

Diplomatic Games: *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and Its Intended Audience

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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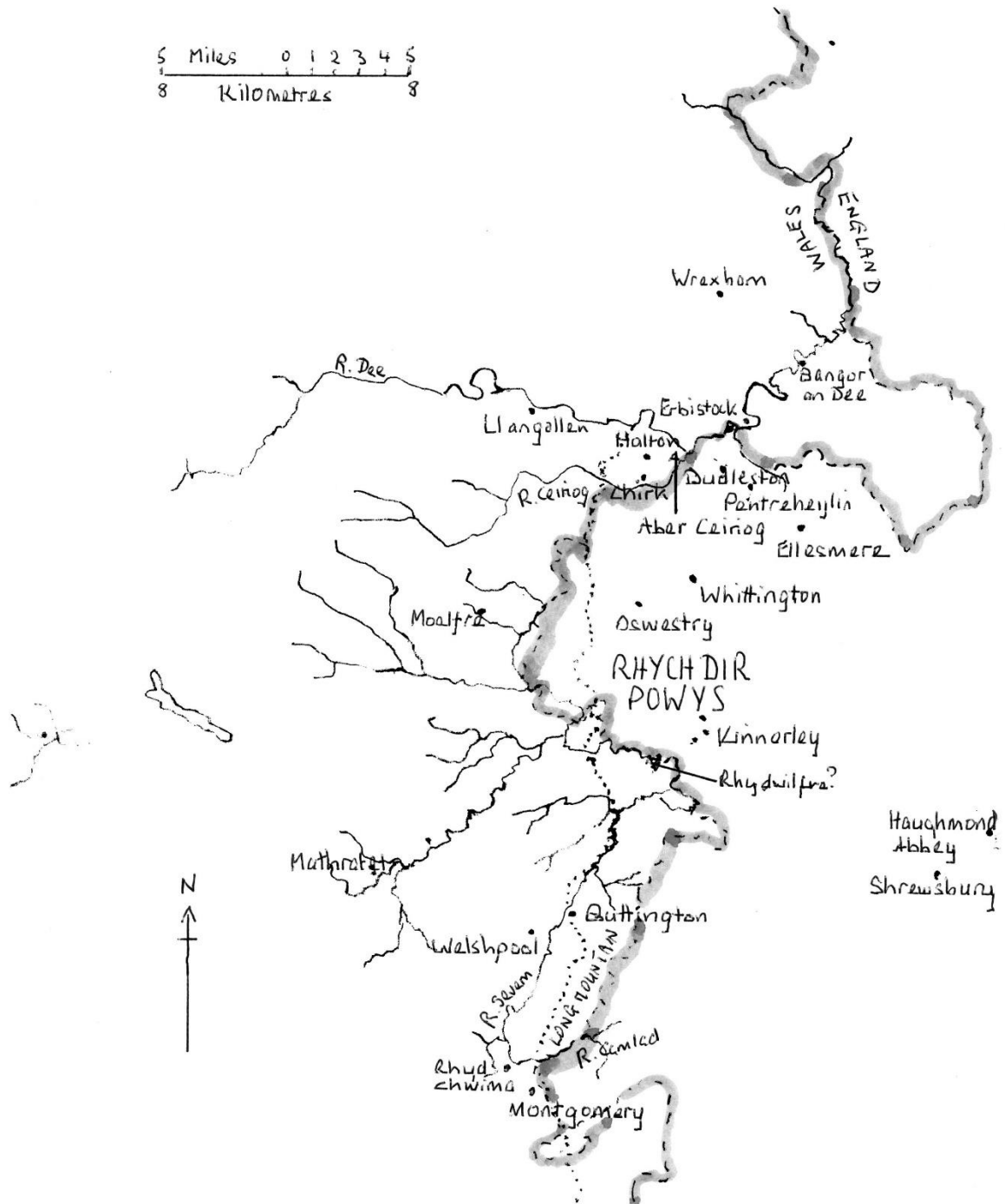
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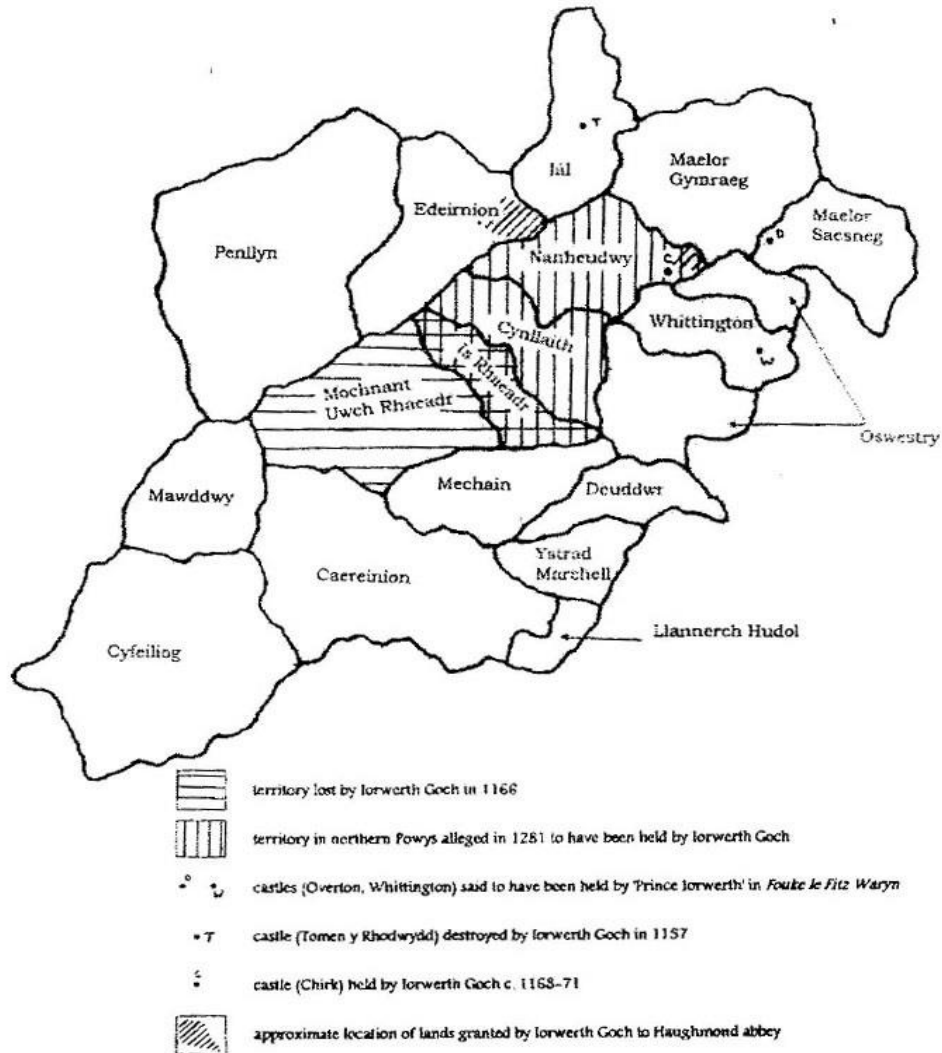
Abstract

The most singular of the Welsh medieval tales prose tales making up the collection known as the *Mabinogion*, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* has consistently proved resistant to successful categorisation and therefore to interpretation as an integrated whole. Instead, it has been regarded as a complex parody or satire of a variety of other medieval literary genres, including Welsh prose narratives, historiographic writing and dream literature. Nevertheless, the very singularity of the text and its production in a milieu which anticipated the oral performance of narrative tales justifies the attempt to identify the intended audience of the author, the 'implied reader' of reception theory. Given the author's closeness to his actual audience, the tale itself can be examined to outline the characteristics of its intended addressees. Such an examination involves not only a detailed consideration of the geographical, historical and genealogical information given in the opening scenes, but also the cultural background reflected in Rhonabwy's dream itself. A specific segment of Welsh society in the thirteenth century having been identified as comprising the author's intended auditors, the nature of the author's use of the figure of Arthur in the story is considered. His presence epitomises the impasse in the interpretation of the dream narrative's progression, since the tale offers no new information about the legendary Welsh Arthur. However, it is proposed in this thesis that an Anglo-Norman typological use of the imperial Arthur was available to the intended auditors. Further, employing Jauss's theory of historically-situated conventions and norms as constituting the genres of any given period, it is argued that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* should be positioned generically with the Anglo-Norman work *Fouke Fitzwaryn* and seen as a Welsh instantiation of Marcher ancestral romance, aimed at those associated with the diplomatic serjeanties of the Shropshire March.

Sketch Map of the Shropshire March



Powys in the Age of Iorwerth Goch



Taken from R. Andrews, & D. Stephenson, 'Draig Argoed: Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd c. 1110-71', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 52. (2006), 65-85, p.91.



Figure 1 Chess piece in the form of two knights

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Available: <https://collections.ashmolean.org/object/404093>.

Introduction

Lady Charlotte Guest's compilation of Welsh medieval prose tales into the collection which she named the *Mabinogion* is arguably one of the outstanding examples of the generic categorisation of disparate medieval texts. Whilst acknowledging Lady Guest's immense success in promoting knowledge and the status of the tales, scholars have increasingly emphasised the distinctions between the tales - the *Pedair Cainc* forming the *Mabinogi* proper, the native Arthurian tale of *Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Arthurian 'romances' *Owain*, *Peredur* and *Geraint* with their disputed relationship with continental romances, the pseudo-historical tales of *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig* and *Llud a Llyfelys*, and the enigmatic *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.

As the strikingly original work of a single author, without obvious generic antecedents in its subject matter or the manner of its storytelling, and in the absence of folkloric or related pseudo-historical legendary motifs, the question of the correct categorisation of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* has proved to be a fundamental one for its interpretation for commentators. Even such a resumé of the *Mabinogion* represents a decision on categorisation, as *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is frequently labelled an Arthurian tale, although one that, to the frustration of modern scholars at least, does not conform to expectations of an Arthurian narrative.

Alternative classifications of the tale have therefore been proposed, such as the suggestion that it represents an early example of the medieval rhetorical exercises known as *Yr Areithiau Pros* ('The Prose Rhetorics') with which it shows certain stylistic and narrative similarities. Yet, since the *Areithiau Pros* are not found in any manuscript predating 1560, any similarity they display with features of the earlier prose tale is more likely to derive from their imitation of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.¹ Moreover, a comparison of the latter with the example known as *Araith Iolo Goch*, a burlesque of features of *Culhwch ac Olwen*, highlights the fact that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is not an obvious parody of any surviving medieval Welsh work.² John Bollard has nevertheless argued that, since the *Areithiau* show a satiric intent, *Breuddwyd*

¹ C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature', in R. Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman, and B. F. Roberts, eds, *The Arthur of the Welsh. The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 183-208, p.190.

² O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p.75.

Rhonabwy should also be regarded as a satire, but this is to place reliance on the response of the text by a considerably later audience.³

Breuddwyd Rhonabwy's generic categorisation by scholars on the basis of its codicological context in the Red Book of Hergest is similarly based on the later reception of the text.⁴ This collection of medieval Welsh texts is dated c.1382-1405⁵ and, whilst unfortunately there is no critical consensus as to the date of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, the majority opinion tends to a date sometime in the thirteenth century.⁶ Here it is found apart from the other *Mabinogion* tales and placed between *Chwedlau Saith Ddoethion Rhufain* ('Seven Sages of Rome') and *Proffwydoliaeth Sibli Ddoeth* ('Prophecies of the Sybil'), a position which for some scholars 'associates it with tales of vision and prophecy, and with questions of interpretation, wisdom and the judicious use of power'.⁷ Thus, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* has frequently been seen as a commentary on the genre of medieval dream literature, including by Dafydd Glyn Jones as a complex satire on the genre⁸ and by Catherine McKenna as a reflection on the interpretative practices associated with 'reading' stories and dreams.⁹ Even so, she concedes that its position may simply represent the point at which the copy became available to the compiling scribe.¹⁰

In an influential analysis, Edgar Slotkin also considers that the generic expectations implicated in the word '*breuddwyd*' (although this designation of Rhonabwy's experience appears only in the colophon), as well as those aroused by the text's Arthurian narrative, govern its interpretation. He posits that the text is a satire on the 'status of stories of the past, whether

³ J.K. Bollard, 'Traddodiad a Dychan yn *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', *Llên Cymru*, 13: (1983), 155-163, p.159.

⁴ It is not included in the surviving manuscript of the earlier White Book of Rhydderch and David Huws is of the view that it was not in the missing quire of that work. (D Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p.246, n.27.

⁵ C. McKenna, '*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*' in C. Lloyd-Morgan, and E. Poppe, eds, *Arthur in the Celtic Languages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), 80-91, p.80.

⁶ For a convenient summary of the dating arguments see T. Øverby, '*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*: A historical narrative?', (unpublished MA thesis, University of Oslo, 2009), available at [www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26852/xverbyxMaster.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/26852/xverbyxMaster.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) <accessed 30.08.20>), p.19-23.

⁷ McKenna, *ibid.*, p.82. Further detail on the manuscript context is given at *ibid.*, p.90 n.9.

⁸ D.G. Jones, '*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', in G. Bowen, ed, *Y Traddodiad Rhyddaith yn yr Oesau Canol*, (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1974), 118-128., available at <https://llyfrgell.porth.ac.uk/View.aspx?id=1635~4p~QbzAupJt> <accessed 4.11.21>, p.177.

⁹ C. McKenna, 'What Dreams May Come Must Give Us Pause', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 58: (2009), 69-99, p.97.

¹⁰ McKenna, '*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', p. 82.

they be Arthurian tales or *brut*-like historiographical narratives', although he accepts that the extent to which the story is referential to traditional Welsh Arthurian narrative cannot be fully answered.¹¹

While acknowledging that such an approach can be seen as a modernist way of looking at a medieval text, Slotkin sees the colophon as compelling such an interpretation. Similarly, it is on the basis of the colophon at the end of the tale¹² that Chandler supports her view that *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is a text the significance of which can only be understood by a reader with an opportunity to reconsider the whole text. Agreeing with Higley's judgement that the text is 'a literary statement about the unreliability of oral statements and the opacity of literary statements',¹³ she concludes that it is an error to look for a meaning in the text and that 'maybe it is in the final analysis simply meaningless rhetoric of the funniest and most ingenious kind'.¹⁴

All these scholars concentrate on a text-to-text approach to the reception of the tale, on how the author might be reacting to earlier texts. Indeed, it is rather as though the author is envisaged as engaged in a solipsistic exercise in intertextuality with the remainder of the Red Book itself in front of him, to which he intended his tale to form the coda. The question of reception by the original audience is largely ignored. There is no reason to believe that this text was not designed to be performed or recited to an audience, like other medieval Welsh tales or much medieval literature in general. Rather than the solitary perusal of the text, 'reading' medieval literature should be envisaged as taking place in a social and interactive environment,¹⁵ and traditionally in medieval Wales conducted by poets or storytellers, the very performers named in the colophon. This renders Chandler's interpretation of the tale

¹¹ E. Slotkin, 'The Fabula, Story and Text of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1989, 89-112, p.95.

¹² 'And this story is called the Dream of Rhonabwy. This is why no one knows the dream – neither poet nor storyteller – without a book, because of the number of colours on the horses, and the many unusual colours both on the armour and their trappings, and on the precious mantles and the magic stones.' (*The Mabinogion*, trans. S. Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p.226)). Although the whole text including the colophon is written in the same hand (that of the main scribe of the Red Book, Hywel Fychan) in so far as the wording goes beyond the mere ascription of the title of the tale otherwise found in the *Mabinogion*, it has been judged to be a scribal addition and not an integral part of the author's work. The point is discussed at *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, ed. M. Richards (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1948), p.xxiv.

¹³ S.L Higley, 'Perlocutions and Perlelections in the *Dream of Rhonabwy*: An Untellable Tale', *Exemplaria*, 2: (1990), p.550.

¹⁴ K. Chandler, 'The Humour in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', *Studia Celtica*, 36: (2002), 59-71, p.71.

¹⁵ S. Gaunt, and S. Kay, 'Introduction' in S. Gaunt, and S. Kay, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-18, p.5.

problematic since, despite finding elements of immediate humour in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (which presumably would have sufficed to provide a degree of entertainment to the original auditors), she judges that the intended effect of the text could only be appreciated by a *reader*. Similarly, Slotkin's views require not only a (post)modern author but also a (post)modern audience.

One can go further and say that, as *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* was a completely original text, produced in a performative environment by an author who was unencumbered by any pre-existing folkloric motifs in the use of his materials, the identity of that author's intended audience is of considerable importance. By the 'intended audience' is meant the original addressees of the text presupposed by the author, the equivalent of Eco's 'model reader' 'who is capable of understanding the language he used,¹⁶ of appreciating his style and of interpreting the techniques which he employed'.¹⁷

Such an intended audience was historically situated, and it is this contemporary historical positioning of the text that proves elusive in interpretations outlined above. In so far as any historical context is considered, they posit a type of fin-de-siècle disillusionment with Welsh 'cultural memory' behind the strategies of the dream section of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.¹⁸ The purpose of the initial scene-setting of the tale, which features an historically unattested dispute between Madog ap Maredudd, a twelfth-century ruler of Powys, and his brother Iorwerth, as well as a graphic description of the dismal conditions of Rhonabwy's quarters in the house of Heilyn Goch. is thereby taken to reflect the political and material impoverishment of the Powys of Madog's time and later.

However, it is not evident why an event which, even if it occurred, had no bearing on the partition of Powys following Madog's death should be used by the author as a representative example of internecine family dispute or societal malaise. To view the initial scene-setting as exemplifying the bad 'old' days, which led to the politically-fractured Powys of the time of the

¹⁶ On the basis of probability alone, a male gender is assigned to the author throughout.

