virginity and sheds light on medieval views regarding female anatomy.

An almost identical virginity test is found in a lapidary by Albertus Magnus of Cologne (c.1190–1280).⁶⁹ The influence of this text on the Welsh material is apparent, although it does not necessarily follow that the *Mineralia* was the direct source for the Welsh test. The *Llyfr Coch* fails to mention that jet stone can be used to relieve labour pains or that it can provoke menstruation in women when burnt between their legs. Fumigation using various substances was commonly prescribed for women suffering from retention of the menses and it was also recommended for women who abstained from sexual intercourse. Suffocation of the womb was considered to be the curse of chastity; since, according to Galenic theory, women as well as men produced seed, it was not considered healthy for a woman to retain her seed indefinitely. Though sexual intercourse was usually believed to be healthy and necessary for the proper functioning of the human body, fumigation could release pent-up menstruation or female seed without damaging a woman's virginity.⁷⁰

Various medieval physicians, including Gilbertus Anglicus, Nicholas of Florence and William of Saliceto, refer to fumigation as a means for testing virginity.⁷¹ Jet stone, coal, cockle or dock are burnt between the girl's legs and if she smells or tastes the fumes then she is supposed to be sexually experienced, whereas if she is a virgin she should not be able to sense the smoke. Virginity tests involving fumigation are more difficult to understand than those involving urine-provoking beverages, since surely only the girl herself could verify whether or not she could taste the substance. It is not known whether the medical tests for virginity were actually carried out, but Albertus Magnus implies that they were and that the properties of jet were known *from experience*.⁷² Why jet stone in particular is included in the recipes is unclear.

While tests involving jet could involve fumigation as well as preparing a drink for the virgin, both methods can be shown to rely on an acceptance of the paradigm that proposed an inverse similarity of the male and female genital organs. In the medieval period it was generally accepted that the male body was the norm and that the female body was an inferior version of the male body. Most texts

include diagrams of the male body in their discussions on general issues such as bleeding. While, for example, the male body is illustrated in a section on *gwaedu* (bleeding) in Mostyn 88, no diagrams of the female body are extant in Welsh medical texts. The female body was considered to be similar to the male body in almost all respects, but with inverted genitals, almost like a wax impression of the male genitals.⁷³ No mention is made of the clitoris, since this did not correspond to any part of the male body;⁷⁴ and no attempt is made to differentiate between the openings of the female urethra and vagina. Because men appeared to have one opening through which sperm and urine passed, it was believed that women passed urine and menstrual blood through the same hole.

Urine, then, was believed to pass through the uterus, and the uterus of a virgin was believed to be smaller than that of a sexually experienced woman. According to Soranus, the uterus would become larger during sexual intercourse just as the penis would elongate.⁷⁵ A virgin's vagina would be tighter than that of an experienced woman and it would take longer for her to urinate. Nicholas of Florence differentiates between the way in which a virgin urinates and the way in which a woman passes water:

The urine of a virgin is thin and clear because the passages of the womb and vulva are narrow, so nothing descends into the urine except what is subtle, neither thickening nor muddying it. Because of this, a virgin urinates more delicately and for a longer period of time than does a woman who has been corrupted.⁷⁶

Thus, if a virgin was given a drink containing fragments of jet stone (as in the Welsh test), it would not automatically pass through her, whereas the more experienced woman, with a larger urethra and slacker 'entrance' to her body, would pass water more easily. It was probably assumed that the fragments of jet (like seed) would 'muddy' the urine and alter its appearance. In the case of fumigation with jet the fumes would pass through an experienced woman's genitals, but would not penetrate the tight vagina of a virgin. As Kelly has shown, the female body was believed to be closed but not sealed; in other words, even the body of a virgin possessed passages which were permeable, since menstrual blood and urine had to be emitted without defloration.⁷⁷ First blood, which is often taken as a sign of virginity, is variously described as being due to the destruction of a venous membrane or to the veins in

the sides of the vagina bursting on penetration. While recipes for faking virginity as well as verifying virginity are occasionally found in medieval medical tests,⁷⁸ the Welsh texts, though including numerous recipes relating to fertility, promoting sperm, urine and menses, do not, as far as I am aware, describe any means of *faking* virginity. The tests could plausibly have been censored, but it is more likely that these particular recipes were never included. Identifying virginity appears to have been considered more important than faking it.

