

Hysbysiad Hawlfraint

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

- Gweld a lawr lwytho copi
- Argraffu copi

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

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

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

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

Teitl y darn: **Inconsistencies and Infelicities in the Welsh Tales**

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Inconsistencies and Infelicities in the Welsh Tales: Their Implications

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I will concern myself primarily with the *Four Branches* and the *Three Romances*. It must be admitted that these seven tales contain a full measure of quirks, inconsistencies and rough spots of one sort or another.¹ This is noted by almost all commentators, but with rarely more than a general statement about their existence.² However, a careful look at these peculiar passages is well worth the effort as they reveal a wealth of information about the transmission of the texts themselves.³

Let me first dispose of the likelihood that many of the inconsistencies are merely *faux pas* by the original author. Simple error of this kind is quite uncommon, but here is an example from *Peredur*. Peredur decides to become an ordained knight and seeks out the court of Arthur. During his initial visit to the court he is praised by a dwarf and she-dwarf. Cei takes offence at this and beats both the dwarves. In this encounter Peredur does not know Cei's name and can address him only as *gwr hir*, 'tall man'. Immediately thereafter Peredur leaves the court and continues his adventures. It is his custom to send messages to Arthur that revenge will be taken on the 'tall man' for the injury done the dwarves. Peredur uses this phrase seven times.⁴ When Arthur decides to meet Peredur, there is an encounter without either side recognizing the other. Finally realizing Arthur's warband has come upon him, 'Heb y pedur a dywedy ti imi a yttiwei yn llys arthur' (WM (WM, 143. 32–3)), Peredur said, 'And tell me, Is Cei in Arthur's court?'⁵ The author has forgotten that Peredur knows Cei only as the 'tall man'.⁶

¹ I extend a thank you to Dr. G. R. Isaac for pointing out several places where my original paper had gone astray.

² For example, some imperfections in *Gereint* are noted by Roger Middleton, 'Chwedl Geraint ab Erbin', in *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 147–57, esp. p. 151. P. Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff, 1992), 36 raises some points bothering him in *Pwyll*. Similarly, he points to problems in *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr*, (Cardiff, 1958), 109, 118–20.

³ Some of the ideas in this article were presented at the 24th Annual CSANA Conference at Virginia Polytechnic in March 2001 and at the 24th Annual University of California Celtic Studies Conference held at UCLA in March 2002.

⁴ The manuscript correspondences are Pen. 7 (WM, 606. 25–7) ~ WM (WM, 122. 24–5) ~ Pen. 14 (WM,

288. 15–16) ~ RM (RM, 197. 20–1); Pen. 7 (WM 607.20–1) ~ WM (WM, 123. 35–6) ~ Pen. 14 (WM, 288. 32–3) ~ RM (RM, 198. 13–14); Pen. 7 (WM, 607. 24–5) ~ WM (WM, 124. 7–8) ~ Pen. 14 (WM, .288. 36 – phrase not used) ~ RM (RM, 198. 17–18); Pen.7 (WM, 607. 30–1) ~ WM (WM, 124. 15–16) ~ Pen. 14 (WM, 289. 2–3) ~ RM (RM, 198. 22–3); Pen. 7 (WM, 609. 2–5) ~ WM (WM, 125. 27–30) Pen. 14 (WM, 289. 21–2) ~ RM (RM, 199. 25–7); Pen. 7 (WM, 609. 28–31) ~ WM (WM, 126. 18–21) ~ Pen. 14 (WM, 289. 35–6) ~ RM (RM, 200. 12–13 – phrase not used); Pen. 7 (WM, 614. 20–2) ~ WM (WM, 132. 18–21) ~ Pen. 14 (not extant) ~ RM (RM, 204. 25–7).

⁵ The other MSS have 'Dywet eb y pedu imi a ydiw kei yn llys arthur' (Pen. 7 (WM, 624. 34–625. 1)) and 'a dywedy di ymi a yttiwei kei yn llys arthur'. (RM (RM, 214. 5–6)).

⁶ Another lapse, though more difficult to notice, is

Most points of logical discontinuity are not the result of authorial confusion, but redactional ineptness. In the section of *Peredur* mentioned above, Arthur first sends an unnamed squire, then Cei, and finally twenty-four other knights to investigate.⁷ At last, Gwalchmei goes to speak with the as yet unrecognized Peredur and says, 'A deu wr a doeth kyn no mi ar yr vn neges honno', 'And two men came earlier than me on this same errand' (WM, 143. 13–14). What happened to the twenty-four others? This error is almost surely due not to confusion by the original author, but to inattention of a redactor. Perhaps the Pen. 7 version (WM, 624. 22–4) which reads 'alla wer a doeth attat ti am yr vn neges honn', 'and many came to you on this same errand', was designed specifically to bypass the problem.

It should not be thought that the original audiences of these tales either did not notice, or were particularly tolerant, of mistakes or puzzling statements. Indeed, the tales take pains to explain difficulties. Consider the story of Pryderi's childhood in *Pwyll*. Pryderi is found as an infant by Teyrnnon, lord of Gwent Is Coed. Eventually, Teyrnnon notices how strikingly the boy resembles Pwyll and must be his son. Herein lies a problem. At the time of our tales lifelike depictions were unknown or at least extremely rare, so how is it that Teyrnnon knows what Pwyll looks like? The text explains (WM, 34. 11–13), 'Ansawd pwyll hyspys oed gantaw ef. canys gwr uuassei idaw kynn no hynny', 'Pwyll's appearance was known to him since he had been a man of his before this'. This resolution seems unlikely. Gwent Is Coed is far from Dyfed with intervening kingdoms. Pwyll was no Arthur attracting followers from afar. There was little contact between Teyrnnon and Pwyll since we are informed Teyrnnon obtains his information about the goings on in Dyfed by questioning the crowds who came to his court rather than direct communication. Even after Pryderi was returned, the text says of Teyrnnon and his wife (WM (WM, 37. 23–4)) 'Yna y trigysant vynteu ar eu kyuoeth', 'Then they dwelt in their domain'. This too implies a remoteness between the two courts. Someone felt compelled to provide an explanation for the difficulty, though the explanation is unconvincing.