¹⁷ I. Willis, *Reception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 71. On the theory of the 'implied reader' see *ibid.*, p. 70-4 and for the 'model reader' U. Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1979), pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ Øverby argues, using Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory, that the author may have written *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* as a reaction to, or even an undermining of, the presentation of an heroic Welsh past in *Historia Regum Britanniae* in the light of negative political developments of the later thirteenth century in Wales (Øverby, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy'). For his discussion of the theory, see particularly *ibid.*, pp. 26-37.

original audience, is a consequence of regarding it simply as a version of the typical introduction to other *Mabinogion* tales (albeit one historically situated) and likewise of taking at face value the depiction of Heilyn Goch's house. In such a view, a more subtle authorial intention is only imputed to the dream sequence, but the disjuncture leads to considerable problems in describing the relationship between the two parts of the tale and how this was interpreted by the audience.

Helen Fulton has considered the tale specifically in an historical context and put forward the interpretation of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* as a political satire. In her view, it was composed in the reign of King John and reflects the anxieties of Powysians in the face of the expansionist politics of Gwynedd under the rule of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. Her interpretation has much to commend it, not least that it unifies the two parts of the text. It also ascribes to the tale a contemporary relevance that is taken for granted in relation to the other *Mabinogion* tales, such as the interpretation of *Pedeir Keinc* as a *speculum principis*¹⁹ or the adaptations for a native audience apparent in the Welsh Arthurian romances as a response to the use of Arthur and his court in French romances.²⁰ On the other hand, unlike the other commentators referred to above, Fulton gives little explanation of why the language, style or techniques used by the author were particularly relevant to her proposed audience, not of how that audience would immediately be able to identify the work generically as a political satire.

As a corollary of the absence of consideration of the intended audience for *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, all the interpretations alluded to have in common a tendency to a formalist, prescriptive view of genre – be it that of dream, prophecy, native narrative tale, Arthurian romance, historiographic narrative – which is derived from other medieval texts. If the text can be fitted into one or more of these pigeonholes, or as a parody or satire of them, its interpretation can follow. This process is essentially reductive, since it ignores the role of the

¹⁹ Examples are H. Fulton, 'The *Mabinogi* and the Education of Princes in Medieval Wales' in Fulton, H., ed, *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), 230-247 and the series of articles on individual branches of the Mabinogi by C. McKenna: C. McKenna, 'The Theme of Sovereignty in *Pwyll*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 29:(1980), 39-52. C. McKenna, 'Learning Lordship: The Education of Manwydan', in J. Carey, et al. eds *Ildánach Ildírech: a festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana* (Aberystwyth and Andover MA: Celtic Studies Publications, 1999), 101-120 and C. McKenna, 'Revising Math: Kingship in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 46 (2003), 95-118.

²⁰ See C. Lloyd-Morgan and E. Poppe, 'The First Adaptations from French: History and Context of a Debate' in C. Lloyd-Morgan and E. Poppe, eds, *Arthur in the Celtic Languages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), 110-116.

historical audience's composition and hence of its reception of the text in establishing its genre or genres. An alternative means at arriving at its classification and interpretation of the story is offered by the historical hermeneutics proposed by Hans Robert Jauss, which aims to reconstruct how the audience was expected to understand the story: '...for each work a preconstructed horizon of expectations must be ready at hand (this can also be understood as a relationship of 'rules of the game' (*Zusammenhang von Spielregeln*)) to orientate the reader's (public's) understanding and to enable a qualifying reception.'²¹ Such an approach involves identifying firstly the likely audience and then the shared patterns of interpretation both available and likely to be of some relevance to it. The more specific the likely intended audience, the more specific the generic 'horizon of expectations' is liable to be.

Self-evidently, this procedure does not permit an analysis involving postcolonial theory. This has now developed its own genres but not ones, in the terms outlined above, which were historically available to the original auditors who would have been incapable of 'hearing' what a postcolonial analysis would attribute to medieval works such as *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*. Whilst accepting a postcolonial stance as a valid tool for investigating the text, it is not an approach which will be utilised in this study.

Seeking to identify the intended audience to facilitate a contemporary interpretation of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* might appear to involve a circular process, in that all that is available initially to identify the audience and their 'horizon of expectations' is the story itself. It must be stressed that 'the horizon of expectations' being sought is that of the implied readers constructed by the text, rather than the real contemporary readers whose identity lies beyond recovery. It is the originality of the text and the performative nature of the text's 'reading' that uniquely justify such an approach.²²

²¹ H.R. Jauss, 'Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature' (extract) in D. Duff, ed, *Modern Genre Theory* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 127-47, p.131.

²² Willis, *Reception*, p.84. The approach also, of course, assumes that the text, as it survives, represents the author's original work. Lloyd-Morgan argues that errors in the text indicate that the scribe of the Red Book of Hergest was working from another written source, which is not unexpected for a compilation, although there is no evidence of significantly earlier knowledge of the story (Lloyd-Morgan, '*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', p.183-4). Huws regards the Red Book as written probably shortly after 1382 (Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, p.82) and sometime in the preceding decade the poet Madog Dwyraig clearly refers to the story in a poem addressed to Morgan ap Llywelyn. Padel suggests Madog is referring a work recently composed and circulated (O.J Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p.75). However, he also wrote several *awdlau* addressed to the commissioner of the Red Book, Hopcyn ap Thomas ab Einion, so it is possible that Madog became aware of the story via Hopcyn.

In search of the identity of the intended audience, chapter 1 considers the places and time(s) represented in the scene-setting section of the tale, the extent to which these assume an audience familiar with them for comprehensibility, that audience's cultural background, and an initial consideration of the possible genres available to it. In chapter 2 the same considerations are applied to the dream sequence. Following the conclusion that the intended audience was one with a specifically Welsh 'Marcher' background and so familiar with Anglo-Norman culture, its likely perception of the figure of Arthur is then examined. Finally, in chapter 3 generic classifications are proposed for the tale drawing on genres available to the audience from the Anglo-Norman *Fouke Fitz Waryn* and a possible interpretation of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* offered which unifies both its 'historical' opening and the dream sequence. A specific audience for whom those genres would be particularly meaningful having been suggested, the question of its ethnic self-identification is briefly examined in the concluding remarks.

Chapter 1: Setting the scene: The Welsh Marchers

As noted frequently by commentators, the striking feature of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, when viewed as a medieval Welsh prose tale in the tradition of the other *Mabinogion* tales, is the historiographic and geographic exactitude of the opening section. While the other tales customarily set the scene by naming a legendary ruler and his territory, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* gives a precise historical timeframe in which the events it records take place – when Madog ap Mareddud was ruler of Powys (1132-1160) – and the exact extent of his kingdom – stretching from Porffordd (present-day Pulford in Flintshire, five miles south of Chester) in the north-east to Gwafan/Gwanan in western Arwystli in the south west (probably somewhere near Llangurig in southern Montgomeryshire).²³

After Iorwerth refuses the position of *penteulu* offered by his half-brother Madog, '*mynet ar herw hyt yn Lloegr, a llad kalaned a llosgi tei a dala karcharoryon a oruc Iorwoerth*.'²⁴ This phrase is ambiguous, but is translated by Sioned Davies as 'Iorwerth went raiding into England, and he committed murder, and burned houses, and took prisoners'.²⁵ Madog and his counsellors decide to place a hundred men in every three commotes to look for Iorwerth and are of the view that Rhychdir Powys, from Aber Ceiriog in Hallictwn as far as Rhyd Wilfre on the river Efyrynwy is a likely place to find him.²⁶ Aber Ceiriog is at the confluence of the river Ceiriog and the river Dee, and Hallictwn (Halton) is just north of neighbouring Chirk. This is the area where the Welsh commotes of Nanheudwy and Maelor Gymraeg abutted the north-western boundary of the Marcher lordship of Oswestry. Rhyd Wilfre refers to a ford on the river Vyrnwy between Llanymnech and Melverley, southwest of Kinnerley at the point where the Oswestry lordship abutted the Welsh commote of Deuddwr.

As Madog's counsellors regard Rhychdir Powys as equal to the three best commotes in Powys, presumably a hundred men are dispatched to search for Iorwerth here as well, amongst whom are Rhonabwy and his two Powysian companions. The furthest extent of the search,

²³ '*Madawc uab Mareddud a oed idaw Powys yn y theruyneu. Sef yw hynny, o Porford hyt y Gwauan y gwarthaf Arwystli*' (*Breudwyt Ronabwy*, ed. Richards, p.1, l.1-3). The same Powys-wide but localised associations characterise Rhonabwy's companions: Cynwrig Frychgoch comes from Mawddwy, a commote in western Powys and the local Cadwgan Fras is from Moelfre in the commote of Cynllaith, 6 miles west of Oswestry.

²⁴ *Breudwyt Ronabwy*, ed. Richards, p.1, l.16-7.

²⁵ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p.214.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

and the destination of Rhonabwy's group, is the village of Didlystun, the present-day hamlet of Dudleston, to the south-east of Aber Ceiriog and to the north-east of Oswestry.

However, although the locus of Rhonabwy's search is described in considerable geographical detail, his route is politically and culturally ambiguous as it traces the border between Powys and the lordship of Oswestry in the Shropshire March. *Rhychdir* (meaning plough or arable land) Powys is the area around Oswestry and the view of Madog and his counsellors that it was equal to three best commotes implies it was not regarded as part of Powys proper. The text continues: *Ac ny vydei da idaw ar teuli ym Powys ar ny bei da idaw yn y rychtir hwnnw*.²⁷

Modern translations reflect the ambiguity of the phrasing, so Davies translates, 'And anyone who did not succeed with a retinue in this arable land would not succeed anywhere in Powys'²⁸ and Bollard gives, 'and no member of a warband in Powys would prosper who did not prosper in that cultivated land'.²⁹ Is Rhychdir Powys to be thought of as an area to be raided outside of Powys, or part of 'Lloegr,' or an area on the borders of Powys to be guarded by the warband and to support it, as Melville Richards suggests?³⁰ Or is it part of Powys from which to launch successful raids in neighbouring Marcher lands? Likewise, where is the audience to envisage that Iorwerth goes raiding – in Powys proper, in Rhychdir Powys, or into England? Or does he just seek sanctuary in English territory after raiding elsewhere,³¹ as many of the Welsh nobility did after being unsuccessful in dynastic conflicts?³²

Clearly the author assumed the audience would be one with a knowledge and interest in this area and of events in mid-twelfth-century Powys and the Shropshire March. Few critics have taken the original audience to be contemporary with these events, as the fact that Madog is referred to as ruling the full extent of historic Powys is taken to assume a knowledge on the part of the audience of the kingdom's fragmentation following Madog's death. The question then is how the intended auditors were expected to identify themselves politically and culturally, and an obvious possibility is they identified themselves as Powysians.

²⁷ *Breudwyd Ronabwy*, ed. Richards, p.1, l.24-5.

²⁸ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p.214.

²⁹ *Companion Tales to the Mabinogion*, trans. J. K. Bollard (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2007), p.98.

³⁰ *Breudwyd Ronabwy*, ed. Richards, p.27, n.1.24.

³¹ I am grateful to David Stephenson for this suggestion (personal communication:26.05.21). This question is discussed further in Chapter 3 below, pp. 45-6.

³² D. Stephenson, *Medieval Powys* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), p.61.

Despite Rhychdir Powys comprising an area which had been under the control of the Mercians before the Norman Conquest, afterwards being incorporated in the Anglo-Norman Shropshire March, David Stephenson regards the frame-story as set in eastern Powys in the cultural memory of its original audience. In discussing the date of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, he comes to the conclusion that the tale is a parody or satire produced for a group of disillusioned Powysian nobles and ‘possesses that element of nostalgia for past glories that seems to characterise the Powysian mentality in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’.³³ He stresses the eastern orientation of Powys in the twelfth century, a consequence of Madog’s increased influence in the area resulting from his alliance with Angevin interests during the Anarchy and later with Henry II. Contemporary support for this view is provided in court poetry, in which the courts of Madog that occur prominently lie on the eastern fringes of Powys and the Powysian landmarks referred to were those on the eastern border such as Breidden Hill and the Long Mountain. Dudleston seems to have been regarded part of Powys by Cynddelw, Madog’s court poet, in his sequence of eighteen *englynion* lamenting the deaths of Madog and his son Llywelyn. Here he refers right at the beginning of the poem to the exploits of their warband along the English border at Acton Hill (in the parish of Wrexham in Maelor) and Dudleston.³⁴

It then remains unclear when the ‘past glories’ of that polity are to be situated if not in the twelfth century, a period the early years of which Stephenson describes seeing the resurgence of Powys.³⁵ If in the time of Madog, rather than in the disruptions following his death, it is difficult to account for the description of the apparent poverty of Heilyn Goch’s house at that time. In such a reading of the historical narrative in the scene-setting, the implied authorial intention behind would seem to be that the audience would realise the danger that Iorwerth’s actions would jeopardise Madog’s diplomatic efforts to maintain the balance of power within the kingdom itself and in relation to Gwynedd and England. The author would thus anticipate

³³ *Ibid.*, p.290. His argument is supported by the inclusion of Croesoswallt (Oswestry) as one of the commotes of Powys in a manuscript dating from about 1400 although probably derived from a much earlier original (*ibid.*, p.288).

³⁴ Text and translation in R.G. Gruffydd, ‘Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr and the Partition of Powys’, *Studia Celtica*, 38: (2004), 97-106, p.99-192.

³⁵ See generally D. Stephenson, ‘The ‘Resurgence’ of Powys in the late Eleventh and early Twelfth Centuries’ in C. P. Lewis, *Anglo-Norman Studies XXX Proceedings of the Battle Conference* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 182-195.

a judgement on the part of the intended audience that interfamilial discord would lead to the fatal weaking of a Powys of which Rhychdir Powys properly formed part.

On the other hand, it is possible that the author assumed that his intended audience were residents of the Shropshire Marches and had more localized political affiliations. Madog's rule in some ways provided a poor basis for claims to a 'maximal' Powys. While Madog may have held Oswestry for more than a decade, this was not necessarily by aggressive conquest. At the imagined time of Rhonabwy's journey,³⁶ it is probable that the lordship of Oswestry was occupied by Madog following the exile in 1138 of its Marcher incumbent, William FitzAlan, for opposing King Stephen in the civil war.³⁷ Whether or not this was an opportunistic move, in 1155 Madog appears to have handed over the majority of the Oswestry lordship to the Marcher lord, apparently at the behest of Henry II. This seems to have occurred by agreement between the two rulers for, according to the *Annales Cambriae*, in the following year Madog supported the Angevin ruler in his invasion of Gwynedd.³⁸

It may be said that Madog's control of Oswestry, like the Welsh possession of other land in Marcher lordships in the Northern and Central Marches, was recognized to involve at the least the acquiescence of the English Crown at this period. Furthermore, as already mentioned, these lordships were based on land held by Anglo-Saxons, not taken from the Welsh by the Normans.³⁹ Thus as far north as Weston Rhyn, as well as Oswestry, Wilfresforde and Whittington at the time of the Domesday Book formed part of the Merset hundred in Shropshire.⁴⁰ However, by the time *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* was composed, the FitzAlans had removed Oswestry from the county of Shropshire, as the Corbets did for the area comprising the lordship of Caus by the mid-thirteenth century.⁴¹

Given this historical background, the ambiguous description of Rhychdir Powys in the story offers support for the view that the intended audience, while having close connections with

³⁶ Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, p.42.

³⁷ In 1149 Madog is recorded as building, or more likely rebuilding or adding to the castle there: D Stephenson, 'Madog ap Mareddud, rex Powissensium', *Welsh History Review*, 24: (2008), 1-28, pp.9-10.

³⁸ Stephenson, 'Madog', p.12.

³⁹ M. Lieberman, *The Medieval March of Wales: The Creation and Perception of a Frontier, 1066-1283* (Cambridge, 2010), p.4.

⁴⁰ *Domesday Book* [online] Available at <https://opendomesday.org> <accessed 28.05.21>, page: <https://opendomesday.org/hundred/merset>.

⁴¹ F.C. Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches: Shropshire, A.D. 1066-1300* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1994), p.99.

Powys proper, had a conception of the area as having a special status. Its features as mentioned by the author parallel those in Lieberman's summary of the contemporary Anglo-Norman understanding of the Shropshire Marches, which includes the area of Rhychdir Powys. Lieberman designates the area as the first 'March of Wales',⁴² since the term *Marcia* appeared for the first time in the Pipe Rolls following Henry II's unsuccessful Welsh campaign by way of Oswestry in 1165.⁴³ He regards it as probably meaning an area of military stalemate and a military buffer zone for the Anglo-Normans of the twelfth century, deriving from the use of the term in medieval Europe 'to denote a border zone of the Carolingian empire for which particular legal and military arrangements had been made in order to provide for standing armies'.⁴⁴

As to the development of the Welsh concept of the March, the term first appears in Welsh acts in 1233 and Lieberman is of the view that in the period of the texts it meant specifically the Shropshire March.⁴⁵ While in this period the Marcher lords were developing a society with an identity distinct from that of the neighbouring county of Shropshire, it is possible that higher ranking Welsh inhabitants of the Shropshire March were doing same in relation to Powys. In *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, the initial evidence of this is provided by the prominence the author gives to Heilyn Goch's family in Dudleston, where Rhonabwy's journey ends in the tale.

In the past, Heilyn Goch's presence has only been regarded as of importance for providing an indication of the date of the story's composition. The satirical description of his house is taken to show that the historical events described were not contemporary with the audience, as otherwise such a description would be in poor taste. However, an examination of Welsh genealogies reveals that his family at least was one of some historical note and long-standing in the area, although these facts would only be apparent to knowledgeable auditors.

Albeit that, as Melville Richards points out, the name Heilyn was common in Powys,⁴⁶ as of course would be the cognomen Goch, a person of this name associated with Dudleston is well attested in medieval genealogies. Bartrum's genealogy of Tudur Trefor, a well-known

⁴² Liebermann, *The Medieval March*, p.xi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁴⁶ *Breudwyd Ronabwy*, ed. Richards, p.29, n.2.8.