Although it was extremely important that a girl be a virgin on her 'wedding' night, she was not expected to remain a virgin: in the eyes of secular society fertility – and in particular the ability to produce male heirs – was perhaps even more important than virginity. As one might expect, the Welsh medical texts pay more attention to fertility and pregnancy than they do to virginity. Fertility, chastity and piety were all considered to be important characteristics for women within marriage. Many of the virginity tests, particularly those found in legendary material, double up as chastity tests aimed at revealing whether married women have had adulterous affairs. Male chastity, however, is not tested. Virginity also was considered to be primarily a female attribute and, perhaps since it was both precious and empowering, perpetual virginity does not seem to have been frequently encouraged in medieval Wales. In Wales, *amobr* was extracted, presumably from the parents. 'Although *amobr* may not have been enforced uniformly all over Wales throughout the whole of the medieval period, court rolls and ministers' accounts reveal that it made considerable sums of money for certain territorial lords.⁷⁹ Thus, virginity was an economic as well as a moral concern, and little wonder that few lords were willing to donate lands and provide long-term financial assistance for nunneries where women could remain perpetual virgins. Whilst numerous monasteries for men were founded in medieval Wales, only three small and economically unstable houses for women appear to have existed.⁸⁰ Virginity was an important commodity in the medieval marriage market, but not a personal treasure to be withdrawn and safeguarded from society indefinitely.

Notes

This is based on the final chapter of my Ph.D. thesis, 'Y Forwyn Fair, Santesau a Lleianod: Agweddu ar Wryfod a Diweirdeb yng Nghymru'r Oesoedd

Canol' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff, 1996). I am grateful to Professor Sioned Davies and Dr Marged Haycock for their helpful comments and suggestions concerning the original Welsh chapter in my thesis.

- ¹ Aberystwyth, NLW, MS Peniarth 17, fols 30–1 (second half of the thirteenth century). Translations from Middle Welsh are my own unless otherwise stated. A more literal translation of this would be as follows: 'The cunt which comes to be tested marries late.'
- ² On the nine legal unions see T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc', in Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd E. Owen (eds), *The Welsh Law of Women* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), pp. 23–39. On *gwraig briod* in the eyes of the Church see Christopher McAll, 'The normal paradigms of a woman's life in the Irish and Welsh law texts', in Jenkins and Owen (eds), *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 7–22 (pp. 16–17).
- ³ Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 11.
- ⁴ Gerald of Wales, for instance, refers to the art of scapulimancy, prophesying whether a woman was chaste or not by using a ram's shoulder-blade; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 145–6.
- ⁵ For other examples of this motif see Cartwright, 'Y Forwyn Fair', pp. 177–81, and Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 8–9, 63–74.
- ⁶ See Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 6 vols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1932–6), vol. 3, pp. 312–16.
- ⁷ The test is similar to that in Numbers 5:16–31 which involves testing a wife's fidelity.
- ⁸ Mary Williams, 'Buched Meir Wry', *Revue Celtique*, 33 (1912), 207–38 (218, 220).
- ⁹ Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *Lives of the British Saints*, 4 vols (London: Cymmrodorion, 1907–13), vol. 4, pp. 376–7.
- ¹⁰ *Math Uab Mathonwy Pedwaredd Gainc y Mabinogi*, ed. Ian Hughes (Aberystwyth: Adran y Gymraeg, Prifysgol Cymru, Aberystwyth, 2000), p. 1.
- ¹¹ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London: Everyman, 1949; new revised edition 1993), p. 47.
- ¹² On rape see Jenkins and Owen (eds), *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 49, 86–8, 139, 155, 177.
- ¹³ Robert Rees Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282–1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 137, n. 25.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137–8, and Davies, 'The twilight of Welsh law, 1284–1536', *History*, 51 (1966), 143–64 (155).
- ¹⁵ Roberta Louise Valente, 'Merched y Mabinogi: women and the thematic structure of the four branches' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cornell University, 1986), pp. 252–3.
- ¹⁶ *Math*, p. 5.