Another example of an awkward explanation is found in *Manawydan*. In mid-sentence while offering Manawydan both Rhiannon and Dyfed, Pryderi needlessly adds that he is married to Cigfa. Thus, a truly remarkable statement is marred.

a riannon uy mam yssyd yno. mi a rodaf it honno a medyant y seith cantref genthi. A chyny bei itti o gyuoeth namyn y seith cantref hynny nyt oes seith cantref well noc wy. *Kicua uerch wyn gloyw yw uy gwreic inheu heb ef.* A chyn bo enwedigaeth y gyuoeth y mi bit y mwynant y ti a riannon. (WM (WM, 62. 11–20)).

seen in Gereint's ill-advised journey with Enid. As they are travelling along, (Pen. 6 iv (WM, 209. 35–7)) 'a choet mawr a welynt y wrthunt. a pharth ar coet y doethant. ac yn dyuot or coet allan y gwelynt petwar marchawc aruawc', 'and they saw a great forest before them. And they came towards the forest. And coming out of the forest they saw four armed knights'. Gereint's altercation with the knights takes up a fair amount of space, but the story then continues with (Pen. 6 iv (WM, 210. 30–1)), 'wynt a gerdassant racdunt y coet. ac adaw y coet a orugant.', 'They walked

onward to a forest. And they left the forest'. The author has forgotten that we already know about the forest from before the encounter and should have written **racdunt yr coet*, 'onward to the forest'. All three MSS containing this passage agree on the wording. Thus WM reads, 'Wynt a gerdassant racdunt y goet. Ac adaw y coet a orugant' (WM, 420. 24–6), while in RM, 271. 29–30 we read, 'Wynt a gerdassant racdunt y goet. ac adaw y coet a orugant'.

⁷ Pen. 7 (WM, 622. 32–3) ~ WM (WM, 141. 6–8) ~ RM (RM, 211. 29–30).

and Rhiannon my mother is there. I will give that one to you and possession of the seven cantrefs with her. And though you do not have territory but those seven cantrefs, there are not seven cantrefs better than those. *Kigfa, daughter of Gwyn Gloyw is my wife*, he said, 'And though the territory is designated to me, let the enjoyment be for you and Rhiannon.'

The statement about Kigfa is even more surprising since Pryderi has just spent eighty-seven years in close contact with Manawydan and it seems Pryderi would have mentioned his wife somewhere along the way.

Consider the section in *Peredur* which explains how the dwarf and she-dwarf had knowledge of Peredur. Peredur comes across a woman struggling to place a corpse on a horse. When Peredur speaks to her, she angrily calls him scum.

Paham wreic da eb yntev ydwyf ysgymvnn.i. am dy uot yn achaws i aghev dy vam eb hi pan aesthost ymeith. y llewygawd ac o affeith y llewic honno yd oed y hanghev. Ar corr ar corres a weleist di yn llys arth^a yn llys dy dat ti ath uam y megesit wynt A chwaer vaeth it tithev wyf innev. am gur jinne yw hwenn. (Pen. 7 (WM, 613. 24–32))

Why, good woman', he said, 'am I scum?' Because you are the reason for the death of your mother. When you went away from her, she fainted and from the result of this fainting she died. *And the dwarf and the she-dwarf whom you saw in the court of Arthur, they had been maintained in the court of your father and your mother.* And a foster-sister am I to you. And this one is my husband (i.e. the dead knight).

The comment about the dwarfs is certainly out of place. If an explanation of the dwarfs' identity is necessary at all, it would have been properly and unobtrusively made at their initial appearance. Instead this explanation comes much later in the text. The explanation itself introduces a new difficulty as it is quite unexpected that Peredur was ever sent out to fosterage. Had he been in fosterage beyond the infant stage, and before being raised isolated from all contact with war and warriors, he would have known about knights and armour. Yet, at the beginning of the story he has no concept of these.

Explanatory glosses are seen in,

Bendigeiduran ar yniuer a dywedysam ni a hwylyssant parth ac iwerdon ac nyt oed uawr y weilgi yna y ueis yd aeth ef. nyt oed namyn dwy auon. lli. ac archan y gelwit. A gwedy hynny yd amlawys y weilgi pan oreskynwys y weilgi y tyrnassoed. Ac yna y kerdwys ef ac a oed o gerd arwest ar y gefyn ehun a chyrchu tir iwerdon. (WM (WM, 50. 14–24))

Bendigeidfran and the host we spoke of sailed towards Ireland. But the sea was not large then – He went on his feet. There were not but two rivers, Lli and Archan they are called. And after that the sea spread out *when the sea overwhelmed* the kingdoms.⁸ And then he went with a stringed instrument on his own back and made for the country of Ireland.

⁸ The clause in italics is not in the Red Book (RM, 35. 14–20) and is likely an omission. This was suggested by W. J. Gruffydd, almost a century ago.

The passage was intended to explain how Bendigeidfran, who was so large he could not be contained in a house, much less a ship, was able to get across the Irish Sea. The gloss about the rivers is triply misplaced since it imposes on the main story, imposes on the Bendigeidfran gloss, and is obviously intended to go with a later passage where the Irish retreat across the Llifon river and break down its only bridge. Indeed, that passage is itself subject to comment, being explained by 'A mein sugyn yssyd y gwaelawt yr auon ny eill na llong na llestyr arnei' (WM (WM, 52. 1-3)), 'And loadstones there are at the bottom of the river, neither ship nor craft can be on it': an explanation which is at the same time both learned and silly. In addition, note that whatever the purpose of the *cerd arwest* (stringed instrument), it has been dropped from the story.