‘ancestor’ of many Welsh families in the Northern March, confirms the historicity of a Heilyn associated with a Dudleston family.⁴⁷ His dates are uncertain, as Bartrum had difficulties in producing a realistic timeline for the generations of his branch of the family. However, Darrell Wolcott, an amateur genealogist, has suggested a revision to Bartrum’s genealogy which would mean that the historically-recorded Heilyn would probably have been in his thirties or forties in the mid-thirteenth century.⁴⁸ This provides a first indication of a likely date for the tale’s composition. Wolcott’s amended genealogy also permits the insertion of the genealogical details given in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* to provide a figure of the same name who would be a contemporary of Madog and Iorwerth Goch. A reconstructed, composite genealogy for these Dudleston Heilyns is set out in the Appendix below. Even if no earlier Heilyn Goch existed historically, the author could have made use of the family’s practice of re-using the same sequence of names through different generations to create a convincing fictional genealogy for an imaginary character of Rhonabwy’s time.

The genealogy in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* was at least intended to be historically plausible, if not accurate, and it seems highly probable that the anticipated audience was well acquainted with contemporary members of the Dudleston family and probably an actual Heilyn Goch. Furthermore, as given in the text, the genealogy may be regarded as ‘defective’. Since four generations were required to establish rights of inheritance to land and these would have been listed when naming a man on formal occasions,⁴⁹ the author might be expected to go back to Rhys Sais, Heilyn’s great-grandfather. Instead, he gives just enough information for the implications of Heilyn’s genealogy to be discovered by a local audience who would be expected to know about the deep ancestry, going back six generations, of a leading Welsh family in the Shropshire March.

⁴⁷ *Welsh Genealogies, AD 300-1400*, ed. P.C. Bartrum (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), available at [https://pure.aber.ac.uk/portal/en/datasets/bartrum-genealogical-project\(40837b6f-1887-4afd-9c6e-9b7e3a1226\)](https://pure.aber.ac.uk/portal/en/datasets/bartrum-genealogical-project(40837b6f-1887-4afd-9c6e-9b7e3a1226)) <accessed 02.11.21>, genealogy of Tudur Trefor, pages 1, 2, 27, 30. The association with Dudleston is emphasized in the genealogy contained in *the (admittedly late) visitation of Shropshire: taken in the year 1623 by Robert Tresswell, Somerset herald, and Augustine Vincent, Rouge croix pursuivant of arms; marshals and deputies to William Camden, Clarenceux king of arms. With additions from the pedigrees of Shropshire gentry taken by the heralds in the years 1569 and 1584, and other sources* (London: College of Arms, 1889), available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101075683563&view=1up&seq=230&skin=2021> <accessed 11.5.21>, Vol 1, p.172.

⁴⁸ D. Wolcott, *Ancient Wales Studies* [online]. Available at www.ancientwalesstudies.org/index.html <accessed 29.09.20>, ‘The Clan of Tudor Trevor’ at www.ancientwalesstudies.org/id55.html.

⁴⁹ F.C. Suppe, ‘Who was Rhys Sais? Some comments on Anglo-Welsh relations Before 1066’, *The Haskins Society Journal*, 7:(1995), 63-73, p.64.

Heilyn Goch's genealogy merits closer attention if only because it is the only detailed genealogy given in the tale, and this was certainly a genre which would be recognised by a contemporary audience. Ben Guy in his study of medieval Welsh written genealogies summarises their two main purposes as being 'to specify the origins of the (usually royal) status of a subject typically in relation to one or more territories and to outline the perceived relationship between multiple branches of a family'.⁵⁰ If the audience were able to bring to mind Heilyn Goch's full genealogy from the information the author of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* supplies, both these purposes would have been served.

Rhys Sais I is a well-known historical figure. Scholars have speculated whether the sobriquet 'Sais' indicates he spoke English, lived amongst the English, or other connections with the English,⁵¹ but in any event, Suppe suggests he probably played the role of an interpreter or intermediary between Gruffudd ap Llywelyn and Earl Aelfgar of Mercia.⁵² The Welsh genealogies show him as a member of one of the prominent local families claiming descent from Tudur Trefor, traditionally regarded as the possessor of extensive territories in the Northern March. Rhys Sais almost certainly held land under Mercian control, being generally identified with a Rhys who is recorded in the Domesday Book as holding Erbistock, a vill a few miles north of Dudleston but on the opposite bank of the river Dee, in Maelor. His family's connections with 'foreign' occupiers of the March seem to have continued after 1066, since Suppe also identifies a 'Tudur', recorded in the Domesday book as holding a border district from Robert, Earl of Shrewsbury, as Tudur ap Rhys Sais and the district in question as Nanheudwy.⁵³

Although nothing else is known of a Heilyn Goch of the right period to be a contemporary of Madog and Iorwerth, based on the reconstructed genealogy shown in the Appendix, he would also have been a member of the same *gwely* ⁵⁴and a contemporary of two other great-

⁵⁰ B. Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), p.11.

⁵¹ On Rhys Sais, see Suppe, 'Who was Rhys Sais?'.

⁵² F.C. Suppe, 'Interpreter Families and Anglo-Welsh Relations in the Shropshire-Powys Marches in the Twelfth Century' in Lewis, ed, *Anglo-Norman Studies XXX*, p.196.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.197.

⁵⁴ The *gwely* comprised all those descended agnatically from a common great-grandfather and the need for families to be able to recall this genealogical information arose from its importance in establishing the obligations associated with the *gwely*'s landholdings. As Ben Guy points out, it was this continuing social role that enabled genealogists in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to record pedigrees from oral sources that were largely accurate for the preceding two or three centuries. Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, p.9.

grandsons of Rhys Sais I, Roger of Powys and his brother Ionas, who would be his second cousins.⁵⁵ It seems more than a coincidence, then, that these two historical figures were close associates of Iorwerth Goch and had remarkably similar diplomatic relations with the English Crown.

Like him, both were closely involved in the Anglo-Norman administration of the March. After Madog ap Mareddud's death and following the loss by Iorwerth of his lands in Mochnant in 1166, Henry II appointed Iorwerth castellan of Chirk Castle, a post which he appears to have held until the date of his presumed death in 1171.⁵⁶ Similarly, during the late 1150s and the 1160s, Roger of Powys was the constable of castles at St Briavels, the administrative centre for the Forest of Dean, Whittington and Overton.⁵⁷ Both Roger and Ionas were paid wages for troops of garrison soldiers and compensation for provisioning the castles and some of the same Pipe Roll entries dealing with such payments refer at the same time to payments to Iorwerth.⁵⁸ All three were associates in supplying horses to the king, presumably as the owners of studs breeding the famous Powysian horse mentioned by Gerald of Wales.⁵⁹ Iorwerth, Roger and Jonas are recorded as travelling to Worcestershire in the company of Robert Mussun, the king's agent in the West Midlands area, was looking after the king's horses and hounds there.

Not only then is the action of the opening scenes set in the Anglo-Norman March adjacent to Shropshire, but the figures of Iorwerth Goch and Heilyn Goch each represent a prominent Welsh family described by Suppe as having 'sought the opportunity for political and economic

⁵⁵ F.C. Suppe, 'Roger of Powys, Henry II's Anglo-Welsh Middleman, and his Lineage', *The Welsh History Review*, 21:1 (2002), 1-23 p.10. Thornton casts doubt on Roger's presence in Rhys Sais's genealogy, appearing to suggest that he was in fact Anglo-Norman: see D.E. Thornton, 'Some Welshmen in the Domesday Book and Beyond: Aspects of Anglo-Welsh Relations in the Eleventh Century', in N.J. Higham, ed, *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 144-164, p.155. In the first instance, this appears based on the fact that William Peverell and Fouke Fitz Waryn are sometimes placed, obviously fancifully, in this genealogy to establish an element of Welsh ancestry. There is no sign of such confusion in the Fitz Waryn ancestral romance *Fouke Fitz Waryn* and Roger is clearly part of the Welsh forces of the 'Iorwerth' of that tale. While Suppe is unable to explain the Anglo-Welsh names given by Gronwy to his sons, Wolcott suggests the marriage of a high-born Anglo-Norman woman might explain them (Wolcott, *Ancient Wales*, 'Welsh Origins of the Peverel Family' at www.ancientwalesstudies.org/id50.html). Thornton also offers no reason why an Anglo-Norman would have a son and grandson with Welsh names and his grandson would act as the King's interpreter.

⁵⁶ D. Stephenson, *Medieval Powys* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), p.68.

⁵⁷ Suppe, 'Roger', p.7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

advancement by developing bi-cultural connections'.⁶⁰ If such a cultural milieu was shared by the author's intended audience, it may shed some light on the portrayal of the impoverished circumstances of the inhabitants of Heilyn Goch's house. Together with the initial scenario of fraternal strife, the description of the household has generally been taken to indicate a view of the time of Madog as 'the bad old days', problematic as that is in establishing a connection with the dream section of the tale. This is despite the fact that it is obviously satiric in tone. The description of the house itself can hardly be realistic if designed for comic effect. It is difficult to imagine that, in the house of someone of Heilyn Goch's standing (even if fallen on hard times), the animal quarters were not partitioned off from the family's sleeping accommodation.⁶¹

What is striking is how the conditions in Rhonabwy's quarters so closely accord with comments by Gerald of Wales on the social conditions among the medieval Welsh set out in his *Descriptio Kambriae*. Composed in 1188 by someone who was himself a quarter Welsh but three-quarters Anglo-Norman, it was hardly flattering. The opening scenario of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* seems to instantiate Gerald's comment that among the less praiseworthy habits of the Welsh was that of living on plunder, not only from foreigners but also from each other, while their desire to hold land was such that, amongst brothers, arguments over the division of property led frequently to fratricide.⁶² He also remarks upon the interest of the Welsh, including their bards, in recalling genealogies and their ability to recite descent from ancestors as far as the sixth or seventh generation and beyond.⁶³

On a positive note, Gerald recorded that generosity and hospitality were greatest virtues of the Welsh: guests who arrived early in the day were entertained by young girls playing the harp until the evening meal was prepared, when the whole family waited upon the guests. The food offered was plain, but the bread was freshly baked, and if there was a shortage, the hosts went without. The sleeping arrangements were uncomfortable, consisting of a communal bed laid against one wall, stuffed with barely-sufficient rushes and a hard sheet

⁶⁰ Suppe, 'Interpreter Families', p.212.

⁶¹ Peate, in his review of the history of the Welsh house, gives the description in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* as the first of a Welsh long-house but remarks on the fact that there is no bower: I. C. Peate, 'The Welsh House: a study in folk culture', *Y Cymmrodor*, 47: (1940), p.67.

⁶² Gerald of Wales: *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*, trans. L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp.260-7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.251.

over them. Rhonabwy's reception is a parody of this description. Instead of finding a harp-playing maiden, he is met by an old crone who ignores him, and the hosts, when they arrive, greet him coldly, offering him a poor supper of barley bread, cheese and watered-down milk. His sleeping quarters are so primitive, the area is not even partitioned off from the cattle's housing: it is ankle-deep in cow-dung, the bed consists of the flea-infested ends of straw and twigs (everything else having been eaten by the cattle) and the tattered sheet has large holes in it.⁶⁴

No work of Gerald is known to have been translated into Middle Welsh other than *Claddedigaeth Arthur* ('Burial of Arthur')⁶⁵ but it seems likely that *Descriptio Kambriae* would have been well-known to the Anglo-Normans in the Shropshire March. Gerald makes favourable mention of the reception of his group by the younger William FitzAlan at the end of his tour of Wales with the Archbishop Baldwin in 1188 and the ethnic stereotyping of the Welsh was probably a source of amusement as well. If the intended audience were well-acquainted with and probably lived in the Shropshire March it would not be strange that they were acquainted with Gerald's views. It is more surprising to find that such an ethnically and culturally Welsh audience (as evidenced at least by the Middle Welsh in the tale is written) being invited to adopt an Anglo-Norman 'Marcher' perspective of the social conditions amongst one of the local Welsh noble families, albeit these are situated in the past and included for, it must be assumed, humorous purposes. If so, rather than later disaffected aristocrats, it suggests auditors with some sense of this superiority in their standing, at least in material terms.

In terms of genre, Jones⁶⁶ and Slotkin⁶⁷ have drawn attention to the similarities to the opening of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* with history and chronicle writing of the time, which also influenced Gerald's ethnographic writing.⁶⁸ Rather than that work, however, the generic similarity of the scene-setting is rather with the travelogue form of Gerald's *Itinerarium Kambriae*. Both relate

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.237.

⁶⁵ The work is an adaptation of Gerald's eyewitness account of the supposed uncovering of the graves of Arthur and Guinevere at Glastonbury in 1190/1.

⁶⁶ D.G. Jones, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy', in G. Bowen, ed, *Y Traddodiad Rhyddaith yn yr Oesau Canol*, (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1974), 118-128, available at <https://llyfrgell.porth.ac.uk/View.aspx?id=1635~4p~QbzAupJt> <accessed 04.11.21>, p.118.

⁶⁷ E. Slotkin, 'The Fabula, Story and Text of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1989, 89-112, p.95.

⁶⁸ R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006), p.148.

to a journey arising out of a particular historical occasion with the experiences of one of the participants, who could loosely be termed an 'emissary', being related.

At the same time, the author employs various features associated with the bardic tradition of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in a further indication of a generic distinction between this tale and the narrative style of the other stories of the *Mabinogion*. The description of extent of Madog's territory with its employment of the formula *o...hyd...* (from...as far as...) and the naming of two extreme points of a particularly important axis across Powys both mimic the schema for describing the extent of a ruler's authority in Welsh court poetry.⁶⁹ What can be seen as an ambiguous, allusive style is employed, exemplified by the uncertainty surrounding the precise political status of Rhychdir Powys and the unspoken identity of Heilyn's great-grandfather. As Welsh court poets frequently in their eulogies recalled the distinguished ancestry of their patrons,⁷⁰ it could even be argued that the author is following bardic practice in identifying his patron in his use of Heilyn's genealogy. Unlikely as that might appear given the terms in which Heilyn Goch's house is described, the portrayal is satirical and presented as situated firmly in the audience's past.

In summary, the opening scenes suggest intended auditors who inhabited the Shropshire March with a Welsh cultural background and had an affinity with Powys, although not necessarily regarding themselves as 'Powysian'. Its members were familiar with Welsh genres such as genealogy and the poetry of court poets but also with the contents of literature intended for Anglo-Norman consumption. The question then arises whether the dream sequence offers evidence of the same intended audience, and if so, whether this can shed light on the presence of the figure of Arthur.

⁶⁹ E.R. Roberts, 'Mental Geographies and Literary Convention: The Poets of the Welsh Princes and the Politics and Provinces of Medieval Wales', *Studia Celtica*, 46: (2012), 85-110, pp.103-4.

⁷⁰ Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, p.33.

Chapter 2: Rhonabwy's Dream: Martial Games

Whatever the apparent disjunction between the opening historical setting and the Arthurian world of Rhonabwy's dream, the dream sequence continues the theme of Rhonabwy's journey, and his experiences unfold in the same landscape of the Shropshire March:

As soon as sleep entered his eyes he was granted a vision, that he and his companions were travelling towards Maes Argyngroeg, and his inclination and intent, so he thought, was towards Rhyd y Groes on the Hafren (Severn).⁷¹

Travelling south, Rhonabwy remains on the western border of the Oswestry lordship until he reaches and crosses the border at Rhyd Wilfre between the Welsh commotes of Ystrad Marchell and Y Gorddwr, the latter generally being under the control of the Corbet Marcher lords of Caus in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷² Maes Argyngroeg was the level land near Welshpool and Rhyd y Groes was probably at Buttington nearby, to the north east and so about 23 miles south of Dudleston.⁷³ Arthur then breaks camp and it is not clear whether he and his armies cross the Severn via the ford at Rhyd y Groes, or after they have travelled further south, to the more noted ford at Montgomery, Rhyd Chwima. After crossing of the river, Rhonabwy is taken on up the Severn valley to the region of Cefn Digoll (Long Mountain) which again is significant as a Powysian landmark in the poetry of Cynddelw, before halting again at Caer Faddon.⁷⁴

Not expectedly in a long-standing border region, the places listed – in so far as they can be identified – are of significance as sites interface between Welsh and Anglo-Saxons. At Buttington in 893 a combined Welsh, West Saxon and Mercian army inflicted a decisive defeat on the invading Vikings⁷⁵ and possibly it was the Rhyd y Groes ar Hafren where Gruffudd ap Llewelyn was victorious in 1039, his foes being taken to be Mercian forces led by the brother of Earl Leofric of Mercia.⁷⁶ Nearer the supposed time of Arthur, in 630, Cefn Digoll was the site of a battle between the Northumbrian forces of Edwin and an alliance of armies including

⁷¹ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p.215.

⁷² Ownership of Gorddwr was contested by Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, the ruler of southern Powys, in the 1240s -70s. (See Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, pp.138-40).

⁷³ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p.276, n.215.

⁷⁴ Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, p.290.

⁷⁵ T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons 350-1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.), pp. 507–508.

⁷⁶ This was the same Gruffudd for whom Rhys Sais brokered an alliance with Leofric of Mercia's exiled son Aelfgar.

Powysians led by Cadwallon, king of Gwynedd, and Penda of Mercia.⁷⁷ The audience seem expected to be attentive to historic interactions between the Welsh and the 'English', yet who is friend or foe remains ambiguous.⁷⁸ So too is the nature of the interactions. Rhyd Chwima was a main crossing point from prehistoric times and the site of negotiation between Welsh princes and Anglo-Norman rulers after 1102, including most notably the signing of the Treaty of Montgomery between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Henry III in 1267.⁷⁹

As in the scene-setting section, the judgement on the Welsh of Rhonabwy's time is negative in character. When Iddog asks Arthur why he is laughing when Iddog arrives with the 'little men' he has found above the ford, Arthur responds, 'I am not laughing, but rather I feel so sad that scum such as these are protecting this Island, after such fine men protected it in the past.'⁸⁰ His opinion is in accordance with the Anglo-Norman stance of another 'Marcher' author, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who reflects that, after the death of Cadwallader, '...the Welshmen, being very much degenerated from the nobility of the Britons, never after recovered the monarchy of the island'.⁸¹ However, it is unclear whether Arthur's words should be understood unreservedly in these terms. Arthur and his men are giants, so Rhonabwy and his companions are in comparison literally small, and no doubt do not look their best, as they have been sleeping in filthy quarters. Moreover, Iddog has offered to be their companion without disparaging them in any way.