- ¹⁷ *Mabinogion*, p. 52.
- ¹⁸ *Llyfr Iorwerth*, ed. Aled Rhys Wiliam (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1960), p. 18. On the Welsh laws of court see T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and his Court* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).
- ¹⁹ See Thompson, *Motif-Index*, vol. 3, pp. 314–15.
- ²⁰ For the life of Melangell see Huw Pryce, 'A new edition of the *Historia Divae Monacellae*', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 82 (1994), 23–40. On the female saints of Wales and the importance of virginity in Welsh hagiography see Jane Cartwright, 'Dead virgins: feminine sanctity in medieval Wales', *Medium Ævum*, 71 (2002), 1–28.
- ²¹ See *Math*, p. 7; *Mabinogion*, p. 54.
- ²² *Math*, pp. 7–8.
- ²³ *Mabinogion*, p. 54. The 'small something' is an undeveloped child, which I take to mean a foetus.
- ²⁴ John Arnott MacCulloch, *Celtic Mythology* (London: Constable & Co., 1918), p. 96; Thompson, *Motif-Index*, vol. 3, p. 314; Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, p. 66.
- ²⁵ Thomas Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folklore and Folk Custom* (London: Methuen, 1930), p. 185. Jenkins and Owen, on the other hand, take the element *llath* to mean 'stealth' as in *lladrad* (theft) (*Welsh Law of Women*, p. 208). For a detailed discussion of *llathrud* see Charles-Edwards, 'Nau Kynywedi Teithiauc', in *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 30–2.
- ²⁶ Morfydd E. Owen, 'Shame and reparation: women's place in the kin', in Jenkins and Owen (eds), *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 40–68 (p. 43, n. 13). See also pp. 142–3.
- ²⁷ *Math*, p. 8; *Mabinogion*, p. 55.
- ²⁸ McAll, 'The normal paradigms of a woman's life', p. 9.
- ²⁹ Arthur W. Wade-Evans, *Medieval Welsh Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 129.
- ³⁰ Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 92. One of the Latin recipes in the Welsh medical text found in *Llyfr Coch Hergest* could perhaps be interpreted in this way; see Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111, col. 953 (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*). *Le Plus Ancien Texte des Meddygon Myddveu*, ed. Pol Diverres (Paris: Maurice le Dault, 1913), p. 132.
- ³¹ Jenkins and Owen (eds), *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 166–7.
- ³² Wade-Evans, *Medieval Welsh Law*, p. 276.
- ³³ Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, esp. pp. 9–13, 28.
- ³⁴ See, for instance, Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), bk 1, ch. 18 (p. 28).
- ³⁵ On *cowyll* see Dafydd Jenkins, 'Property interests in the classical Welsh law of women', in Jenkins and Owen (eds), *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 76–8, and the definition of the term given on p. 196.
- ³⁶ *Agweddi* refers to the matrimonial property that a woman could take with

her if she and her husband separated within seven years (the amount depended upon her status); *argyfrau* refers to the property which she brought to the husband's household and may be translated, according to Jenkins and Owen, as dowry (ibid., pp. 79–85, and the glossary, pp. 187–8, 191).