There can be little doubt that these explanatory comments, placed as awkwardly as they are, and intended to explain away some logical difficulty, are *scholia*. This tells us that someone was at one time taking these stories very seriously to the point of asking and attempting to answer pointed questions. This took place after the individual episodes had been gathered together to form essentially the stories of the manuscripts, since the questions imply a knowledge of the full tales. I would offer that these explanations are marginal or interlinear notes which made their way into the main body of the text. Such marginal commentary is found as early as the late ninth century in the Cambridge Juvenius and is a regular feature in Welsh manuscripts.⁹

At this point it would be well to argue against the idea that many of the inconsistencies found in the tales are 'from a background of oral performance'.¹⁰ Whatever may have been the prehistoric history of our seven tales, in the form in which they reach us, they are thoroughly from a written rather than oral environment. Even by the time of our oldest examples, mid-thirteenth century, a virtually canonical form for our stories has been attained. During the remainder of the Medieval period there is hardly any interest in these texts. Only nine medieval manuscripts of the 170 or so still extant contain any of the eleven 'native tales' and no tale has more than four exemplars.¹¹ The latest is the Red Book of Hergest dating to about 1400. All interest in the tales by the scribes and their patrons disappeared after the Red Book of Hergest. Before this date the same scribes who penned the tales were also producing legal, historical, technical and religious texts. Afterwards, their output of these other genres continued undiminished, but there are no more exemplars of our stories. Only much later, in early modern times, did antiquaries once again begin to show an interest in *Owein* and *Peredur*, the earliest of these late manuscripts being Llanstephan 171 dating to 1574. Dramatic demonstration that the stories were not performed – at least at the time of the manuscripts – is seen in the famous gap in the White Book *Culhwch ac Olwen*. The scribe left a blank space of about 10 lines on his parchment after WM, 467. 36 and then continues

⁹ Helen McKee, *The Cambridge Juvenius Manuscript* (Aberystwyth, 2000), 1–13. For an example of marginal notes being incorporated into the text itself see Thomas Jones (trans.), *Brut y Tywysogion* (Peniarth MS. 20 Version) (Cardiff, 1952), 211 (note to 113. 29–32).

¹⁰ Roger Middleton, 'Chwedl Geraint ab Erbin', in *Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), 152.

¹¹ The MSS being Pen. 6 i and ii, Pen. 6 iii, Pen.

16 iii, Pen. 7, Pen. 6 iv, Pen. 14 ii, the White Book of Rhydderch, Jesus College 20, and the Red Book of Hergest. *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* is the exception as a form of this story is found in all MSS of the *Brut y Brenhinedd* except for the Dingestow Court manuscript and Pen. 44. This is noted in Brynley F. Roberts, *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* (Dublin, 1975), xi.

on with the story. This was assuredly due to a defective spot in the manuscript he was consulting. If there had been an authoritative oral source for the text, a performer could have easily been consulted. Remember, the White Book was commissioned by a rich and interested party – almost certainly Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd.¹²

It is worth noting that by the time of the White Book, c.1350, the eleven native tales probably constitute virtually all that currently existed of the native Welsh prose stories.¹³ This is likely since both the White and Red Books were intended to be comprehensive collections and both have the same inventory of tales. Moreover, every tale found in an independent manuscript is found in these two great compendia.

Also pointing firmly in the direction of a written rather than oral milieu, when a tale's narrator wants to remind the reader of something he uses the word *uchot* which always carries a spatial meaning 'above', rather than a temporal meaning 'earlier'.¹⁴

efnyssen gwr anagneuedus a dywedassam uchot (WM, 41. 13–15, *Branwen*)

Efnisien, a contentious man whom we mentioned above.

seithwyr a dywedysam ni uchot (WM, 61. 20–1, *Manawydan*)

seven men whom we mentioned above.¹⁵

In contrast, direct speech uses the term *gynheu* 'earlier', 'a mynet y eiste yr bwrdd a oruc y gwr'¹⁶ *gynheu a minheu yn nessaf idaw* (WM, 227. 2–4, *Owein*) 'and the man (mentioned) earlier went to sit at the table and I was next to him'.¹⁷

It is obvious that the *Four Branches* and the *Three Romances*, were composed by stringing together unrelated episodes. This is made explicit in a passage such as the giving of the rescued colt to Gwri Wallt Euryn where the text continues, 'a chwedyl wrthaw' (WM, 33. 30, *Pwyll*), 'And there is a story about him'. Similarly, we see in 'Gereint, Y chwedyl ef hyd yna' (WM, 399. 36) 'The story thus far', referring to a story about Edern mab Nudd.¹⁸ The transitions from episode to episode are often poorly prepared. Thus at the end of *Owein* we read, 'Sef oed hynny trychant cledyf kenuerchyn ar vranhes' (RM, 192. 20–1), 'Now those were the Three Hundred Swords of Cenferchyn and the Ravens'. Unfortunately, this entire episode, whatever it may have been, has been completely edited out of *Owein*, only the title remaining. In *Branwen* much is made of the large number of horses brought over from Ireland by Matholwch:

¹² On Rhydderch see Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000), 249–52.

¹³ It is still undecided whether *Breudwyt Ronabwy* was included in the missing quire 22A of the White Book. Daniel Huws, *MWM*, p. 246, n. 25 believes not, since the Red Book version would still leave over two empty pages when inserted in the gap. On the other hand, the scribes tended to leave more space than needed when they temporarily left a gap. For example, in the White Book the scribe leaves almost three pages blank between the end of *Math* and the beginning of *Peredur*. Also the gap just mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, required just 6 of the 10 lines allotted.