The Anglo-Norman elements in the dream sequence extend beyond the implications of Arthur's remark. If the cultural background – the props and scenery – of the tale are examined, it confirms a considerable Anglo-Norman influence on the material culture being portrayed, which must have been regarded by the author as recognizable and intelligible by

⁷⁷ See J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp.127-8. The alliance led to the defeat and death of Edwin at Hatfield 3 years later (Charles-Edwards, *Wales*, p.390).

⁷⁸ The Powys-Mercian alliance extending throughout the seventh century: see L.B. Brady, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands in Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p.42 and J. Rowland, *Early Welsh*, pp.120-138.

⁷⁹ Since there is no evidence that Arthur's presence in the Shropshire March in a pseudo-historical context is derived other than from the imagination of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy's* author, the location of 'Caer Faddon' near the Severn must also be taken to be his invention. If the audience were intended to allocate a corresponding landmark, the most likely candidate would be the Iron Age hillfort of Ffridd Faldwyn, sited on a prominence overlooking the Severn valley.

⁸⁰ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p.217.

⁸¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth: *History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. A. Thompson, revised J.A. Giles (Cambridge, Ontario: In parentheses Publications, 1999), available at https://www.yorku.ca/inpar/geoffrey_thompson.pdf <accessed 12.10.21>, p.214.

the intended audience. This is most obviously evidenced in the elaborate description of the appearance of the various subsidiary characters in the story. Almost invariably this is now taken to represent heraldic display rather than an exaggerated version or parody of the trope of character depiction in the rest of the *Mabinogion*.⁸² If so, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is by far the earliest work containing heraldic descriptions in Welsh literature, with no other example until a poem of 1351-9.⁸³

On the other hand, the description of armorial display was a feature of late thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman literature, reflecting the reality of its importance in aristocratic society.⁸⁴ The thoroughgoing descriptions suggest more than a partial adoption of Anglo-Norman practice of recording or memorizing heraldic devices even if not described in the technical terms of blazon, which was not well-established until around 1300.⁸⁵ There may be a reference to French heraldic vocabulary in the description of the curious colour of the horse of the first messenger to come to Arthur, with the word for dapple-grey '*erchlas*' perhaps indicating the heraldic colour (or, technically, 'fur') '*vair*', a blue/grey and white squirrel fur. Likewise, the misapplication of a French term may lie behind the strange green armour of Arthur's second messenger.⁸⁶

The earliest evidence of actual Welsh heraldry is from about 1253 in an Anglo-Norman work, that of Walter Map.⁸⁷ Otherwise there is contemporary evidence of only a few Welshman having adopted arms before 1300 and these were members of the princely houses of Gwynedd and Powys Wenwynwyn,⁸⁸ all of whose arms contained lions and were red and

⁸² The assumption that the runs of adjectives represented a parody of the rhetorical style of Welsh Arthurian romances was dismissed by Melville Richards: see discussion in Jones, '*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', p.126.

⁸³ M.P. Siddons, 'Welsh Heraldry', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1993), 27-46, pp.32-3.

⁸⁴ T.J. Jones, *Outlawry in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.192, n.17. The most notable example of such heraldic literature was the ca.1300 poem in Old French, *The Siege of Caerlaverock*.

⁸⁵ M.H. Keen, 'Introduction' in P. Coss and M. Keen, eds, *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), p.9.

⁸⁶ Corley, in his study of the late twelfth-century *Second Continuation of the Old French Perceval*, gives 'dapple grey' as a possible meaning of '*vair*'. He also comments that the use of the term '*vert*' or green for armour in the Perceval text may be a confusion with '*vai'r*' or '*ver*' as meaning shining or polished: C.F.V. Corley, *The Second Continuation of the Old French Perceval: A Critical and Lexicographical Study*, MHRA Texts and Dissertations (24 Cambridge: MHRA, 1987), p.162.

⁸⁷ Siddons, 'Welsh Heraldry', p.30: showing the same coat of arms for Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, who fell to his death whilst trying to escape from the Tower of London in 1244 and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd who died in 1246.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.41. There is also an absence of heraldic detail on the contemporary Welsh seals depicting armoured horsemen: M.P. Siddons, 'Welsh Equestrian Seals', *The National Library of Wales Journal*, 23 (1983-4), 292-318, p.294.

yellow.⁸⁹ Even as late as the mid fifteenth century, it was largely those who had contact with Anglo-Norman or French chivalric society in a military or administrative capacity who adopted arms.⁹⁰ Likewise, the depiction of the groups in Arthur's armies being clad identically accords with historical evidence from the Anglo-Norman world in the thirteenth century.⁹¹

The same pattern is discernible regarding the armour of the various messengers to Arthur as he sits playing *gwyddbwyll* with Owain at the ford. Their conspicuous feature – the crests on their helmets – led Mary Giffin to date the text to late thirteenth/early fourteenth century. However, these began to appear in the later twelfth century⁹² and their large, elaborate form would characterise them as being tournament crests.⁹³ There is a distinction between the two sets of messengers, those coming to Owain being more lightly armed while the messengers to Arthur are portrayed as wearing increasingly elaborate, heavy (and in the case of the first messenger, what is expressly identified as 'foreign') armour. Davies, in his study of Welsh warfare in the medieval period tends to minimize the difference between Welsh and general Western European practice but nevertheless concedes that Welsh armour was poorer than that of the Anglo-Normans.⁹⁴

Not only the dress of characters suggest the Anglo-Norman world: the whole contest between the followers of Arthur and Owain reported by the messengers looks very like an informal mêlée of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a possibility which Giffin herself mentions in passing.⁹⁵ This, rather than the individual joust, was the dominant form of tournament in the twelfth century and for most of the thirteenth, involving teams of knights with up to 200 men

⁸⁹ Siddons, 'Welsh Heraldry', p.42.

⁹⁰ Almost certainly anachronistically, but plausibly, Iorwerth in *Fouke Fitz Waryn* is described as bearing arms of or and gules quarterly and in each quarter a leopard and quartered arms were certainly later favoured by the Welsh (*Ibid.*, p.39.) Lieberman, on the other hand, identifies the arms as being those of Iorwerth Drwyndwn (Lieberman, M., 'The English and the Welsh in *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*' in J. Burton, P. Schofield, and B. Weiler, eds, *Thirteenth Century England XII: Proceedings of the Gregynog Conference 2007*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 1-11, p.6, n.29).

⁹¹ C. Gravett, *English Medieval Knight 1200-1300* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), p.30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.27. Richard I is depicted with a helmet crest on his second great seal.

⁹³ *Ibid.* These could be so large and elaborate because, not being designed for warfare, they were made of light material, parchment, pasteboard, cloth or a leather shell over a wood or whalebone framework filled with tow, sponge or sawdust. Carpenter records that two gilded helmets studded with gems were taken by Henry III on his campaign against the Welsh in 1245 but there is no record that he ever wore them. (D. Carpenter, *Henry III: The Rise to Power and Personal Rule 1207-1258* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p.431).

⁹⁴ S. Davies, *War and Society in Medieval Wales, 633-1283: Welsh Military Institutions (Studies in Welsh History)* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p.146.

⁹⁵ M. Giffin, 'The Date of the *Dream of Rhonabwy*', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1958), 33-40, p.33.

on each side fighting over a large area of countryside. Substantial forces of foot soldiery could officially be involved in these contests but problems, even for the knightly participants themselves, could arise from the informal participation of armed servants and attendants.⁹⁶

In the dream, this picture of a sport or mock-military activity which turns out to have more serious implications parallels the game of *gwyddbwyll*. It may also be foreshadowed in the behaviour of Arthur's armies and the appearance of the 'superstar' knight, Cai. Crouch suggests that the derivation of 'tournament' (Welsh *twrnament* from the French *tornier* meaning to revolve or whirl about) 'seems to have been conjured up as a metaphor by the participants to describe what they did, rushing round and round like leaves in a tornado'.⁹⁷

What is notable is that, unlike the Marches of Scotland or the continental border regions of the Angevin empire, tournaments did not take place between the English and the Welsh because of the lack of a common social and military background. Even though Welsh princes could muster large numbers of mailed horsemen and there is ample evidence of the knighting of Welsh nobles by the Crown, the Welsh nobility did not participate in tournaments. Even those held in Wales by the Marcher Mortimers were attended by Anglo-Norman knights, especially those from the Marches, and not Welsh knights,⁹⁸ although this is not evidence that no Welshmen were in attendance.⁹⁹

In fact, much of what passes as the hallucinatory experience of the dream can be interpreted as reflecting the social display of the Anglo-Norman world or thinly-veiled references to it. David Glyn Jones asks how the raising of Owain's banner can change the course of the conflict between Arthur's men and Owain's followers portrayed as ravens and why Rhonabwy does not enquire as to its meaning.¹⁰⁰ Raising a banner might signal knightly challenge in romance, but here its import would seem to be the recognised method in medieval warfare of declaring

⁹⁶ The unregulated participation of large numbers of non-knightly retainers at tournaments was the problem which Edward I's *Statuta Armourum* of 1292 sought to address: see J. Barker, *The Tournament in England 1100-1400* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1986), p.57.

⁹⁷ D. Crouch, *Tournament* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), p.3.

⁹⁸ Barker, *The Tournament*, p.39.

⁹⁹ Here again, the situation in the Shropshire March is presented differently in *Fouke Fitz Waryn*, where Owain, Prince of Wales, together with two hundred shields, attends a tournament at Whittington proclaimed by William Peverell (*Two Medieval Outlaws: Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn: The Romance of Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn*, trans. G.S. Burgess (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), pp.136-7).

¹⁰⁰ Jones, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy', p.125.

open war, war to the death.¹⁰¹ Rhonabwy (or at least the audience) is therefore taken to be aware of its significance.

If Owain's banner is imagined as depicting or being in the form of a raven, the movement of his birds then mirrors that of the banner and enables Rhonabwy to witness the conclusion of the contest. Lest the concentration seem to be focussed entirely on an Anglo-Norman background, only familiarity with Welsh legend would give the connection between Owain and the ravens, and the gruesome image of the aerial battle is perhaps less macabre than Cynddelw's anthropomorphising of the carrion birds, identified as Owain's ravens, in his poem in praise of Owain Gwynedd.¹⁰²

Thirteenth century reality may lie behind other curiosities in the dream such as Arthur's attribute of a ring with a magic stone, whose property is not to make him invisible, like that bestowed on Owain by Luned in *Owain*, but to enable Rhonabwy to recall his dream. For a medieval audience familiar with the administrative practices of the Anglo-Norman areas of influence, rather than the contemporary Welsh world, such a ring must have recalled to mind the exotic and costly high-status seal rings set with an ancient gem, which could be regarded as imbued with special properties.¹⁰³ If '[t]he sealed document, just like the memory of

¹⁰¹ M.H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p.106. Contemporary records show the reality underlying the description in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*:

in the Spring of 1216, Louis of France attempted to take John by surprise at Winchester, 'hearing that the King had raised the dragon battle standard ('insigne bellicum draconem') But John, learning of his arrival, lowered his dragon ('draco') and fled, having first burned four parts of the city'. Henry III commanded just such a dragon banner in 1244. Made of red samite stencilled with gold, it had a tongue of burning fire depicted as if in constant movement, and eyes of sapphire or other precious stones.

(N. Vincent, 'Feature of the Month: April 2015 - Leopards, Lions and Dragons: King John's Banners and Battle Flags', *The Magna Carta Project* [online]. Available at http://magnacarta.cmp.uea.ac.uk/_read/feature_of_the_month/Apr_2015_4 <accessed 3.6.29>, p.4. How alien the effects might be to modern expectation is underlined by the fact that banners were often made of hammered plate and so would clang rather than flutter (*ibid.*, p.2).

¹⁰² 'They rode on corpses, on a thousand crows, riders on Brynaich's men, Owain's ravens.' (Translation from *Medieval Welsh Poems*, trans. J.P. Clancy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p.148). See M.P. Siddons, *The Development of Welsh Heraldry* (Aberystwyth: The National Library of Wales, 1991), pp.117-8 on the heraldic association of ravens with Owain ap Urien.

¹⁰³ Jasper, for example, was believed to stop the flow of blood from a wound. It was during the twelfth century that written records, validated by seal, became common in government business and seals were regularly used by private individuals in property conveyancing in the March by the beginning of the thirteenth century. Their use was more novel in Wales and remained uncommon until the Edwardian conquest. See J. McEwan, 'Seals and their Functions' in J. McEwan and E.A. New, *Seals in Context: Medieval Wales and the Welsh Marches* (Aberystwyth: CAA University of Aberystwyth, 2012), 45-56, available at https://www.academia.edu/2437759/Seals_in_Context_Medieval_Wales_and_the_Welsh_Marches <accessed 12.12.20>, p.59.

witnesses, could contribute to preserving an act',¹⁰⁴ then, rather than having a magical property, Arthur's ring possesses the real one of enabling the confirmation of past actions, which in this case establishes the veracity of Rhonabwy's dream as a prophecy.¹⁰⁵

It may be argued that, in using an Anglo-Norman background the author is following merely contemporary French romance literature, which itself reflected much the same knightly society. Against this, the quality of the detail is quite unlike the formulaic chivalric detail contained in the Welsh *rhamantau* which are associated with the same source.¹⁰⁶ If a parody of a romance tale is proposed, vaguely analogous details to do for example appear in the *Didot Percival*, namely a chessboard game, a rampaging knight making a tumult, a battle at a ford with ravens who turn into women. Still, the essential romantic elements of Arthur's court (other than the reference to Cornwall at the end) and questing knights do not feature nor do any female characters other than the crone and the wife of the host in the opening scene who give a cold welcome to Rhonabwy. As the later *Araith Iolo Goch* indicates, to be effective at least the genre, if not an individual work, which is being parodied must be clear to the audience. In that case, it is the style and content of the traditional tale that are caricatured, in particular the heroic quest and impossible tasks and their listing in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. The nearest the author of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* comes to recalling the traditional Welsh Arthurian tale is the trope of the roll-call of Arthur's counsellors.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ J. McEwan, 'The Early History of Medieval Seals' in McEwan and New, *Seals in Context*, 31-44, p. 42.

¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the audience would have been aware of the plot device of the magical ring in medieval romance which, as a topos, permitted the achievement of supra-human feats by the ring's possessor (see A. Scholey, 'Magical Rings in Middle English Romance', (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham, 2009), available at <https://core.ac.uk/reader/77080> <Accessed 17.6.21>), p.27. Here, unusually, the ring confers power on the viewer, Rhonabwy, and may also represent the author's reflection on the narrator's ability to recall the details of the heraldry of the participants in the dream, on which the colophon comments.

¹⁰⁶ So, for example, Sioned Davies notes the use of stock formula for knightly combat in the *rhamantau*. See S. Davies, 'Horses in the *Mabinogion*', in S. Davies and N.A. Jones, eds., *The Horse in Celtic Culture, Medieval Welsh Perspectives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 121-140.

¹⁰⁷ Rather, the text exhibits several similarities with the non-Arthurian *chanson de geste*, the *Chanson de Roland*. In the scenario depicted in the first few hundred lines of the late eleventh-century epic, the Saracen king sends envoys to sue for peace to the emperor Charlemagne who is encamped at Cordoba in Spain. They are accompanied by 400 mules laden with gold and silver and find him seated in an orchard with his nobles and counsellors. Meanwhile, his older and wiser knights are 'seated on white silken cloths' (trans. *The Song of Roland*, trans. J. Crosland (Cambridge, Ontario: In parentheses Publications, 1999), available at https://www.yorku.ca/inpar/roland_crosland.pdf <accessed 21.09.21>) playing at backgammon and chess to amuse themselves while the active younger ones 'exercise in arms' (trans. Crouch, *Tournament*, p.4). The emperor's response to the embassy is to send his emissary Ganelon, the step-father of Charlemagne's nephew Roland, to the Saracen ruler, but, to avenge himself on Roland, Ganelon misrepresents the emperor's message. Later, in the subsequent ambush on the rearguard of the emperor's troops Roland refuses three times Oliver's request

If *Breuddyd Rhonabwy* is not taken to be primarily a parody of chivalric romance or traditional Welsh tales, it is most frequently categorized generically as an example of medieval dream literature. More specifically, it is regarded as a parody of dream theory and types of dream derived from Macrobius's '*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*' found in such literature. In McKenna's detailed analysis of the tale in these terms, she sees the author as setting up an anticipation in the audience that Rhonabwy's unpromising quarters will result in a meaningless *insomnium* (nightmare) or *visum* (dozing dream). The special hide on which he finally sleeps then suggests rather a revelatory dream of some sort and, while Iddog's appearance indicates the possibility of a truthful *oraculum* (oracular dream), Rhonabwy appears to have an enigmatic dream or *somnium*, although with no authorial interpretation of it offered in the tale. In the end, McKenna places the dream closer to the *visio*, a dream which, according to Macrobius, foretells mundane events. Nevertheless, she follows others in regarding Rhonabwy's dream as relating to the past and concludes that the overall effect is of a tale which, while itself dream fiction, denies the value of such fiction.¹⁰⁸

Such an approach casts the tale as a very literary exercise and makes too great a claim for the exclusivity of the dream genre in guiding its composition. It is also one in which the opening scenario is taken purely as scene-setting, and contemporary and local references in the dream itself are disregarded. While it may be granted that members of a medieval Welsh audience are likely to have had some acquaintance with contemporary dream literature, not least the *Dream of Maxen* from the *Mabinogion*, it seems improbable that they should wish to hear a subversive tale about dream theory and narratives when the author clearly expects them to

to blow his horn Oliphant to summon assistance from the rest of the army. Then, when Roland changes his mind, Oliver three times turns his own arguments against him.