- ³⁷ Nerys W. Patterson, 'Honour and shame in medieval Welsh society', *Studia Celtica*, 16–17 (1981/2), 73–103 (80).
- ³⁸ Nevertheless, the rules were flouted and in many areas women did succeed in owning or sharing lands; see, for instance, Anthony David Carr, *Medieval Anglesey* (Llangefni: Anglesey Antiquarian Society, 1982), pp. 156–61.
- ³⁹ R. R. Davies, 'The status of women and the practice of marriage in late-medieval Wales', in Jenkins and Owen (eds), *Welsh Law of Women*, pp. 93–114 (p. 93).
- ⁴⁰ Dafydd Jenkins, *Cyfraith Hywel: Rhagarweiniad i Gyfraith Gynhenid Cymru'r Oesoedd Canol* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1970), p. 9.
- ⁴¹ O. Warnatsch, 'Der Mantel, Bruchstück eines Lanzeletrones des H. von dem Türflin (nebst einer Abhandlung über die Sage vom Trinkhorn und Mantel und die Quelle der Krone', in K. Weinhold (ed.), *Germanische Abhandlungen*, vol. 2 (Breslau: Koebner, 1883). For 'The Boy and the Mantle' see *English and Scottish Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child (London: Samson Low, 1861), pp. 3–16.
- ⁴² F. A. Wulff, 'Le conte du mantel, texte français des dernières années du XIIe siècle', *Romania*, 14 (1885), 343–80; Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, *Lanzelet*, ed. Kenneth Grant Tremayne Webster and Roger Sherman Loomis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).
- ⁴³ *The Anglo-Norman Text of Le Lai du Cor*, ed. C. T. Erickson, Anglo-Norman Text Society, 24 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973); *Diu Crône*, ed. G. H. F. Scholl (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1852). Thérèse Saint-Paul, 'The magical mantle, the drinking horn and the chastity test: a study of a "tale" in Arthurian Celtic literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), provides a comprehensive survey of all known versions of the chastity-testing horn/mantle motif and summarizes more than forty versions of the tale.
- ⁴⁴ Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 76–9. One exception to this rule is an Irish poem, thought to have been compiled in the fifteenth century, found in the *Duanaire Finn* (Book of the Lays of Fionn); *Duanaire Finn*, ed. Gerard Murphy, Irish Texts Society, 28 (London: Simpkin Marchall, 1933), pp. 330–5.
- ⁴⁵ Aberystwyth, NLW, MS 2288. Graham C. G. Thomas, 'Chwedlau Tegau Eurfron a Thristfardd Bardd Urien Rheged', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 24 (1970), 1–9.
- ⁴⁶ The continental versions of the tale refer only to either a chastity-testing horn or a mantle. It is fitting that Welsh culture, which placed great emphasis on triadic narrative structure, should produce a tale which comprised three different tests.
- ⁴⁷ Thomas, 'Chwedlau Tegau Eurfron', p. 1.

- ⁴⁸ See, for example, *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, ed. Thomas Parry (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 140, 144, 151, 175, 252, 292. She is also referred to in the poet's prose: *Yr Areithiau Pros*, ed. D. Gwenallt Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1934), pp. 30, 65.
- ⁴⁹ A complicated system of 'sound-chiming', involving repetition of consonants and internal rhyme, found in strict-metre Welsh poetry; see *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 139–40.
- ⁵⁰ *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*, pp. 140, 252; *Dafydd ap Gwilym: His Poems*, trans. Gwyn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 110, 185: 'one like Tegau'.
- ⁵¹ *Gwaith Tudur Penllyn ac Ieuan ap Tudur Penllyn*, ed. Thomas Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), p. 14; *Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), p. 362; *Gwaith Dafydd ab Edmwnd*, ed. Thomas Roberts (Bangor: Welsh MSS Society, 1914), p. 66; *Gwaith Guto'r Glyn*, ed. Ifor Williams and John Llywelyn Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), p. 270.
- ⁵² On Welsh erotic and satirical poetry see *Canu Maswedd yr Oesoedd Canoll/ Medieval Welsh Erotic Poetry*, ed. Dafydd Johnston (Cardiff: Tafol, 1991) and *Gwaith Prydydd Breuan, Rhys ap Dafydd ab Einion, Hywel Ystorm, a Cherdidi Dychan Dienw o Lyfr Coch Hergest*, ed. Huw M. Edwards (Aberystwyth: Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2000).
- ⁵³ *Triodd Ynys Prydein*, ed. and trans. Rachel Bromwich (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), pp. 174, 200.
- ⁵⁴ *Triodd*, p. 174. Tegau is not listed in another version of the triad found in the White Book of Rhydderch c.1350, although Hemythryd (=Emerchet?) is referred to in this earlier text (here made Mabon's wife rather than his daughter).
- ⁵⁵ *Triodd*, pp. 241–2. The mantle is listed as one of the treasures in the following manuscripts: Aberystwyth, NLW, MSS Peniarth 51 (c.1460), Peniarth 60 (c.1500), Peniarth 77 (c.1576), Mostyn 159 (1586–7) and London, BL, MS Add 15, 047 (1575–76). See also P. C. Bartrum, 'Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain', *Études celtiques*, 10 (1962/3), 434–77.
- ⁵⁶ See, for example, Nicolaus Alemannus' notes on Procopius' *Arcana* (c.500–c.562): T. W., 'Influence of medieval upon Welsh literature', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, ser. 3, 9 (1863), 7–40 (16–17).
- ⁵⁷ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 96–7.
- ⁵⁸ Saint-Paul, 'Magical mantle', p. 24.
- ⁵⁹ Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 78–9.
- ⁶⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 170.
- ⁶¹ See Morfydd E. Owen, 'Meddygon Myddfai: a preliminary survey of some medieval medical writing in Welsh', *Studia Celtica*, 10 (1975/6), 210–33.