¹⁴ Examples of unambiguous *uchot* are found at

WM, 140. 33 (*Peredur*), WM, 228. 13 and 230. 9 (*Owein*), RM, 131. 8 (*Culhwch ac Olwen*), and RM, 149. 5 (*Ronabwy*).

¹⁵ Similar phraseology occurs in *Gereint* (WM, 385. 34–5, 422. 27–8), *Hystoria o Uched Dewi* (LLA, 105. 14, 115. 4–5), *Amblyn and Amic* 812–13, and *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* 8. 6. The last three examples cited almost certainly were never performed orally.

¹⁶ Corrected in the MS from *gwy*.

¹⁷ See also WM, 251. 13–14 (*Owein*), RM, 150. 16, 150. 28 (*Ronabwy*).

¹⁸ Other examples are seen at WM, 402. 13–14, 406 40–1, and RM, 256. 6–7.

ar swydwyr a dechreusant ymaruar am rannat y meirych ar gweisson. ac eu rannu a wnaethant ym pob kyueir hyt y mor. (WM (WM, 41. 8–12))

And the officers began discussion about quartering the horses and the grooms. And they quartered them in every place as far as the sea.

This is emphasized again with,

A thrannoeth y talwyt y ueirych idaw tra barhawd meirych dof. ac odynd y kyrchwyt ac ef kymwt arall ac y talwyt ebolyon ydau yny uu gwbyl idaw y dal (WM (WM, 45. 7–11))

And the next day his horses were paid out to him while trained horses remained. And then another commot was set off to with him, and colts were paid to him until the payment to him was complete.

What purpose were all these horses meant to serve? They do not seem to have been intended as a gift to anyone and they were not used for transportation. The Irish preferred to travel by ship.

Ac y kychwynassant yr yniuerod hynny parth ac aberffraw. Matholwch ay yniuerod yny llongheu. Bendigeituran a yniuer ynteu ar tir yny doethant hyt yn aberffraw. (WM (WM, 40. 23–8))

And those hosts set out towards Aberffraw, Matholwch and his hosts in their *ships*, Bendigeidfran and his host on *land* until they came as far as Aberffraw.

The purpose of the horses has been edited out of the episode.

Again, poor redaction is seen at the very beginning of *Branwen*.

Bendigeiduran uab llyr a oed urehin coronawc ar yr ynys hon. ac ardyrchawc o goron lundein. a frynhawngueith yd oed yn hardlech yn ardudwy yn llys idaw. ac yn eisted yd oedynt ar garrec hardlech uch penn y weilgi. (WM (WM, 38. 12–18))

Bendigeidfran uab Llyr was crowned king on this Island and invested with the Crown of London. And one afternoon he was in Harddlech in Ardudwy in a court of his. And *they* were sitting on the Rock of Harddlech above the sea.

Who are the 'they', since to this point in the tale only Bendigeidfran has been referred to? 'They' are the members of the court, but it is a rigid convention of Middle Welsh prose that people are given a 'formal' identification on entering a story. In the few instances where this is not observed, such as the Pandaran Dyfed passage in *Pwyll*, or the Morddwyd Tyllion segment in *Branwen*, the text itself is in a confused state. This convention is violated here, I believe, because different episodes are poorly joined.

It may be this imperfect redaction of versions which leads to a serious logical flaw in *Branwen*. In a famous scene, Efnisien comes upon some of the horses of Matholwch in a stable and maims them. It stretches our credulity to believe that this one stable, out of many where the Irishmen's horses were quartered, could contain so many horses that at least two commots were needed to replenish them. This is made even more amazing since the Irish, their horses, the horses' grooms, and everything else came over to Britain in a mere thirteen ships.

In sharp contrast to the clumsy inter-episode joins, the individual episodes usually show redaction of the highest quality. Consider the artistry in the melding of two distinct anecdotes to form the Knight of the Hedge of Mist episode in *Gereint*.¹⁹ As the story is written, Earl Owein has instituted magical games from which none have ever returned. These games take place beyond a hedge of mist. Once through this mist, Gereint purposely offends a knight he finds there and they fight. However, there are at least six discrepancies in the story and these reveal the seams in the melding.

1. We are told earl Owein started the contests,²⁰ but the earl never mentions the knight and the knight never mentions the earl.

2. The earl has the power to stop the games,²¹ but the Knight of the Hedge of Mist says the games will only cease if one who overcomes him blows the horn.²²

3. When Gereint asks the earl the way to proceed into the mist the earl does not know.²³

4. As Gereint and the Little King are heading towards the hedge of mist they see men's heads on stakes, but two stakes are empty.²⁴ This is a wonderful image of foreboding and implies that the Little King has a part to play. This theme is then abandoned.

5. The frequent reference to contests (*gwaryeu*),²⁵ that is, formal sporting games, never comes about. The battle between the Knight and Gereint is a purely personal matter.

6. When Gereint is talking with the earl he says, 'I do not desire but to go to the game and I be directed to it'.²⁶ Yet he says exactly the opposite to the Knight of the Hedge of Mist, 'Not do I desire, he said, 'but this game not be here evermore, nor the hedge of mist, nor the magic, nor the enchantment'.²⁷

How can it be that the individual episodes seem so finely wrought but the linking sections are often poorly executed? It has been suggested, in regard to the *Four Branches* at least, that the intended emphasis of the tales is upon the individual episodes and the grouping into branches is simply a convenience to gather together more or less related lore. The branches take second fiddle to the individual episodes and less care was lavished on them.²⁸ I offer a different interpretation. The older layer of the tales, the individual episodes, were crafted by literary men. Though they worked with still older materials they moulded their stories as they saw fit. The full tales as we have them were put together later by a different group with different objectives. They were primarily

¹⁹ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 223. 38–225. 40 + 254. 16–25).