While analogues for triadic structure are found everywhere, Fulton also regards the triple appeal as a deliberate echo of *Le Chanson de Roland* (H. Fulton, 'Cyð-Destun Gwleidyddol *Breudwyd Ronabwy*', *Llên Cymru* 22 (1999), 42-56), p.48. It is perhaps going too far to see a link between the description of the white cloths on which Charlemagne's knights are seated and Arthur's mantle, Gwen. Still, various factors raise the suspicion that the name is the author's own invention. The name is only recorded in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and, although Arthur conventionally has a number of 'white/brilliant' belongings, such as Gwenhyfar, Prydwen and Carnwennan, these are compound terms. If the author and his audience did know of the *Chanson de Roland*, this would almost certainly have been via a French or Anglo-Norman version, as the only known Welsh translation, *Cân Rolant*, was probably made at Llanbadarn Fawr in the late thirteenth century, from an Anglo-Norman text of the late twelfth/early thirteenth century. (*Cân Rolant: The Medieval Welsh Version of the Song of Roland*, ed. and trans. A.C. Rejhon, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp.66-88).

¹⁰⁸ McKenna, 'What Dreams'. The author himself describes Rhonabwy's dream it as a *drych*: And as soon as sleep came into his eyes, a *drych* was granted to him that he and his companions were journeying across Maes Argryngroeg. *Drych* suggests the self-referential mirror, and the term may do not more than reflect Rhonabwy's participation in the dream.

be interested in the history, society and culture of the March. On the other hand, if not regarded as a literary straight-jacket, the dream genre is extremely useful to the author in allowing in effect an element of time travel, either to the past or the future. Plainly, the author intends the audience at least alive to the possibility of a prophetic dream by the use of the trope of the special hide which the narrator asserts will bring good fortune to he who sleeps on it¹⁰⁹ and Rhonabwy sleeps uninterrupted for the magical period of three days and nights.

Several factors suggest that the dream represents or reflects the future, and more precisely the contemporary time of the intended audience. These include the placement of the scene-setting in its historical past and the overtly contemporary nature of the background details, as well as the diplomatic lack of any physical description of the main characters, Arthur and Owain. The ambiguity of their relationship points in the same direction. For this reason, the author does not offer an interpretation or express resolution of the dream: he would expect the audience to provide their own. In addition, a comparison with the prophecies of Merlin incorporated by Geoffrey of Monmouth into his historical writing reveals a curious consequence of the imagined historic prophecy in literature, whether uttered by a vatic figure such as Merlin or in a dream marked as prophetic. If the prophecy can be interpreted by the members of its audience as fulfilled in their present, the prediction validates both the story of its conception and the future/present it apparently accurately foretells, providing the author with a self-constructed authority for the truth of what he says.¹¹⁰

The greatest utility of the dream is perhaps the complete freedom it offers to the author to construct a novel story, so that in effect he can 'kill off' the 'historical' Arthur, in as decisive a way as the discovery of Arthur's grave at Glastonbury.¹¹¹ This act in itself would, taken with the contemporary background, have alerted the audience to the need to look for a more contemporary instantiation of Arthur. Then, as it would be termed today, the author can 'reboot the franchise' by offering a new Arthurian figure who draws on elements of existing

¹⁰⁹ McKenna points to an ambiguity of whether the good fortune arises because of the unpleasantness of the alternative sleeping places or because it will produce an incubatory dream, such as vouchsafed to Brutus in Diana's temple in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* (McKenna, 'What Dreams', p.85).

¹¹⁰ In the case of Geoffrey, to be sure, this is supported by the mysterious ancient book given to him by Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, which validates the historicity of Merlin, even if the origin of the prophecies themselves is left unclear. In *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, the same function is fulfilled by the historical and geographical accuracy of Rhonabwy's present.

¹¹¹ Here literally 'removing him from the storyline'.

socio-political symbolism of Arthur and is presented in a new environment. Such a move would be made possible by the tendency of medieval chroniclers to write their history in typological terms. The prime example of this approach in relation to Arthur was Geoffrey of Monmouth who, with the aim of constructing an indigenous national foundational figure to rival Charlemagne, created a literary presentation of Arthur modelled in part after Henry I and other renowned rulers of Western tradition. As Berard in his survey of Arthurianism and the Plantagenet kings notes, this was an Arthur 'whose aspirations and accomplishments are attuned to the political circumstances and aspirations of Geoffrey's Anglo-Norman dedicatees'.¹¹² The process was circular because Henry I could then be seen as a figurative reincarnation of an historical but deceased Arthur, rather than the mysteriously revived Arthur of the Breton Hope, with each portrayal of Arthur validating the status of the other.¹¹³ Similarly, while Henry II did not politically position himself as a new Arthur on obtaining the English Crown, nevertheless in the contemporary works of Wace, Étienne and Chrétien, Arthur is depicted as possessing an Angevin 'style of kingship, social display, political influence and territorial holdings'.¹¹⁴

Breuddwyd Rhonabwy's depiction of Arthur is undoubtedly satiric in the emphasis given to the projection of his imperial power in contrast to his lack of control over his troops and allies. Helen Fulton, who unusually analyses the text in historicist terms, argues that this satire is both a literary satire on the Galfridian Arthur and a political satire against the early thirteenth century ruler of Gwynedd, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth. Any political satire would unavoidably also be in some manner a literary satire since, as noted above, the typological use of the Arthurian figure in contemporary political life was derived from Geoffrey's figure. Against this, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy's* author tends to avoid Galfridian references, save for Arthur's imperial guise, and refers rather to the native Welsh Arthur of *Culhwch ac Olwen*.

In Fulton's view, the scene-setting offers a background of alliances and hostility between Powys, Gwynedd and England. In time of Madog, caught between with what she terms a 'fragile alliance' with England and the threatening ambitions of Owain Gwynedd.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹² C.M. Berard, *Arthurianism in Early Plantagenet Britain* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), pp.16-7.

¹¹³ Berard suggests that to a considerable extent the Breton Hope was a myth created by the Anglo-Normans to discredit the 'Celtic' Arthur and to enable appropriation of Arthur for their own ends.

¹¹⁴ Berard, *Arthurianism*, p.43. and, generally, pp.13-75.

¹¹⁵ No alliance was likely to be permanent in medieval Wales but the alliance between the rulers Powys and England could hardly be described as a particularly fragile one, being motivated by considerable self-interest on

dreamscape represents the Powys of the original audience at the end of King John's reign, with Llywelyn, taking the role of Arthur, embodying a national leader who keeps the English at bay. However, Llywelyn rules without legitimate authority and the author prophesies that one of Llywelyn's followers, like Owain, could oppose his nationalistic appropriation of political authority over Powys.¹¹⁶

If Fulton's reading of the story as having a specifically Powysian background is accepted, the identification of Arthur with a contemporary ruler of Gwynedd has considerable attraction, particularly as Fulton notes that Arthur shares features of Angevin rulers, in particular that Arthur/Llywelyn emulates the materialism and ceremony of the kings of England and France but is 'overwhelmed by these inappropriate signs of power'.¹¹⁷ Certainly after 1215 Llywelyn was able to project his influence beyond Gwynedd on every region of Powys, as well as Deuheubarth.¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, there are several problems with Fulton's interpretation. First of all, the first decades of the thirteenth century would be too early for an historical Heilyn Goch, and probably also for the emphasis on heraldic detail and the type of armour of the knights in the dream. Again, Fulton suggests the occasion referred to in the dream is Llywelyn's meeting with other Welsh rulers and representatives of King John at Rhyd Y Groes in 1216, to consider the English king's request for their support in his dispute with his barons. Still, while Llywelyn ap Iorwerth negotiated various treaties, including yearly with Henry III after 1234,¹¹⁹ no truce resulted from the meeting in 1216.

The main difficulty with identifying Arthur with Llywelyn ap Iorwerth lies in the expectations of the intended auditors. Although Fulton's analysis sees them as appreciating the typological

both sides. Madog has acted in Angevin interests as early as 1141 and the importance of his position was confirmed in 1158 when Henry II sponsored the knighting of one of his sons. See Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, p.48-50.

¹¹⁶ She also sees parallels between Arthur's relationship with his followers and King John's problems with his barons and follows Lloyd's tentative identification of the site of Rhyd Y Groes with the *Rhud fel Crucem Griffin* where King John's emissaries met Llywelyn and other Welsh princes in an attempt to gain their support against the Anglo-Norman barons in 1215. See J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.,1911), available at <https://archive.org/details/historyofwales/fr01lloyuoft> <accessed 7.10.21>, Vol. ii, pp. 642-3, n.154.

¹¹⁷ Fulton, 'Cyd-Destun', p.52.

¹¹⁸ D. Stephenson, *Medieval Wales c.1050-1332: Centuries of Ambiguity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), pp.17-8.

¹¹⁹ D. Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066-1284* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p.327.

use of the figure of Arthur, it is arguable whether a Welsh Marcher or a Powysian audience would have immediately thought of a prince of Gwynedd, rather than an Angevin ruler, as figuring himself as Arthur.¹²⁰ The only evidence Fulton cites in support of the audience being able to identify Llywelyn ap Iorwerth with the figure of Arthur is its members' assumed familiarity with two of Llywarch ap Llywelyn's poems addressed to the Welsh prince in which he is compared with Arthur.¹²¹ More to the point, whereas both Llywelyn, and more especially his grandson Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (who similarly impinged heavily on the politics of Powys and the Marches between 1256 and 1277), may have appeared as threatening and overbearing figure to Powysians, both were at the same time canny and effective military and political leaders. Neither would usually be characterised as inactive or loathe to engage in a combat they thought they would win, yet in the dream Arthur postpones the battle of Badon and agrees an apparently unnecessary truce. Even in the jaundiced eye of a Powysian noble, would the power and influence obtained by either Llywelyn Fawr or Llywelyn ap Gruffudd have been regarded as depending, like that of the dream Arthur, entirely on the outward show of wealth?¹²²

Described by Carpenter as a 'a visionary and a realist, a warrior and a diplomat, aspiring to rule the principality of Wales yet also masquerading as a loyal counsellor to the king,'¹²³ it is Llywelyn ap Iorwerth would better fill the role of Owain in Rhonabwy's dream.¹²⁴ Again,

¹²⁰ The rulers of Gwynedd customarily used Maelgwyn Gwynedd to support their claims to hegemony over the Welsh (Berard, *Arthurianism* p.207) and, although the Llywelyns may have made some use of Arthurian propaganda (*ibid.*, p. 206-212) there is no evidence of a typological identification being made between a ruler of Gwynedd and Arthur.

¹²¹ Fulton cites Llywarch ap Llywelyn's *Canu Mawr* where Llywelyn ap Iorwerth is praised as a second Arthur with a wealth of gold and silver whom the men of Powys should accept as their ruler, rather than the French. The other reference is no more than a comparison between Llywelyn and Arthur as similar heroic fighters. She takes the unfavorable portrayal of Arthur (who is unpopular with some of his followers) to be a fitting answer to Llywarch's appeal to the men of Powys to accept Llywelyn as their leader. In medieval Welsh poetry the earliest Welsh ruler compared to Arthur is in fact Madog ap Maredudd himself in a praise poem by Gwalchmai ap Meilyr: *Arthur gedernyd, menwyd Medraúd*. ('With the strength of Arthur, with the disposition of Medrawd.') (B. Lewis, 'Arthurian References in Medieval Welsh Poetry, c.1100 - c.1540' in C. Lloyd-Morgan, and E. Poppe, eds, *Arthur in the Celtic Languages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2019), 314-339, p.319, n.13).

¹²² Fulton, 'Cyd-Destun', p.51.

¹²³ Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p.327.

¹²⁴ Again, if there is to be a realistic portrayal of the contemporary position, it would be expected that the Anglo-Norman rulers would play more than the offstage role of a distant Osla Gyllellfawr and that the most likely challenge to Llywelyn would come from the Anglo-Norman Crown rather than an unidentified Welsh Owain. Another weakness is the role of Owain as embodying the vision or prophecy of a challenge by one of Llywelyn's own lords to his leadership. How would that be an improvement? Owain might be a better viewed as representing one of the Llywelyns, trying the limits of the English king's tolerance of the expansion of Venedotian influence in the Marches. At the end of the day, the wise Welsh ruler, even if successful against Anglo-Norman forces in the short run, would back away from all-out war.

rather than a Welsh prince, it seems more likely that Arthur would have been identified typologically with a ruler members of whose dynasty had already been so treated.¹²⁵ As Fulton recognizes, Arthur exhibits a number of features of Angevin rulers. If a Welsh Marcher author was prepared to invite his audience to adopt, even if for satirical purposes, Gerald of Wales' judgments on their countrymen, he might also be prepared to do the same in regards to the typological use of Arthur in Anglo-Norman propaganda.

The Angevin rulers with whom the audience might have been familiar, depending on the date of the tale, were John, Henry III and Edward I. John, although distracted by his difficulties with his barons, was not a negligible military leader¹²⁶ and Edward I's authority was clearly not a matter of mere external show. The Anglo-Norman king most likely to have been contemporary with the audience was Henry III (1207-72), whose reign coincided with the flourishing of the Matter of Britain in Europe. Ironically, he was the subject of little Arthurian propaganda, but for the very reason that make him an excellent match for the Arthur who appears in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, namely what Carpenter terms his 'dearth of charisma and chivalric aptitude'.¹²⁷

An audience of Welsh living in Marches would not have lacked opportunities to observe Henry III at first hand. He participated in a number of ignominious campaigns which, although they displayed royal power, generally involved little major confrontation with either of the Llywelyns or Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's son and successor Dafydd, and resulted in inconclusive truces. All too often they consisted of the king and his nobles living in tents and pavilions for months on end while castles were built, as at Ceri in 1228, where Llewelyn ap Iorwerth pragmatically brought hostilities to an end by paying homage to the King,¹²⁸ and at Painscastle in 1231, the campaign ending in one-year truce with Llywelyn.¹²⁹ In 1245, after the justiciar

¹²⁵ Berard, *Arthurianism*, p.10.

¹²⁶ The success of John's Welsh campaign of 1211 was real even if, as it turned out, it only temporarily curbed Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's ambitions. See W.L. Warren, *King John* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.198-9.

¹²⁷ Berard, *Arthurianism*, p.175.

¹²⁸ D. Carpenter, *Henry III: The Rise to Power and Personal Rule 1207-1258* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), pp.74-5.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.100-3. The campaign at Rhuddlan in 1241 did not involve castle building but saw the submission of Dafydd ap Llywelyn without battle in the face of overwhelming odds. A final abortive campaign to invade Anglesey occurred in 1258 following the defeat of the future Edward I's forces the previous year and ineffective efforts at mediation by Richard of Cornwall. Thereafter both Henry III and Edward I, the more active military leader, were distracted by rebellion and civil war, enabling Llywelyn ap Gruffudd to conclude the treaty of Montgomery with the Crown in 1267.

of Chester John Lestrange had spent much of the previous year fending off Welsh attacks on Oswestry and lifting sieges elsewhere, Henry III launched a campaign to rebuild the castle at Deganwy. While the work was ongoing, the king lived in a set of pavilions surrounded by an army of about 10,000 foot soldiers and some 660 cavalrymen, but these engaged only in raiding and skirmishes.¹³⁰ It was during the Painscastle campaign that Henry was reconciled with his brother Richard, Earl of Cornwall.¹³¹ The latter, who possessed the hereditary right to county of Cornwall and did utilise Arthurian propaganda was first in line of succession until the birth of Edward in 1239. In the 1230s he rebuilt Tintagel Castle as a prestige project¹³² and this may explain why Cadwr, the Earl of Cornwall who appears in Rhonabwy's dream, is one figure whom unusually the author does take from Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Other features of the dream too are particularly relevant to Henry III. Tournaments of this period not only provided practical training in warfare, but also occasions for furthering political aims, and consequently Marcher lords were usually enthusiastic participants. Tourneys could be arranged when there was a lull in fighting in a military campaign¹³³ and could provide a convenient cover of the pursuit of private feuds or political manoeuvres against the king.¹³⁴ This was particularly the case when the king was not himself a tourneyer and had problems with his barons. As a result, Henry III's reign saw numerous prohibitions on tourneying, although this did not prevent them from occurring.¹³⁵ If Arthur was recognized as representing Henry III, the implications of the offstage 'tournament' in the dream would be clear to the original audience. It would reflect a political reality in contemporary Anglo-Norman society, as well being a metaphor for political relations between the Angevin ruler and his notional vassals amongst the Welsh princes.

Carpenter concludes of Henry III's period of personal rule that 'he had failed to discipline leading magnates and had allowed them to expand their local powers. He had failed, in more

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.428-31.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.104.

¹³² Berard, *Arthurianism*, pp. 193-5. Matthew Paris records but rejects a report that at some time before 1246 Richard had received Dafydd ap Llywelyn at Tintagel: Matthew Paris's *English History*, Vol II, trans. J.A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), available at <https://archive.org/details/matthewparissen00rishgoog> <accessed 02.11.21>, pp.115-6.

¹³³ Barker *The Tournament*, p.31.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12, pp.45-7.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.48-9, p.60.

than individual cases, to discipline his own officials'.¹³⁶ Presumably, those with political acumen among the Welsh of the Shropshire March were of the same view. Here indeed was someone whose power, like that of the Arthur of the dream, did appear to depend entirely on externalities of wealth. It would hardly be surprising if the audience felt that the soaking of Arthur and his counsellors by Addaon, without any apparent reaction from the emperor, was at the same time realistic and humorous. When turmoil is caused in his army by the arrival of Cai (and one wonders whether the author has anyone particular in mind) Cadwr, Earl of Cornwall, is required to restore order by the use of Arthur's splendid ceremonial sword, rather than the Excalibur that was the attribute of the warrior Arthur.¹³⁷

If Arthur does represent the Anglo-Norman king, it also casts a different light on the board game played by Arthur and Owain. To an Anglo-Norman, the game should be chess, a game of tactical acquisition and strategy and, if the tale's author had any familiarity with Anglo-Norman culture, he would be aware of the nature of the game.¹³⁸ To Owain, his Welsh opponent, the game is *gwyddbwyll*, one of attack, feint and escape. Owain's forces may be winning in the offstage skirmishes, but when Arthur makes a decisive intervention and acts destructively to bring an end to the game, Owain wisely backs down. The offer and acceptance of a truce immediately follows. Seeming in some way to be derived from the conclusion of the game of *gwyddbwyll*, the truce is in effect between Arthur and Owain, which explains the otherwise curious nonentity of Osla Gyllellfawr. The story would then reflect the realities of English/Welsh interaction in the March in the thirteenth century, with the Welsh rulers of Gwynedd in effect testing how much territory and influence they could acquire at the expense of the Marchers before the king resolved to intervene.