- ⁶² Cardiff, Central Library, MS 3.242 (= Hafod 16); Ida B. Jones, 'Hafod 16 (A mediaeval Welsh medical treatise)', *Études celtiques*, 7 (1955/6), 46–75, 270–339 (curing wounds with urine, 296–8) and Ida B. Jones, 'Hafod 16 (suite)' and 'Hafod 16 (suite et fin)', *Études celtiques*, 8 (1958/9), 66–97, 346–93 (cure for deafness, 66).
- ⁶³ Aberystwyth, MS Mostyn 88 (NLW, MS 3026, c.1488–9), fols 31, cols a and b, 33, col. a. The manuscript is in the hand of Gutun Owain.
- ⁶⁴ Aberystwyth, Mostyn 88, fol. 31, col. b. A more literal translation of 'du las' is 'blue black'.
- ⁶⁵ See, for example, the *De secretis mulierum*, trans. Helen Rodnite Lemay (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 128–9.
- ⁶⁶ Aberystwyth, Mostyn 88, fol. 31, col. b.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., col. a.
- ⁶⁸ Oxford, Jesus College, MS 111, col. 938; *Le plus ancien texte*, ed. Diverres, p. 60.
- ⁶⁹ Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals*, trans. Dorothy Wycoff (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 93.
- ⁷⁰ Laurinda S. Dixon, 'The curse of chastity: the marginalization of women in medieval art and medicine', in Robert R. Edwards and Vickie Ziegler (eds), *Matrons and Marginal Women in Medieval Society* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), pp. 49–74; Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 22–32. See Jonathan Hughes in this volume for further discussion.
- ⁷¹ Esther Lastique and Helen Rodnite Lemay, 'A medieval physician's guide to virginity', in Joyce E. Salisbury (ed.), *Sex in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. 56–82 (pp. 63, 72); Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 29–31.
- ⁷² The idea that there is a relationship between jet and virginity testing is found in classical writings as early as the first century CE, for instance, Pliny, *Natural History*, ed. and trans. David Edward Eichholz (London: Heinemann, 1962), p. 115.
- ⁷³ See Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, p. 37.
- ⁷⁴ It was not until the sixteenth century that an accurate description of the clitoris appeared, associating it with particular sensitivity in women. See also Jacquart and Thomasset's comments on Albert the Great; *ibid.*, p. 46.
- ⁷⁵ *Soranus' Gynecology*, trans. Owsei Temkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), p. 15.
- ⁷⁶ Lastique and Lemay, 'A medieval physician's guide', p. 61.
- ⁷⁷ Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 26–9.
- ⁷⁸ See Helen Rodnite Lemay, 'William of Saliceto on human sexuality', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 165–81 (176); John F. Benton, 'Trotula, women's problems and the professionalization of medicine in the Middle Ages', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 59 (1985), 30–53; Joan Cadden, 'Medieval, scientific and medical views of sexuality: questions of propriety', *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, NS, 14 (1986), 157–71 (164).
- ⁷⁹ In 1334 the surveyor of Denbigh calculated the return on *amobr* at £41

annually and in 1395 in Kidwelly it was calculated at £21. 6s. 8d.; see Davies, *Lordship and Society*, pp. 137–8.

- ⁸⁰ There were Cistercian houses for women at Llanllugan and Llanllŷr as well as a Benedictine priory at Usk. I examine why there may have been so few houses for religious women in Wales in 'The desire to corrupt: convent and community in medieval Wales', in Diane Watt (ed.), *Medieval Women in their Communities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 20–48.