²⁰ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 224. 24).

²¹ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 224. 25–6).

²² Pen. 6 iv (WM, 225. 40 + 254. 16–20).

²³ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 225. 4–5).

²⁴ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 224. 39–40).

²⁵ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 224. 1, 20, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 225. 38).

²⁶ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 224. 30–1).

²⁷ Pen. 6 iv (WM, 225. 37–9).

²⁸ 'If we accept this eclectic theory of the composition of the *mabinogi*, that is, that each branch repre-

sents a collection of more or less related lore, our understanding of the material and its treatment by the redactor is improved. It means that we can look at isolated episodes, examine their structures, compare them with related episodes elsewhere in Celtic and Indo-European, and thus grasp their meaning more fully. It offers an explanation of why the quality of the redactor's work is so high within individual sections and episodes, and why continuity between these sections is often lacking or poor.' Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley, 1977), 4.

scholars. They sought to make sense of these episodes and join them into unified compositions. They could include or omit but, being scholars, they could not alter. The materials they were working with were often mutually intractable and they did the best they could.

Let us now take a closer look at the *Four Branches* and inconsistencies internal to a given branch. In *Manawydan*, when the dogs, Pryderi and Rhiannon, all disappear along with the magic fortress, Manawydan says to Cigfa, 'Yn cwn a gollyssam ac ymborth ny allwn' (WM (WM, 72. 7–9)), 'We have lost the dogs and we are unable to survive'. This is entirely in keeping with Welsh practice where dogs are an absolute requirement for the hunting of game. However, this points to a perplexing problem. Earlier in the story we read,

A phan edrychysant y ford y guelyn y preideu ar anreithu ar kyuanhed kyn' no hynny. ny welynt neb ryw dim na thy nac aniueil. na mwc. na than. na dyn. na chyuanhed eithyr tei y llys yn wac diffeith anghyuanhed heb dyn heb uil yndi (*sic*). . . . ny welynt eithyr guydlwdyn . . . dechreu a wnaethant ymborth ar kic hela a physcawt a bydaueu. (WM (WM, 64. 28–65. 20))

And when they looked to where they saw the flocks and the herds and the habitation before that, they did not see anything, neither house, nor animal, nor smoke, nor fire, nor man, nor habitation, but the houses of the court were empty, desolate, unoccupied, without man, without beast in them. . . . They saw but wild beasts. . . . They began to survive on the meat of the hunt, and fish, and bee-hives.

We now ask where the dogs for the hunt came from and, after the four companions went to Lloegyr and returned, we can repeat the same question. Internal infelicities such as these may be found in each of the branches.

There are even more serious logical discords between the different branches. The Pendaran Dyfed problem between *Pwyll* and *Branwen* is noted by many writers. Of more consequence, in *Branwen* we are told that Pryderi and Manawydan spent eighty-seven years away with the head of Bendigeidfran. During that time, or at least for a period of eighty years, they did not age.

Ac yno y treulyssant y pedwarugeint mlyned hyt na wy buant wy eiryoet dwyn yspeit digriuach na hyurydach no honno. Nyt oed anesmwythach nac adnabot o un ar y gilyd y uot yn hynny o amser no fan doethan yno. (WM (WM, 59. 19–25))

And there they passed the fourscore years so that they had not ever known spending time more pleasantly nor more agreeably than that. It was no more tedious, *nor did one recognize on his fellow that it was that much time since when they came there*.

The *Third Branch* begins where *Branwen* leaves off. Rhiannon and Cigfa would have been very old women indeed. Even if one does not interpret the preceding passage as meaning that Pryderi and Manawydan ceased to age, there is still a problem. Now all four characters would be ancient. Furthermore, this would lead to Pryderi being well over 100 years old, possibly 150, when he engaged in single combat against Gwydion in the *Fourth Branch*. Had the composer of *Math* thought of Pryderi as being so old he surely would have drawn attention to it. Extreme old age is simply not a feature of native

Welsh literature and it is accorded to only a single person, and a minor one at that. In *Culhwch ac Olwen* we read 'Ellylw merch neol kyn croc. a honno a uu teir oes gyvr yn uyw', 'Ellylw daughter of Neol Kyn Croc – and she was alive three lifespans of men'.²⁹

At the end of *Pwyll* we are informed that, after Pwyll died, Pryderi ruled over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed. Later he conquered the three cantrefs of Ystrad Tywi and the four cantrefs of Ceredigion. Only then did he marry Cigfa. In *Manawydan* on the other hand, Pryderi rules over Dyfed, no mention being made of Ystrad Tywi or Ceredigion. This is confirmed when we read, 'Miui yw llwyd uab kil coet a mi a dodeis yr hut ar seith cantref dyuet' (WM (WM, 79. 17–20)), 'I am Llwyd mab Cil Coed and I put the enchantment on the seven cantrefs of Dyfed'. In *Math*, Pryderi is once again lord of Ystrad Tywi and Ceredigion, and has added the seven cantrefs of Morgannwg besides. Now, if the tales were originally separate, each with their own view of Pryderi before being linked by a redactor, this contradiction would not surprise us. However, if the branches are the unified conception of a single author, these differences are very difficult to rationalize. They are entirely unnecessary and without clear purpose.