The greatest difficulty in seeing the presentation of Arthur as rendering *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* a political satire in its totality is the unusualness of satire as a genre in Welsh literature before

¹³⁶ Carpenter, *Henry III*, p.710.

¹³⁷ See K. Watts, 'The Field of the Cloth of Gold; Arms, Armour and the Sporting Prowess of Henry VIII and King Francis I', in A.V. Murray and K. Watts, eds, *The Medieval Tournament as Spectacle* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021), 208-37, p.230. The medieval king's 'bearing sword' represented the military strength of the monarchy and when unsheathed with the blade upwards represented the threat of the use of that strength.

¹³⁸ While the equivalence of a game of chess with military tactical manoeuvre is a commonplace, still in the context of the dream, the realism of knightly representations on contemporary high-status chess pieces is of relevance as another example of the aristocratic Anglo-Norman culture of the story's background. See fig.1 for an example of a chess-piece in the form of two knights, probably of Anglo-Norman provenance and dated c.1230-50. Made of walrus ivory, it retains traces of gilding and dark green paint.

the fourteenth century.¹³⁹ This is not to deny that the satiric elements in the story might not have been considered inappropriate when directed at an Anglo-Norman figure. There is a first time for everything, but the question is how would a political satire at the expense of Henry III have been a meaningful exercise for the intended audience? Neither a Marcher nor a Powysian audience was in a position to react to the satire in a meaningful way. Since the other tales of the *Mabinogion* offer no other clear generic category in which the tale can be placed and it can be regarded as particularly aimed at an audience of Welsh Marchers, it is legitimate to ask whether there are alternative generic possibilities provided by Marcher literature which utilize a typological Arthur and which could have informed the horizon of expectation of the intended auditors.

¹³⁹ M. Stephens, *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 667.

Chapter 3: The Interpreter's Tale

It is illustrative of the fact that the Middle Welsh language of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy's* composition has led to its reductive classification as a 'native Welsh' prose text that Lieberman in his account of Marcher literature does not include *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* amongst the works of 'Marcher' authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales.¹⁴⁰ The Welsh tale is unmentioned, even though it exhibits a considerable number of similarities with another text which he describes as 'most vividly preserving the Marcher ethos',¹⁴¹ the Anglo-Norman *Fouke Fitz Waryn*, was not only probably produced at virtually the same time as *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*,¹⁴² but also is centred on virtually the same location - the lordship of Whittington which split in half the two parts of the Oswestry lordship, Oswestry Dupart and Oswestry Traean - and features prominently Iorwerth Goch, Roger de Powys and his son Meurig. A summary of the Anglo-Norman text could also stand for the Welsh tale: 'a weird mixture of accurate information, plausible stories that lack confirmation and magnificent flights of pure imagination.'¹⁴³

There is no doubt that *Fouke Fitz Waryn* was produced for a local audience, which would have been expected to identify with its fundamental purpose of affirming Anglo-Norman aristocratic power and values in the Shropshire March. This finds expression in the tale through the heroic exploits of the Marcher Fitzwaryn family in pursuit of the validation of its claims to the lordship of Whittington. The story concentrates on the activities of Fouke III and in particular his dispute with King John. Apart from personal antipathy, this involved the rival claims to the lordship of Roger of Powys and his son Meurig, those close relatives of Heilyn Goch according to the genealogy in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*. There is some argument as to the extent to which the story was intended for a restricted audience associated with the family or, given the historical inaccuracies, for a more general audience who had heard outlaw

¹⁴⁰ M. Lieberman, 'Marcher Lordships and Literature', in R. Rouse, and S. Echard, *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 1286-88.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.1288.

¹⁴² As with *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, there is considerable variance of opinion about the exact date of *Fouke*, completed by the fact that the surviving prose version, which dates from the early fourteenth century, clearly derives from a lost Anglo-Norman version of the second half of the thirteenth century and therefore may not precisely reflect the original form of the tale: see discussions at T.J. Jones, *Outlawry in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.192 and D. Stephenson, 'Fouke Le Fitz Waryn and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's Claim to Whittington', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 77: (2002), 26-31.

¹⁴³ Sydney Painter, *The Sources of Fouke fitz Warin* quoted at *Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.91.

legends about Fouke III and would appreciate these cast into a romantic form.¹⁴⁴ Stephenson's conclusion of an audience composed of northern Shropshire /Marcher nobles would seem the most likely,¹⁴⁵ but it has also been argued that *Fouke's* author envisaged a Welsh audience for his tale,¹⁴⁶ which would account for the favourable treatment of Welsh figures such as Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Owain Cyfeiliog and Gwenwynwyn.¹⁴⁷

Fouke shares elements with *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* apart from its *mise-en-scène*. The text records Fouke III's battle against the attempt by a 'Iorwerth Drwyndwn' to take over the entire (north and central) March. Since this was certainly not Iorwerth ap Gruffudd, who was active in northwest Wales, it is generally agreed that this is a garbled reference to Iorwerth Goch.¹⁴⁸ *Fouke* wildly exaggerates the military activities not only of Fouke but also of Iorwerth, painting the latter as an adversary rather than an ally of Henry II. The inversion of the nature of the relationship is similar to the supposed dispute between the apparently historically-allied Iorwerth and his half-brother Madog. In *Fouke* it is stated that, although Iorwerth after his conquest of the Marches 'from Chester to Worcester' returned Ellesmere to Henry II, on no account would the Welshman give up Whittington and Maelor Saesneg.¹⁴⁹ It may be that Iorwerth, on behalf of Madog, seized control of Whittington and parts of Maelor in the Anarchy of the 1140s,¹⁵⁰ and the family's continuing interest in Whittington castle is evidenced by the fact that Madog probably died there in 1160.¹⁵¹ It could also explain why the king, at some time after he came to the throne, granted Whittington to Iorwerth's

¹⁴⁴ *Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.123-5.

¹⁴⁵ Stephenson, '*Fouke Le Fitz Waryn*', p.29.

¹⁴⁶ J. Smith in an unpublished PhD thesis, 'Literary Encounters', (Northwestern University, 2011) quoted in D.G. Helbert, 'The Arthur of the March of Wales', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 2016), available at <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0314265> <accessed 06.06.21>, p.205, n.392.

¹⁴⁷ Lieberman, 'The English and the Welsh', pp.5-6.

¹⁴⁸ The confusion was probably intentional: see discussion at Stephenson, '*Fouke Le Fitz Waryn*', p.21. It remains questionable to what extent Iorwerth was engaged in warlike activities against Marcher targets. As with other historical details in *Fouke*, the timing may have been transposed and the events referred to have taken place in the Anarchy, as the time Madog moved into Oswestry on a similarly rather opaque basis. There is in any event a severe chronological difficulty regarding military interaction between Fouke III and any of the significant Welshman named Iorwerth who might be represented by the figure of that name in *Fouke*. Iorwerth Goch probably died in 1171 and Iorwerth Drwyndwn in c.1174. Fouke III's dates are uncertain but he is generally held to have been born sometime between 1160-70 and to have died at an advanced age in 1258.

¹⁴⁹ *Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.148.

¹⁵⁰ Stephenson, *Medieval Powys*, p.43.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.585.

associate Roger and Overton in Maelor Saesneg to Roger's brother Jonas, with Roger's son Meurig subsequently succeeding to possession of both.¹⁵²

The geography of Rhonabwy's dream journey also has its counterpart in *Fouke*. Notably, the section of the text describing Fouke's major period of outlawry in England and Wales, following his initial flight and return from Paris contains what Burgess describes as 'a chain of toponyms stretching from the fringes of Staffordshire through northern Shropshire and the Oswestry 'salient' into the most northerly commotes of southern Powys and across the Berwyns to Bala in Penllyn'.¹⁵³ *Fouke* also exhibits the same contemporary cultural elements as those which appear in Rhonabwy's dream, such as an elaborate tournament, which includes a mêlée tournament on the first day, and a description of heraldic devices which have been seen as being used for the first time here for the purposes of political allegory.¹⁵⁴ Although Arthur does not participate in the action as a character, the Anglo-Norman text contains a considerable number of Arthurian references, including a claim that Arthur himself once occupied Whittington, references designed to bolster Fouke's claims to the lordship.

While the two texts present a picture of Welsh and Anglo-Norman contemporary audiences with a very similar background, what is of more import are the generic categorisations contained in *Fouke* which might have been available to the intended Welsh Marcher audience of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*. This is not to say that such an audience was necessarily expected to be familiar with the original verse text of *Fouke* in its totality, but that elements of the story were circulating together in a form that provided for the Welsh tale's intended auditors more extended and socially relevant 'horizons of expectations' as described by Jauss than those offered by other, less localised, contemporary literature.¹⁵⁵ Generalised concerns about fratricidal conflict in ruling families, the ineffectuality of the ruling aristocracy and the culture exemplified by the prose poets who supported them, or the satirical presentation of Arthur as an ineffectual *roi fainéant* might have been written for any Welsh audience.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.246-7. Suppe suggests that Iorwerth may have given Whittington to Roger during the Anarchy: Suppe, 'Roger', p.22.

¹⁵³ *Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.126.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *Outlawry*, p.192, n.1.

¹⁵⁵ There is evidence of Welsh familiarity with at least the character of Fouke, identified as 'Syr Ffwg' or 'Ffwg ap Gwarin', if not details of his history, in later poets. See the entry for the 'Fitz Warin lords of Whittington and Alderbury (Salop) and Alverston (Glos.)' in *the Dictionary of Welsh Biography* [online] Available at <https://biography.wales/article/s-FITZ-WAR-1130> <accessed 12.12.21>.

One such generic ‘horizon’ is the story’s status as an outlaw narrative. Historically, Fouke III was indeed outlawed by King John in 1200 and not pardoned until late 1203, having the castle at Whittington restored to him in 1204.¹⁵⁶ In the interim he may have carried out the equivalent of border raiding with others drawn to his band and sought refuge wherever willing hosts might be found, but he certainly did not travel to Sweden or Spain to engage in dragon-slaying activities, as related in the more imaginative flights of fancy of *Fouke’s* author.

If the opening scene of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is considered with this genre in mind, it is apparent that Iorwerth can be seen as cast in the role of an outlaw figure. While a dispute between Madog and Iorwerth over the rulership of land in Powys is possible,¹⁵⁷ in the historical records there are only indications of co-operation between them.¹⁵⁸ As a fictional construct, the fraternal dispute prompts the flight of Iorwerth who ‘*mynet ar herw hyt yn Lloeger*’. The author then immediately adds, ‘*a llad kalaned a llosgi tei a dala karcharoryon a oruc Iorwerth*’.¹⁵⁹ This is generally regarded as describing raiding by Iorwerth in England. However, given that Iorwerth is thought most likely to be found in the borderland in the lordship of Oswestry, it is possible that the phrase ‘*hyt yn Lloeger*’ (‘as far as/up to into/in England’) is to be read as the equivalent of the Latin ‘*usque in Angliam*’, indicating that England is Iorwerth’s ultimate destination following raiding in the Shropshire March.¹⁶⁰ The sentence

¹⁵⁶ *Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, pp.100-3.

¹⁵⁷ The argument is not over the position of *penteulu*, which is offered to Iorwerth but rejected, but the failure of Madog to offer land to Iorwerth. It has been suggested that the rejection might be because it would involve future exclusion from succession to Powys (R. Andrews and D. Stephenson, ‘Draig Argoed: Iorwerth Goch ap Maredudd c. 1110-71’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 52: (2006), 65-85, p.6, n.7).

¹⁵⁸ They first appear in the exchequer year 1156-7 when they appear to have been acting in concert as the Pipe Roll records the payment by Henry II of £8 10s to Madog, 40s to Iorwerth and 40s to Hywel ab Ieuaf, Madog’s underking in Arwystli (Andrews, ‘Draig Argoed’, p.67, n.14). The payments related to Henry II’s attack on Owain Gwynedd.

¹⁵⁹ Davies translates, ‘But Iorwerth...went raiding in England, and he committed murder, and burned houses and took prisoners.’ (*The Mabinogion*, trans. S. Davies, p.214.) See also p.16 and n.31 above.

¹⁶⁰ The author, like other *Mabinogion* storytellers, favours the use of the conjunction ‘and’ rather than a more complicated syntax which accounts for the difficulty in establishing the logical relationship of the two parts of the sentence. The *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* offers no translation for the conjoined prepositions ‘*hyt*’ + ‘*yn*’ but Lewis and Short’s *Latin Dictionary* gives ‘*usque in*’ meaning ‘all the way to’. Coincidentally, the same Latin phraseology is used in a chronicle entry for the year 1168, relating that Iorwerth Goch, Owain Cyfeiliog and their men fled all the way into England, but then returned to capture the castle of Tafolwern: ‘[b1190.2] *Fugientibus Iorwert choch et owinus de keweilac cum suis usque in angliam · In eorum vero Reditu castellum de walwern ceperunt.*’ (*Annales Cambriae: The B Text* From London, National Archives, MS E164/1, pp. 2–26, transcribed by H.W. Gough-Cooper [published online by the Welsh Chronicles Research Group, 2015]. Available at <http://croniclau.bangor.ac.uk/documents/AC%20B%20first%20edition.pdf> <accessed 29.9.20>, p. 63).

could therefore be translated, 'But Iorwerth went off into exile raiding all the way to England and, as he went, he committed murder, and burned houses and took prisoners.'

It seems more probable that in the context of a familial power-struggle that Iorwerth would have raided lands under Madog's notional control on the border and then taken refuge in England proper, rather than pursuing the rather Machiavellian (and dangerous) policy of raiding in England itself to cause embarrassment for his half-brother, who favoured a policy of co-operation with the Anglo-Norman Crown.¹⁶¹ In any event, while *herw* can mean raid, *mynd ar herw* can mean 'to go into exile or banishment' as well as 'to go harrying', and *(bod)ar herw* can be translated as 'to be outlawed or banished, live in exile, be on the run or in flight'.¹⁶² Suggestive of some sort of cross-fertilisation between the texts is that, as in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* Madog dispatches 100 men into each commote to search for Iorwerth, in *Fouke* King John sends a hundred knights with their followers throughout England to find Fouke.¹⁶³

Notoriously, *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* does not pursue Iorwerth or his career beyond Rhonabwy's arrival at Dudleston, so that there are no outlaw adventures or resolution of his outlaw status. In the view of the author's allusive style, this absence of an express resolution of Iorwerth's story does not mean that the intended audience would not be expected to bring it to mind his subsequent biography, in which the March landscape and adjoining Shropshire figured prominently. Even at this distance in time, a considerable amount of information survives about Iorwerth's subsequent career and that of his descendants, particularly so as it followed that of the successful outlaw. As Jones points out, the restoration of the outlaw to his original status is not the only successful resolution of the outlaw narrative: 'While the experience of outlawry stripped a man of his legal identity and hence the basis of his power, it also offered the opportunity to rebuild that identity and power by constructing a new system of relationships, perhaps elsewhere.'¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ This was not an unusual course of action for fugitive members of Welsh royal households e.g., Cadwaladr when exiled from Gwynedd in mid-twelfth century was maintained in England by Henry II and Dafydd ab Owain, again from Gwynedd, who sought refuge in England at the end of the century: see Stephenson, *Medieval Wales*, p.77, n.10.

¹⁶² *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* [online] Available at <https://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html> <accessed 05.02.21>, s.v. 'herw'.

¹⁶³ *Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.152.

¹⁶⁴ He also points out that outlaws of higher social status tended to have the resources which enabled them to utilise the condition of legal outcast to their benefit. Jones, *Outlawry*, pp.42,45.

Iorwerth's actual period of dispossession followed Madog's death. Although initially he acquired Mochnant on the partition of Powys, he was driven out in 1166 in the subsequent familial power-struggle. Thereafter, the focus of his activities appears to have been largely in the service of the Anglo-Norman Crown or in his English possessions, although there is evidence that he retained lands adjacent to the Shropshire March in Nanheudwy and Edeirnion.¹⁶⁵ Apart from his position as castellan of Chirk for Henry II, he was militarily active in the interests of his own family as well as those of the Crown, removing Owain Gwynedd from Iâl (Yale) in 1157 and supporting Owain Cyfeiliog in reestablishing himself in Caereinion in 1167. It was while defending Owain's territory against Lord Rhys in 1171 that he met his death.¹⁶⁶ The Welsh tradition confirms both his military and political roles in Powys with the poet Cynddelw describing Iorwerth in his *marwnad* as *draig argoed* and *hynefydd* or counsellor, indicating in the Welsh law texts an elder of the nobility who acted as the king's adviser.¹⁶⁷

Stephenson refers to the possibility that payments of £20 covering the period of 4 months of that year to *Geruerdi Troioduri* refer to Iorwerth Goch and the designation *Troiodurus* may represent the Welsh *troediwr*, with later examples of it meaning 'guide'.¹⁶⁸ If so, this a first indication of other, more diplomatic duties undertaken by Iorwerth within the Anglo-Norman sphere. According to Anglo-Norman records, in 1166, the same year as the first payment by Henry II for his castellany at Chirk, he appears to have made a successful legal claim to a number of manors, including Sutton in Shropshire proper, thus becoming the feudal lord of English lands.¹⁶⁹ Subsequently, the serjeanty of this manor of Sutton was specifically identified in 1211 as held by his son Gruffudd for the service of being the king's *latimarius* [interpreter] in Wales.¹⁷⁰ That the serjeanty of interpreter might include a number of associated roles is

¹⁶⁵ Andrews, 'Draig Argoed', p.70.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.73

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.82.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.70-1.