Consider an incongruity between the second and fourth branches as well as internal to the *Fourth Branch*. Gwydion tells Math, 'mi a gogleu dyuot yr deheu y ryw bryuet ni doeth yr ynys honn eiroet . . . Moch y gelwir weithon' (WM (WM, 83. 5–14)), 'I hear some animals have come to the south which never came to this island . . . Pigs they are called now'. The redactor of *Math* emphasizes that pigs are a new phenomenon by having Math ask basic questions about their nature. However, if *moch* really are an innovation, how could they have had an older name in Britain as implied by 'Pigs they are called now'? Contrast this with an event in Ireland well over a century earlier.

A meicheit matholwch a oedynt ar lan y weilgi dydgueith yn troi ygkylch eu *moch*. (WM (WM, 50. 24–6))³⁰

And the *swineherds* of Matholwch were on the shore of the sea one day following their *pigs* around.

In *Branwen* we can see by example and by explicit statement that there was, in the mind of the storyteller, considerable communication between Britain and Ireland. By that view it is difficult to accept that pigs had not already made their way to Britain. It seems improbable that a single author, as opposed to a redactor, would have composed such contradictory factual statements about pigs.

We have now seen a number of significant logical inconsistencies between the different branches of the *Four Branches*. Nevertheless, the received text is almost universally accepted to be the work of a single author. This is despite the fact that many believe the stories underlying the *Four Branches* must have their origin in a variety of places and times.³¹ The standard view is summed up nicely by R.L. Thompson,

²⁹ WM (WM 470.11–13).

³⁰ The bracketed words are omitted in the Red Book (RM, 35. 20). It is interesting to contemplate that the Red Book scribe did this intentionally to lessen the discordance with *Math*.

³¹ See, for instance, Ian Hughes, 'Die drei Zweige des Mabinogi', *Akten des Ersten Symposiums*

deutschsprachiger Keltologen, ed. Stefan Zimmer (Tübingen, 1993), 121–32, and Brynley F. Roberts, 'Where were the Four Branches of the Mabinogi Written?', *The Individual in Celtic Literatures (CSANA Yearbook 1)*, ed. Joseph Falaky Nagy (Dublin, 2001), 61–73.

at some point, probably in the eleventh century, a final ordering and polishing took place, and scholars are generally agreed that the resulting work has such homogeneity and shows such evident signs of more than ordinary skill in narrative and dialogue alike that we may be justified in calling the man who produced it not 'editor' or 'redactor but 'author'.³²

Even if the *Four Branches* had a single author, the standard view can, at best, be regarded as a hypothesis. There have been, so far as I am aware, no attempts to demonstrate the branches' homogeneity of style, the supposed homogeneity being left entirely a subjective matter. Further, the idea that because the branches are acclaimed as 'of more than ordinary skill in narrative and dialogue alike', they must necessarily be the work of one author is clearly unsound. Indeed, Sioned Davies, who more than any other scholar has uncovered the style of the *Four Branches*, is also the only researcher to investigate seriously the possibility that the branches in their final forms are the work of multiple authors. As a corollary to her investigation of the formulaic components of native Middle Welsh prose texts, Professor Davies suggested that a comparison of the frequency of the formulas in the various tales might serve as a diagnostic of authorship. She also examined the percentage of direct speech in each of the branches.³³ Unfortunately, the data she examined provided for no conclusive results. In hindsight, this is subject to explanation. No given formula occurs with any frequency, and one always has doubts if the small differences in their counts are due not to authorial style, but chance, or the demands of the tale's content. Also, formulas are by their nature public, and so personal idiosyncrasies would tend to be obscured rather than highlighted. Nevertheless, in her book on the *Four Branches*, she says, 'it is high time that these branches were looked at anew and the whole question of authorship reconsidered'.³⁴

What are needed to demonstrate that the branches are not homogeneous in style are characteristics that are abundant enough to be statistically meaningful, and yet only visible through laborious analysis and not apparent to the senses. This assures that the point of style being considered is truly a mark of an individual writer, since the writer is probably unaware of these traits. Moreover, these traits are not likely to be noticed and so not the product of imitation. My manuscript source will be the White Book versions of the *Four Branches*. For this purpose, the Red Book versions are essentially identical to their White Book counterparts. Two characteristics are examined here.

The first trait to be considered is the author's tendency to use negative constructions. Negative constructions are those that use words such as *ni*, *na*, *nit*, and the like – the negative 'n' words. Negative compounds such as *kanys* are also counted, but not words of exclusion such as *heb*. These constructions are extremely common in the *Four Branches* with 452 instances being noted. However, it is also true that the content of a story may influence the number of negatives used as much as an author's style. To obtain a true measure of the predilection for negative constructions I will look at the use of what may be called 'unforced' negations. Unforced negations are negative constructions which may

be stated in a natural way in Middle Welsh without using negations. Most of these phrases will be of the type where a double negative could be replaced by a positive, or where a single word exists carrying the meaning opposite the keyword in the negative construction. A typical example is 'Ac ny thebygaf or yniuer hwnn oll nit adnappo uot y mab yn uab y pwyll' (WM, 36. 8–10, *Pwyll*) 'And I do not think all this company will not recognize that the boy is a son to Pwyll'. This could be replaced by *'A mi a debygaf or yniuer hwnn oll yd ednebyd uot y mab yn uab y pwyll', 'And I think all this company will recognize that the boy is a son to Pwyll'. Another example is 'Dyuot yr orssed a orugant y eisted. ny buant hayach o enkyt yno yny welynt y uarchoges yn dyuot yr vn ford ac yn un ansawd ac vn gerdet' (WM, 17. 4–9, *Pwyll*) 'They came to the mound and sat. They were not there scarcely a moment until they saw the rider coming along the same road and in the same form and the same pace'. This is to be compared to the positive phrasing 'Ac val y bydynt yn eiste wynt a welynt y wreic ar yr vn march ar vn wisc amdanei yn dyuot yr un ford' (WM, 15. 12–16, *Pwyll*) 'And as they were sitting they saw the woman on the same horse and the same garb about her coming along the same road'.