¹⁶⁹ The manors lay between Telford and Bridgnorth. Eyton too surmises his claim to a great part of the escheated honour of Gerard of Tournai, comprising manors in Sutton Brockton and Ellerdine, as well as Rowton, were acknowledged at least in part from ulterior political motives. R.W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire* (London: J.R. Smith, 1854-60), available at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000156282> <accessed 29.11.21>, Vol.II, pp.108-9.

¹⁷⁰ The concept of the serjeanty seems to have been developed by royal officials in the late twelfth century to describe the feudal tenure held directly from the king for a mixed assortment of feudal services not involving service as a knight (Suppe, *Military Institutions*, p.73).

indicated by a local survey from c. 1210 which reported that Gruffudd held the manor for the service of being a messenger between the English and Welsh and by evidence from 1254 that the serjeanty, then held by Gruffudd's son Madog, was that of leading the king into Wales in time of war.¹⁷¹

This would confirm the long-standing practice of the Anglo-Norman Crown, noted by Constance Bullock, of endowing royal interpreters with feudal landholdings.¹⁷² Similar roles in Anglo-Norman administration of the March and rewards are recorded for the two Welsh Marcher associates of Iorwerth, Roger of Powys and Ionas and their descendants. Roger was stated to be granted Whittington castle and Overton *per servicium de ferentis mandatis nostris per Walliam* while his son Meurig is recorded as receiving payments for doing the King's business in Wales in 1194,¹⁷³ and Roger's grandson Wrenoc ap Meurig ap Roger is also recorded in c.1212 as holding his land by virtue of being the King's Latimer.¹⁷⁴

Uncertainty surrounds the identity of Iorwerth's wife but his son Gruffudd married Matilda, an heiress of Guy Lestrage, who was a member of the notable Shropshire family associated with the FitzAlans while his grandson Madog married the sister of James de Audley, sheriff of Shropshire.¹⁷⁵ If the Welsh personal names in Iorwerth's family over this period is taken as an indicator of ethnic affiliation, the family retained a Welsh ethnic identity and, presumably, linguistic ability in east-central Shropshire until at least 1262.¹⁷⁶

A generic similarity as an outlaw tale between *Fouke* and the scene-setting in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and the similarities in some details might seem merely coincidental, even if the author of the Welsh tale could rely upon local knowledge of his auditors to recognize the genre of the outlaw tale and its local instantiation in stories about Fouke. Although a Marcher background would enable the audience to provide a resolution for Iorwerth's supposed outlaw flight from Powys to the Shropshire March in the subsequent activities of Iorwerth

¹⁷¹ F.C. Suppe, 'The career and subsequent reputation of Iorwerth Goch, bi-cultural denizen of the medieval Welsh marches', *North American Journal of Celtic Studies*, 2:2 (2018), 133-154, p. 141 and n.12,13.

¹⁷² C. Bullock-Davies, *Professional Interpreters and the Matter of Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1965), p.13.

¹⁷³ Lieberman, *The Medieval March*, p.123.

¹⁷⁴ Suppe, 'Roger', p.20.

¹⁷⁵ F.C., Suppe, 'Interpreter Families and Anglo-Welsh Relations in the Shropshire-Powys Marches in the Twelfth Century' in C. P. Lewis, ed, *Anglo-Norman Studies XXX Proceedings of the Battle Conference* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 196-212, pp.209-11.

¹⁷⁶ Suppe, 'The career', p.141.

and his offspring, clearly the dream element of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* in no way constitutes an outlaw narrative. The issue remains the import of the introduction of the figure of Arthur and his court into the landscape of the March and whether it can be shown to have any bearing on Iorwerth's situation and, more pertinently for the author and his audience, that of his descendants and those of Roger of Powys.

Here another generic categorisation of *Fouke* requires consideration. It is generally recognized as a family or 'ancestral' romance, in which foundational history and legend was presented to lend prestige to an Anglo-Norman family regarded as 'parvenu' in newly-acquired estates outside Normandy.¹⁷⁷ The problem which beset Fouke's 'biographer' in establishing his family's entitlement to Whittington, which represented the family's standing with the other Marcher lords, was that it unfortunately appeared to derive from the ultimately successful bribery of King John.¹⁷⁸

If in *Fouke* King John is driven to acknowledge the validity of Fouke's title to Whittington by Fouke's campaign of Robin Hood-like outlawry, an important element brought into play to bolster the Fitzwaryn proprietary claims was what can be termed Arthurian validation, comprised of Arthurian references and antecedents, and including typological identification with figures from the Arthurian world. The tale starts with a brief, apparently unconnected, introduction evoking the spring, suggesting a generic connection with romances such as Chretien's *Perceval*, to which the text makes a number of references, and casts Fouke III on his first appearance in arms in the role of the young Welsh knight Percival/Peredur.¹⁷⁹ The

¹⁷⁷ The generic category and its features are described by Dominica Legge in M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp.139-175. She regards *Fouke* as a late example of the genre. Burgess n.54 The category 'romance' is not entirely discrete from that of the *chanson de geste*, so that Sarah Kay in her study of the genre includes the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* as a *chanson de geste*, although it is normally classed as a romance. (S. Kay, *The Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance: Political Fictions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p.243).

¹⁷⁸ Fouke III finally acquired the title to Whittington after payment to king John of a fine of 200 marks. The family's title was not acquired directly from the Conqueror, the ultimate validating source of Anglo-Norman landholding in Britain nor was it wrested from Welsh control by either Fitzwaryn ancestors or by Fouke III himself. The legal basis of the Fitzwaryn claim to Whittington was supposed to derive from William Peverel II, the nephew of Payn Peverel of Bourn and William Peverel I of Dover, both of whom were prominent in the court of Henry I. The younger William died childless on crusade and his lands passed into the hands of Henry II after 1147. The Fitzwaryns claimed the younger William had enfeoffed Whittington, together with Overton, to them. A telling, but obviously fictitious, later genealogy introduces the younger William into Rhys Sais' family tree, making him the half-brother of Roger de Powys. See Thornton, 'Some Welshmen', p.155.

¹⁷⁹ So, Fouke is described as he sets out to face his first combat in terms reminiscent of the young Percival/Peredur: 'The young man [Fouke], as a result of the reproof she had uttered, became flushed with anger and distress. Then he climbed down I the tower and found an old, rusty hauberk, which he donned as best he

Arthurian role provides a background appropriate to Fouke's status as a chivalric hero, whose virtue marks him out as properly belonging to the ranks of the Marcher lords.¹⁸⁰

Arthur himself is introduced into the March by means of an onomastic tale. At the end of *Fouke*, Whittington/Blancheville is equated with the Blanche Lande of the dream of Cahuz from the early thirteenth-century Arthurian romance *Perlesvaus*, which at the beginning relates how Arthur undertakes a quest to Blanche Lande. This enables the author to support Fouke's claims by a prophecy of Merlin relating to Blanche Lande that a wolf coming from it would overcome a leopard, the wolf being identified with Fouke and the leopard with King John in heraldic terms.¹⁸¹ This prophecy had already been made at the start of *Fouke* by the demonically-possessed Geomadog, a reanimated giant, to Payne Peverel, who repeats the defeat of the giant previously achieved by his Brythonic predecessor, Corineus. In *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the story of Corineus and his defeat of the giant Gogmagog is an onomastic one explaining the name of Cornwall, conceived of as to some degree independent of Loegria,¹⁸² a status which the Fitwaryns seek to emulate in relation to the English Crown.¹⁸³

could. He grabbed hold of a large Danish axe and went to a stable... where he found a packhorse, which he mounted...[he] had a wretched helmet, which scarcely protected his shoulders.' (*Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.140).

¹⁸⁰ In *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* such echoes of continental romance as have been identified have been derived rather from the so-called *Didot Perceval*, such as the Orgueilleus de la Lande who 'armed with vermilion arms ... came at such a speed that he made the whole wood quake and it seemed he might have been ten he made such tumult' and Perceval's combat at the ford with Urban involving birds who are transformed women (*Didot Perceval, or, The Romance of Perceval in Prose*, ed. and trans. D. Skeels (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), available at www.ancienttexts.org/library/celtic/ctexts/pd01.html <accessed 10.08.21>, chapters 2 and 6). While Percival's adventures tend to include magical chesspieces, a closer analogue to the *gwyddbwyll* scene in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* is the chess game between Renaud and Bertolai, Charlemagne's nephew in the popular twelfth-century French *chanson de geste* '*Renaut de Montauban*'. After Renaud checkmates Bertolai three times, a violent conflict ensues which results in the latter's death: see https://theodora.com/encyclopedia/r/renaud_de_montauban.html.

¹⁸¹ Going even further, the author of *Fouke* presents his hero as in effect a second Arthur 'who recovered his chivalry and his valour at Blanche Lande, when he had lost everything'. (*Two Medieval Outlaws*, trans. Burgess, p.182).

¹⁸² Geoffrey: *History*, pp.72-88.

¹⁸³ There is the distinct possibility that an identification of the Shropshire March with Cornwall may have been derived from Welsh sources. Brady refers to Marged Haycock's unpublished suggestion that the 'Cernyw' named in the poem *Trawsganu Kynan Garwyn mab Brochfael* indicates the land of the British tribe of the Cornovii of Shropshire rather than the area inhabited by the tribe of the same name in the West Country. (Brady, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands*, p.36 and p. 49, n. 76). If so, the tradition may have been preserved for a long time, since the poem's date of composition has been placed at any time from the sixth to the tenth centuries and Charles-Edwards suggests the area had come to be known as part of Powys by the early seventh century: see Charles-Edwards, *Wales*, p.389.

If the Welsh tale is taken to fulfill the same role as a foundational ‘romance’ of Welsh Marchers, it is the presence of Arthur and his armies on the western border of Oswestry that effects the Arthurian validation of their status in Rhonabwy’s dream. While Arthur is presented as an Angevin potentate, references to the triads, and echoes of Cynddelw and *Culhwch ac Olwen* also colour his figure with a localized yet Brythonic identity, rather than a contemporary romance Arthur or a ‘Welsh’ manifestation of him. In this way the text achieves the combination of the apparently conflicting interpretations of the twelfth-century Arthur who was a figure of ancestral possession of Prydein to the Welsh and who to the Anglo-Normans was ‘the champion of the prevailing institutional authority in England.’¹⁸⁴ Rather than the fulfilment of a Merlinic prophecy, the author of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* uses the prophetic dream to claim the authority of truth for his Arthurian vision.¹⁸⁵ When Arthur returns to Cornwall, not Caerleon and this can be reached in the dream the same day, the Shropshire March seems, like *Fouke*’s ‘Blanche Lande’, to adopt its own ‘Brythonic’ identity as another ‘Cornwall’ and is similarly distinct from Lloegr.

Breuddwyd Rhonabwy would not be the only surviving thirteenth-century work to make use of a satirical portrayal of a revived Arthur and an Angevin ruler, cast as his typological counterpart, for the purpose of validating a territorial claim.¹⁸⁶ In Étienne de Rouen’s *Draco Normannicus*, a seemingly factual Latin verse history of the Dukes of Normandy from Rollo to Henry II of c. 1167-9,¹⁸⁷ the writer includes an epistolary exchange between the latter and an Arthur who lives and reigns in the Antipodes. The correspondence occurs in the context of the Breton revolt against the Angevin ruler in 1167. Regarded by critics as a dismissal of the Breton hope for Arthur’s return, the work also uses the revivification of Arthur to construct parallels between a Galfridian, imperial Arthur and Henry II. It presents the Angevin ruler as the new Arthur, and Henry II’s rule over Brittany receives the Brythonic Arthur’s approval when the king acknowledges that he will hold the duchy, even if only temporarily, under Arthur’s suzerainty.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Berard, *Arthurianism*, p.20.

¹⁸⁵ The manipulation of time and prophecy by the author of *Fouke* to validate his ‘history’ is considered in detail by A. Williams, ‘Stories Within Stories: Writing History in *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*’, *Medium Ævum*, 81:1 (2012), 70–87, pp.73-4.

¹⁸⁶ Admittedly the author of the Welsh tale would be unique in incorporating them in the same figure.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.54.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.59.

If the Arthur of Rhonabwy's dream represents a figure who through his dual identity validates both Brythonic and Anglo-Norman claims to the area of the Shropshire March, the question is the precise identity of those who saw themselves as inheritors of this 'Brythonic' claim. The Welsh with whom the scene-setting is particularly concerned are those who themselves or whose families were involved the role of go-between between the Anglo-Norman Crown and the Welsh in the Shropshire March in the twelfth century. The social position of these Welsh Marchers depended on their role in Anglo-Norman diplomacy and entailed a particularly direct relationship with the Crown.

Since the dream presents figures contemporary to the audience in an anonymous, typological form, it is not surprising that neither Iorwerth nor his associates figure in it. But they do share a role with one of the dream's main figures, Iddwg.¹⁸⁹ Like Iorwerth with Madog, Iddog's offence against Arthur seems somewhat manufactured to make a point in the story, as they are on good terms in the dream itself. The Arthurian figure of importance in the dream is the not the chivalric knight but the royal envoy, interpreter, and guide, who is otherwise unknown in Welsh medieval literature but here achieves his eminence by being part of the Arthurian world.

As described in the dream, Iddog's role was more one of interpreter between Arthur and Medrawd. In his eagerness for battle, he distorts Arthur's message, which leads to the unexpected consequence of Arthur's defeat. As Fouke repents of his youthful violence (which included the murder of Roger's son Meurig), receives the mercy of seven years' penance of blindness and then dies, so Iddog tells Rhonabwy he undertook seven years penance in exile in Pictland for the misapplication of his talents and received mercy. In the story, Iddog and, in a humbler way, Rhonabwy in a number of respects fulfil the role of the latimer as described by Constance Bullock, as no doubt did Iorwerth, Roger and Jonas and their later counterparts:

The latimer was expected to act as secretary to his lord, to accompany [him] in times of war, to parley with the enemy, carry letters, deliver verbal messages, ask questions, prepare the way for his lord, be sent forward to speak with strangers –

¹⁸⁹ A correspondence felt by Jones who sees them as the primary troublemakers in the two parts of the tale: see Jones, *'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy'*, p.181.

often a risky business in medieval times – act as agent for his lord in hostile territory and, if necessary, disguise himself and be a spy.¹⁹⁰

Just as Fouke is a type of Peredur, so Iorwerth can be seen as a type of Iddog. It is perhaps not coincidental that the one character amongst Arthur's counsellors who keeps the descriptive terms or epithets given to him in *Culhwch ac Olwen* is Gwrhyr Gwalstawd Ieithoedd, the interpreter who 'knew all languages'.¹⁹¹

In confirmation of the latimer's 'job description', it is clear from references to the employment of the Welsh Marchers under consideration by the Crown that their activities went beyond those one might expect of an interpreter or translator. In some respects, their functions can be compared with the later formalized position of the herald: when Rhonabwy and his companions meet with Iddog, who takes on the role of their guide to Arthur, his first action is to negotiate their safe passage in the encounter with Rhuawn Bebyr. At first sight this seems no more than a discussion between successful raiders regarding the division of spoil, a procedure reflected in the provisions in the Welsh laws for the shares of booty to which officers of the court were entitled.¹⁹² In the context of the Arthurian background of more knightly characters, Iddog's approach recalls rather the medieval, chivalric-based 'laws of war'.¹⁹³ The exchange would suggest he takes the status of Rhonabwy and his companions to be that of privileged messengers themselves, while he himself in a quasi-heraldic role would be a non-combatant and so not entitled to take booty, such as prisoners for ransom.

More directly bearing on heraldic concerns is the detailed recital of the appearance of the messengers to Arthur and Owain and thus their identification, which was a skill which any intermediary would do well to learn. What is striking is the extent to which the quite specific type of information offered by Iddog reflects later heraldic practice, as evidenced by French romances and poems from the late twelfth century on. Here they were almost always

¹⁹⁰ *The Mabinogion*, trans. Davies, p.188. The derivation of *gwalstawd* from the Anglo-Saxon term *wealhstod* for intermediary and translator indicates the early necessity for this function between the Welsh and English: see Bullock-Davies, *Professional Interpreters*, p.26.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹⁹² See *The Law of Hywel Dda*, trans. D. Jenkins (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986), p.10 (the captain of the household), p.14 (the steward), p.17 (the court justice).

¹⁹³ M.H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp.194-5. An instance of the application of such ideas even in the intercultural violence of the Marches is provided by the case of the English siege of Poole's castle in 1196 where Gwenwynwyn and his garrison were allowed to march out in safety with their weapons and Gwenwynwyn reciprocated the gesture when he in turn besieged the English at the same location. (Stephenson, *Medieval Wales*, p.51).

associated with the conduct of tournaments and, as well as proclaiming forthcoming events, were expected to recognize the participants, and their background.¹⁹⁴

The encounter between Iddog and Rhuawn Bebyr is the first of a series of diplomatic exchanges in the dream sequence where one of the participants seeks to avoid or ameliorate conflict. The next takes place between Addaon and Elphin at the ford. Iddog's interpretation of their characters may be correct in that, if Addaon carelessly and doubtless to the amusement of the audience manages to soak an Angevin ruler and his entourage, he does not escalate the violence in the face of a savage reproof by Elphin, albeit one sanctioned by Welsh law. One would imagine that in practice the exercise of the notional Welsh right of reproof on an equal would not result in a peaceable outcome. The most outstanding example is Cadyriaith. As someone named 'Fine Speech', who understands the poets' praise of Arthur, it might be expected he would urge the emperor to battle. Instead he counsels a truce with Osla Gyllellfawr and diplomatically proposes a reward for the poets for the delay of their opportunity to praise Arthur's success in battle.¹⁹⁵

The siting of the 'action' of the dream at a significant crossing (or crossings) of the Severn itself points to the importance of diplomacy in the narrative. Lieberman argues that the idea of a march as representing an area's status as a site of diplomatic interaction was a feature which, from the beginning of the twelfth century, contributed to the development of an Anglo-Norman concept of the Shropshire March. The connection arose by analogy with the role played in the 'march' of Normandy by the Epte valley as the traditional location for diplomatic encounters between the rulers of Normandy and France.¹⁹⁶

In *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, those who of overriding importance are the interpreters, messengers and negotiators surrounding Arthur. As with *Fouke*, the genres of outlaw history

¹⁹⁴ A. R. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp.24-5. So, in the late thirteenth/early fourteenth century poem *Le Tournai de Chauvency* the narrator asks the attendant herald Bruiant who each combatant is and where they come from.