Here is a table of the number of unforced negative constructions found in each of the branches. Looking at the table, the 'Count' column is the actual number of occurrences. The 109 instances in the text easily provide enough examples to be statistically meaningful. In 'Adjusted count' this value is adjusted proportionally so that we may compare each branch as if it were the length of *Pwyll*, the longest of the branches.³⁵ The differences between the branches in using the stylistic device of unforced negations is dramatic as a glance at the table reveals. This should explode any idea that the literary styles of the branches are homogeneous. Using this characteristic, at most *Branwen* and *Math* could have the same author. A common author for any other pair of tales is extremely unlikely and this is made improbable by the next trait.

A characteristic of medieval tales in general and the *Four Branches* in particular, is the incessant moving about. Amongst the large inventory of verbs of movement employed, there are five of a generalized nature, all interchangeable in use: *kerdet*, *kychwyn*, *kyrchu*, *dyuot* and *mynet*. Interchangeability is used here to mean the words are very similar in meaning and they may be freely used in place of each other. There can be no debate

TABLE 1: Unforced Negative Constructions

	Count	Adjusted count	Excess % over Bran.	Excess % over Math	Excess % over Man.
Branwen	15	21	–	–	–
Math	21	22	5	–	–
Manawydan	24	39	86	77	–
Pwyll	49	49	133	127	26

³⁵ I will be using the length of the various branches so they may be compared to each other. Because of the uniform line length and font size in PKM this may be objectively measured. Uniform printing is not used on the *englyn* in *Branwen* or the four *englynion* of *Math*,

but it is a simple matter to determine their length had the prose conventions been used. The line lengths of the branches are *Pwyll* 755, *Branwen* 540, *Manawydan* 460, *Math* 706.

³² R. L. Thomson, *Pwyll Pendueic Dyuet* (Dublin, 1986), p. xx.

³³ Sioned Davies, 'Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi – A Case for Multiple Authorship', in Gordon W. MacLennan

(ed.), *First North American Congress of Celtic Studies* (Ottawa, 1988), 443–59.

³⁴ Sioned Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Llandysul, 1993), 50.

TABLE 2: Count of Generalized Verbs of Movement

	<i>Pwyll</i>	<i>Bran.</i>	<i>Man.</i>	<i>Math</i>
kychwyn	3	7	1	1
kyrchu	11	15	19	28
kerdet	18	8	5	18
mynet	40	20	21	40
dyuot	63	46	42	66
Total	135	96	88	153

that all these words mean essentially ‘come’, ‘go’. Their exchangeability in Middle Welsh is shown by noting that in corresponding lines of different manuscripts we find all the verb pair combinations.³⁶ We can exploit these verbs and their interchangeability. Each time an author wishes to express the idea of ‘coming’, ‘going’, he must select one of these verbs. We would expect that the same author would choose among the verbs with the same relative frequency regardless of the tale. This is not what we find.

First notice that the counts of the verbs are more than enough to be statistically meaningful (Table 2). Now observe in Table 3 how each branch chooses among our five verbs. The author of *Pwyll* is only half as likely or less to select *kyrchu* as the authors of *Branwen*, *Math* or *Manawydan*. *Manawydan* chooses *kerdet* only half as often as *Pwyll* or *Math*. *Pwyll* is half again as likely to select *mynet* as *Branwen*. *Branwen* also isolates itself from its fellow branches by its tolerance of *kychwyn*.

³⁶ dyuot-mynet: Peniarth 6 i (WM, 280. 5-6, *Branwen*) ar kennadeu a doethant
WM 53. 25-6 Ar kennadeu a doethant
RM 37. 26 Ar kennadeu a aethant
dyuot-kerdet: Peniarth 16 iii (WM, 90, col. 2. 17-19, *Breudwyd Maxen*) ac ar hyt e bont e tebygei e vot en kerdet ene delei yr llong e mewn.
WM, 180. 12-14 ac ar hyt y pont y tebygei y vot yn kerdet yr llog.
RM, 83. 16-17 ac ar hyt y bont y tebygei y vot yn dyuot yr llong.
dyuot-mynet-kyrchu: Peniarth 7 (WM, 610. 16-17, *Peredur*) A mynet a oruc ped^a yr llys
Peniarth 14 (WM, 290. 9-10) a dyuot a oruc peredur y mewn yr neuad
WM, 127. 13-14 Ynteu pedur a doeth racdaw yr llys
RM, 200. 29-30 Ynteu p^{ur} a gyrchwys y llys
dyuot-kychwyn: Wanting. In lieu of this we can point to similar lines within the same manuscript.
WM, 402. 11-12 (*Gereint*) a trannoeth y kychwynassant racdunt y lys arthur
WM, 406. 41-407.1 Trannoeth y deuth gereint parth ar llys
mynet-kerdet: Peniarth 14 (WM, 286. 17-18, *Peredur*) a gouyn a oruc idaw a weleisti uarchawc yn kerdet y fford honn
WM, 118. 30-2 Dywet eneit heb yr owein a

weleisti varchawc yn mynet yma heibaw ay hediw ay doe
RM, 194. 19-21 Dywet eneit heb yr owein a weleisti di varchawc yn mynet heibaw na hediw na doe
mynet-kyrchu: Peniarth 14 (WM, 286. 4-5, *Peredur*) ac nyt oed oet ydaw gyrchu brwydyr
WM, 117. 10-11 nyd oed oet ydaw uynet y ryuel nac ymlad
RM, 7-8 Ac nyt oed oet idaw vynet y ymlad nac y ryuel
mynet-kychwyn: Peniarth 7 (WM, 605. 13-15, *Peredur*) ac ef gynnv ar y varch a oruc ped^a a mynet ymeith
Peniarth 14 (WM, 287. 32) a mynet ymeith
WM, 121. 11-12 a chymryt y varch a chychwynu y ymdeith
RM, 196. 18-19 a chymryt y uarch. a chychwyn ymeith
kerdet-kychwyn: Peniarth 16 iii (WM, 90, col. 1. 8-9, *Breudwyd Maxen*) A th^anoeth e bore ef a gerdus
WM, 179. 3-4 Trannoeth y bore ef a gychwynnwys
RM, 82. 7 Trannoeth y bore ef a gychwynnawd
kyrchu-kychwyn: (WM 60.13-14, *Branwen*) namyn ky<r>chu ar penn parth a llundein
RM 42.23-24 namyn kychwynnu ar penn parth a llundein