¹⁹⁵ On the role of the poets in urging Welsh rulers to wage war or at least conduct raids for booty into the Marches see Stephenson, *Medieval Wales*, p.71.

¹⁹⁶ M. Lieberman, "The Medieval 'Marches' of Normandy and Wales." *The English Historical Review*, vol.125, no. 517, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 1357–81, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40963190> <Accessed 15.11.21>, p.1380. As a corollary, a march was a site where homage was paid, a point made by Michelle Warren (Warren, M.R., *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100-1300* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p.8). The association of the ideas of treaty, homage and tribute may explain the otherwise unmotivated appearance of the train of mules bearing tribute at the end of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*.

and an ancestral 'romance/*chanson de geste* figuring Arthurian references work together to establish the claims of a particular group of inhabitants of the Shropshire March. The tale positions them both as heirs of the Brythonic Arthur, inhabiting lands imagined as comprising an ancient extensive Cornwall/ Powys under his authority, and as feudal landowners in the contemporary political landscape of the Shropshire March, with specific diplomatic roles established by Arthur's contemporary incarnation, the Anglo-Norman king. Denying the distinction in terms of their truth value for the medieval audience of histories on the one hand and romance (and here on can include the *chanson de geste*) on the other, Hanna argues that both:

are inherently invested in the land itself and the capacities of those who use it. The two genres we recognize separately share a subject matter, the noble men who have the capacity, or at last the potential, to govern a specific lordship, great or small.¹⁹⁷

In the case of subsequent generations of Iorwerth Goch's family and those like them, the right to hold land depended on the special abilities exemplified in the dream by Iddog and Cadyriaith.

At the same time, for the Welsh outside the Marches, Arthur was developing into a figure of Brythonic resistance to Anglo-Norman expansion and the ironies inherent in the position of the Welsh Marchers in their dependence on the Anglo-Norman kings are reflected in the satirical nature of Arthur's portrayal in the dream. The same tension lies behind the portrayal of Heilyn Goch's house. The Anglo-Norman lifestyle must have been a highly attractive one¹⁹⁸ and, as the Marcher Welsh integrated into that society, the author imputes to his auditors the ability to participate in the disparaging Anglo-Norman view of their forebears of the previous century, as reflected in the ethnography of Gerald of Wales.

However, the production of the tale itself argues for some confidence on the part of the author and his intended audience in their position in the Shropshire March. As the serjeanties they held involved diplomatic duties providing direct access to the King, they both complimented military serjeanties in Shropshire and represented rivals to the position of the

¹⁹⁷ R. Hanna, 'The Matter of Fulk: Romance and History in the Marches', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 110: 3 (2011), 337-358, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jenglgermphil.110.3.0337> <accessed 12.01.21>, pp.352-3.

¹⁹⁸ A fact commented on by R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.49, referred to at Fulton, 'Cyd-Destun', p.56.

lesser Marcher lords, such as the Fitzwaryns.¹⁹⁹ As Stephenson concludes of Iorwerth's descendants, 'Within half a century the descendants of a war-like adventurer had established themselves as pillars of Shropshire society married into some of the leading Anglo-Norman families of the borderland.'²⁰⁰ The transition of Madog's brother from dispossessed Powysian aristocrat to Marcher magnate and royal, not to say imperial, go-between formed the idealized archetype for subsequent generations of Welsh nobility in the Shropshire March who continued to exercise many of the same functions, if in a less exalted form.

¹⁹⁹ Lieberman, *The Medieval March*, pp.122-3.

²⁰⁰ D. Stephenson, 'Welsh Lords in Shropshire: the descendants of Gruffydd ap Iorwerth Goch', *Shropshire History and Archaeology*, 77: (2002), 32-7, p.35. Iorwerth's pursuit of 'Marcher' status is reflected in his grant of land at Aber Ceiriog to the Augustinian priory of Haughmond Abbey, a foundation of FitzAlan family, in 1166. Although there is no direct evidence of his motives for the grant, it seems probable it signaled a political affiliation with the holders of the adjacent Oswestry lordship and his 'arrival' in the area, The grant was confirmed by his son Gruffudd. Likewise, Roger de Powis was the first witness to the grant of the advowson of Wroxeter Abbey to Haughmond by William FitzAlan and later reconfirmed the making of that grant him using his own seal. (Suppe, 'Roger', pp.3,15)

Conclusion

The author's intended audience posited in this thesis is a very restricted one, in both space and time. The colophon's reference to the story being unknown to storytellers and bards, the traditional creators and transmitters of medieval Welsh literature, perhaps indicates its opaqueness to a subsequent audience whose ethnic identity was formulated in terms of that literature. Not only does the author adapt the format of the native Welsh tales, such as the *Mabinogi*, to a narrative structure much closer to that of contemporary English or continental writing,²⁰¹ but he also positions himself as a rival to the Welsh poets represented by Arthur's bards in his story. Their interests in princely self-aggrandizement through conflict and raiding were irrelevant to, and even in conflict with, those of his intended auditors. Like the bards, he has told what appears to be an incomprehensible tale of Arthur, save to those who, like Cadyriaith, possess the necessary interpretative abilities. However, by his use of a typological Arthur, he is able to overcome the poets' problem of dealing with the contemporary realities of Anglo-Norman influence in Welsh affairs.²⁰²

In doing so, the investigation of the nature of his intended audience in the preceding chapters has revealed that he relied upon various elements pertaining to that audience's perception of their ethnic identity. The elements distinctive of such an identity have been identified by Davies as comprising – in addition to language – mythology, law, customs, lifestyle, economic practice and borders, as well as local, regional, dynastic and kindred loyalties.²⁰³

In one way, the author followed Cynddelw and the court poets by envisaging his audience as holding a historic Brythonic, rather than a contemporary Welsh, identity.²⁰⁴ Huw Pryce views the adoption of the term Welsh by the Welsh themselves as a move to:

distinguish more sharply between the twin elements in the national identity, British dimension which defined the Welsh in relation to the past and the future, and the Welsh dimension which linked then to as specific territorial space in the present.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy', p.190.

²⁰² *Medieval Welsh Poems*, trans. Clancy, p.21.

²⁰³ R.R. Davies, 'The Identity of "Wales" in the Thirteenth Century', in R.R. Davies and G.J. Jenkins, eds, *From Medieval to Modern Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 45-63, p.4.

²⁰⁴ H. Pryce, 'British or Welsh? National Identity in Twelfth-Century Wales', *The English Historical Review*, 116: (2001), 775-801, p.790.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.796.

Situated in an area which in historic memory had been Brythonic lands but for a considerable period had been located outside a Welsh polity, the term 'Brythonic' better reflected an ethnic identity constituted by the Welsh language and access to literature in that language, such as the poetry of the *gogynfeirdd*, *Culhwch Ac Olwen* and *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*. Importantly, the Welsh language was an essential 'badge of office' for the audience, their language skills and related abilities constituting the basis of their social position.

Culturally, the audience's familiarity with and adoption of a Marcher lifestyle is reflected in the tale by the assumed familiarity with Gerald of Wales's view of aspects of Welsh life, Anglo-Norman royal and chivalric display and typological royal propaganda. As holders of diplomatic serjeanties with direct relationship with the king and their associates, members of the audience would have occupied a milieu not dissimilar to that of those Welsh lords who at times positioned themselves as rivals to the greater Marcher magnates, such as Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn and Gruffudd ap Madog of Bromfield, or Welsh administrators such as Hywel ap Meurig and Gwilym ap Gwrwared who in the thirteenth century secured high social rank through service to the Marcher lords and the Crown.²⁰⁶

Closely related to the audience members' perception of their ethnic status was how they saw themselves politically. As inhabitants of what is regarded primarily as a border region, they have tended to be regarded in postcolonial analyses as occupying a position of permanent liminality. So, Helbert regards the mixture of fantasy and reality in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and *Fouke* as 'a self-conscious refraction and exploitation of the border's constructed ineffability for political purposes' by the works' authors.²⁰⁷ Like Michelle Warren, he sees Arthur as a metaphor of the border, one of many metaphors in both *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* and *Fouke* which he describes as 'inherently self-destructive'.²⁰⁸ However, it has been argued in this

²⁰⁶ Stephenson, *Medieval Wales*, pp.79-82.

²⁰⁷ Helbert, 'The Arthur of the March'. He downplays in his arguments for Arthur as a border figure Arthur's non-border incarnations such as *Culhwch ac Olwen*, *Gawain* or *Peredur*, and that the fantasy elements in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* are appropriately located in a dream. He interprets the purpose of the Welsh tale to be a criticism of the governing Welsh aristocracy of Madog's time but fails to provide a convincing link between the frame tale and the dream.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.237, Warren, *History on the Edge*, particularly pp.1-22. Curiously, although Warren concentrates on compete narratives of Arthur's reign, she does not include *Fouke* as an Arthurian narrative at all, despite tending in practice to take a wider approach than examining purely Arthurian narrative and to look at the larger Galfridian legacy. As well as Arthur, she regards his named sword as a symbol of the 'postcolonial' border and in the terms of her argument it is therefore significant that in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* Arthur's sword is not the warrior's Excalibur but the sword of state: Arthur takes no offensive action but utilizes 'power display' to achieve his ends.

thesis that what he identifies as metaphors are not regarded as unsatisfactory and so discarded, but constructive and cumulative.

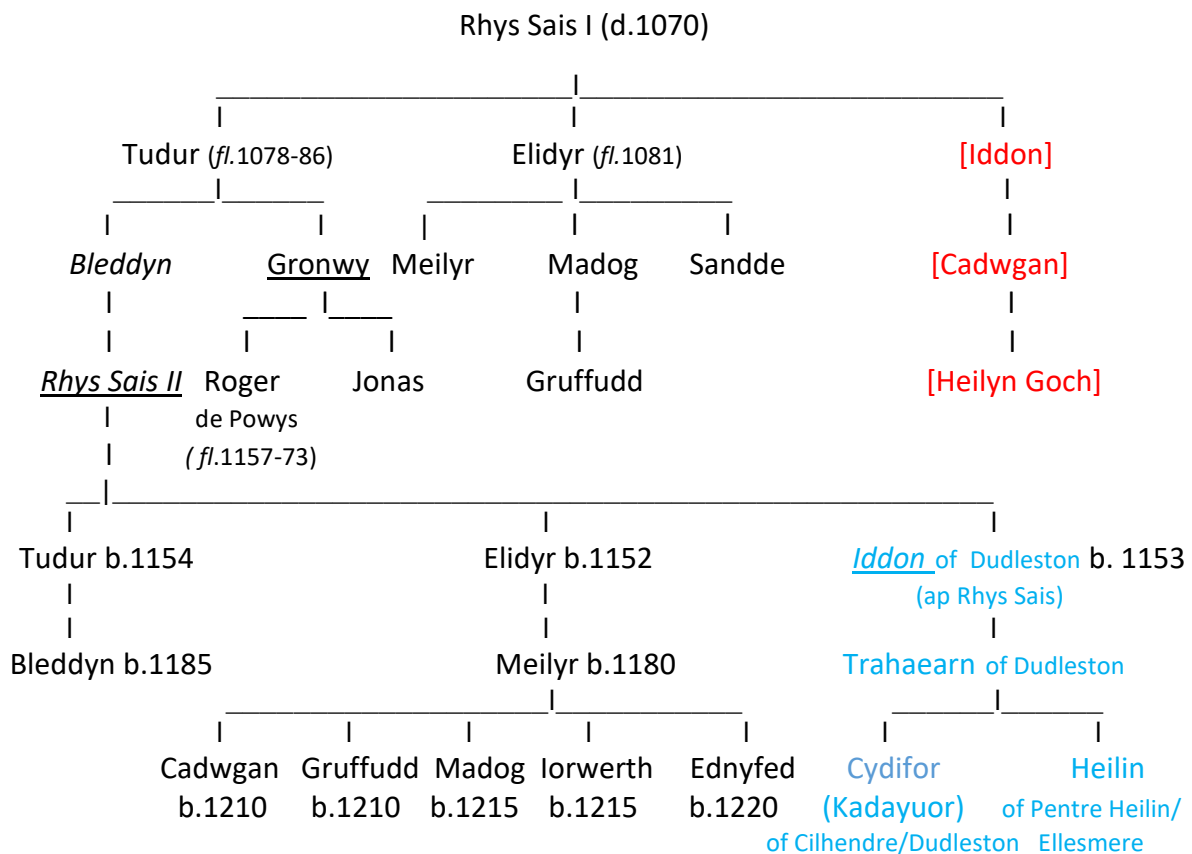
In a similar way, the concentration in *Fouke* on the period of Fouke III's life while he was an outlaw has been judged to mark the tale's more general status as a border narrative, since the concept of outlawry requires a boundary between legal and extralegal territory.²⁰⁹ Still, although Fouke's case he suffered an historical period of outlawry, it is, even from the point of view of the story, in some ways a token one. Most of his adventures take place overseas and his restoration is finally secured from King John himself. Likewise, Iorwerth's period of 'outlawry' does not last beyond the opening scenes of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*. The outlaws come home, Fouke to a Marcher lordship that has been made ancestral by the manipulation of Galfridian history and the Arthurian romantic myth that developed from it, and Iorwerth to a diplomatic feudal lordship in ancient Powysian, Brythonic lands, imagined as once controlled by the 'historical' Arthur.

For Iorwerth and Fouke, as for Welsh and Anglo-Norman Marchers generally, the Shropshire March was their centre, while the Welsh rulers of Gwynedd and the Angevin Kings of England were on the periphery. In both cases their position was directly validated by Angevin rulers and the tales in which they figure provide an historical teleology for their achievement of a social standing and degree of political autonomy characteristic of the Marches. For the future, as for the past, the loyalties which chiefly define them are familial, rather than a wider ethnic or political group.

²⁰⁹ Jones, *Outlawry*, p.50.

Appendix

Genealogy of descendants of Rhys Sais I



Notes:

1. Sources: D. Wolcott, *Ancient Wales Studies*, [online]. Available at www.ancientwalesstudies.org/index.html <accessed 29.9.20>.
The visitation of Shropshire: taken in the year 1623 by Robert Tresswell, Somerset herald, and Augustine Vincent, Rouge croix poursuivant of arms; marshals and deputies to William Camden, Clarenceux king of arms. With additions from the pedigrees of Shropshire gentry taken by the heralds in the years 1569 and 1584, and other sources (London: College of Arms, 1889), available at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101075683563&view=1up&seq=230&skin=2021> <accessed 11.05.21>.
Welsh Genealogies, AD 300-1400, ed. P.C. Bartrum (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1974), available at <https://pure.aber.ac.uk/portal/en/datasets/bartrum-genealogical-project> (40837b6f-1887-4afd-9c6e-9b7e3a1226) <accessed 02.11.21>.
2. The main chart in black represents a composite genealogy of the family of the historically-attested Rhys Sais, based on Bartrum's genealogical trees for the descendants of Tudur Trefor, as constructed

by Darrell Wolcott, an amateur genealogist. The genealogy in blue is confirmed in *The Visitation of Shropshire*. The red genealogy is that given in *Breudwydd Rhonabwy*.

3. Bartrum gives only one Rhys Sais (Rhys Sais I) and then shows the genealogy in blue – in place of that shown in red on the main chart – on his family tree for that Rhys's son Iddon and his immediate descendants. He realised that the positioning of Iddon as the son of this Rhys Sais was chronologically problematic, as he gives the fifth-generation descendant of this Iddon's grandson Heilyn as David Holbach, fl.1377-1423. 80 years separate the active years of the first Tudur and his grandson Roger but, in Bartrum's genealogy, over 220 years would separate a Heilyn of the same generation as Roger and his great-great-great-grandson, David Holbach. The long generations needed to achieve this result seem improbable in the Middle Ages. To avoid the problem, Walcott has posited that the family reused names through the generations, thus causing the confusion, and he inserted the speculative names indicated by italics, with Rhys Sais II thus being the presumed great-grandfather of the historically recorded 'Heilin' from a Dudleston family. This brings the generations much closer to the usual estimate of 30 years each.
4. The blue genealogy inserted in the position given by Bartrum is that used by Francis Jones in F. Jones, 'Two Border Families', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1948), 253-270. He compounds the confusion by placing Trahaearn's *floruit* in the middle of the thirteenth century (despite regarding him as the grandson of Rhys Sais I) while Angela Carson, although claiming to have used Jones's material for her date calculations, gives c. 1300 as Trahaearn's date of birth and is clearly referring to yet another Heilyn who, according to Bartrum, was Trahaearn's grandson and the son of Cydifer.
5. Wolcott's proposed reduplication of family names allows for the red genealogy to be inserted to produce a Heilyn Goch who was the contemporary of Madog and Iorwerth Goch. This is also of course the result if Bartrum's genealogical tree is used, although Heilyn's father's name would be incorrect.
6. For the dates in brackets, see the genealogy of Roger of Powys in Suppe, 'Who was Rhys Sais?', p.2. He too includes the 'historic' Iddon and his offspring in the position given in Bartrum's genealogical tree. The other dates are derived from Walcott's website and not exact but are included here to illustrate the approximate timeframe of the generations.

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