TABLE 3: Relative Distribution of the Generalized Verbs of Movement (%)

	<i>Pwyll</i>	<i>Bran.</i>	<i>Man.</i>	<i>Math</i>
kychwyn	2	7	1	1
kyrchu	8	16	22	18
kerdet	13	8	6	12
mynet	30	21	24	26
dyuot	47	48	48	43

Using the ideas developed so far, it would appear likely that no two of the *Four Branches* had the same author. By an author is meant someone who treats the *Four Branches* as a unified composition and recounts the tales in their own words and outlook. This contrasts with a redactor who takes underlying material and merely joins it together with the necessary transitional links – no particular concern being shown to form a single unified composition. The linguistic differences among the branches preclude the possibility that the style of the tales is the product of a single author. Coupled with the rather gross discrepancies among the different branches and even internal to each branch, the assertion of homogeneity for the *Mabinogi* is undone.

Another doubt may be raised against the single author model of the *Four Branches*. The settings of *Pwyll*, *Branwen* and *Math* are in an ancient era. The first part of *Manawydan* is set in the same era. However, once the four companions travel to Lloegyr, they step into a different time. Now we are in a setting of numerous towns and towns large enough to support specialized trades and even a guild system of saddlers, shieldmakers, and shoemakers. Compare this with *Math*, where Aranrhod must wait on the unscheduled services of an itinerant shoemaker. While in the other branches there is no hint of what we call today ‘government administration’, this does appear in *Manawydan*. When Pryderi suggests slaying the other saddlers, Manawydan says, ‘bei ymladem ni ac wyntwy clot drwc uydei arnam ac yn carcharu a wneir’ (WM (WM, 66. 16-18)), ‘If we fight with them, we will have a bad reputation and be imprisoned’. Similarly, when Pryderi suggests slaying the other shieldmakers, Manawydan says, ‘casswallawn a glywei hynny ae wyr. a rewin uydem’ (WM (WM, 67. 11-13)), ‘Casswallawn and his men could hear about that and we would be ruined.’ Moreover, in the other branches there are no certain references to Christianity, but here we see there is an organized church hierarchy as implied by finding a cleric, a priest and bishop with retinue. Lastly, we find Manawydan inhabiting a society where currency is a medium of exchange, ‘mi a rodaf it pedeirpunt ar ugeint o aryant parawt a gellwng ef. (WM (WM, 78. 30-2)), ‘I will give you twenty-four pounds of ready money and (you) release it.’

Though there was no author, there was a redactor, or redactors, and some of their efforts have been highlighted above. I believe that we can even point to the specific devices used by the redactor who combined the four tales into the *Mabinogi*. The most obvious transition of the redactor, and the best executed, is at the start of *Manawydan* where the normal opening formula of the other three branches, the three romances, *Maxen* and *Rhonabwy*, and exemplified by

Bendigeiduran uab llyr a oed urenhin coronawc ar yr ynys hon. . . . a frynhawngueith yd oed yn hardlech yn ardudwy yn llys idaw. (WM (WM, 38. 12-17, *Branwen*))

Bendigeidfran uab Llyr was crowned king on this island . . . and one afternoon he was in Harddlech in Ardudwy in a court of his.

is replaced by a direct linking to the conclusion of *Branwen*.

Gwedy daruot yr seithwyr a dywedysam ni uchot cladu penn bendigeiduran . . . (WM, 61. 20–2, *Manawydan*))

After the seven men whom we mentioned above finished burying the head of Bendigeidfran . . .³⁷

A less satisfactory attempt to link the first and third branches centres around the minor character of Kigfa. The sole reference to Kigfa in *Pwyll* occurs in the very last sentence of the tale before the colophon. Though Kigfa plays no part whatsoever in the first branch, it is striking that she is denoted 'Kicua uerch wynn gohoyw uab gloyw wallt lydan uab cassnar wledic' (WM, 38. 6–8). This is, I believe, the longest patronymic in Welsh texts outside of genealogies.

The hand of the redactor who put the four tales together to form the *Mabinogi* is probably also seen in the lone occurrence of Pryderi in *Branwen*.³⁸ If Pryderi had not appeared, there would be no direct link between the first and second branches.

Let me now change focus somewhat and ask 'Were the native tales ever given oral presentation?' Though this is taken as axiomatic by some scholars, there is but one reference possibly pointing in this direction. Namely, Gwydion's stay at the court of Pryderi in *Math*. Sioned Davies has demonstrated that when reference to the telling of stories is made, it is almost always the relating of personal experiences.³⁹ Thus the stories told by characters in the native tales are not part of a repertoire of stories. In *Math* when we read,

ynteu wydyon goreu kyuarwyd yny byt oed. Ar nos honno didanu y llys a wnaeth ar ymdidaneu digrif a chyuarwydyt yny oed hoff gan paub or llys. ac yn didan gan pryderi ymdidan ac ef. (WM (WM, 84. 7–13))

Gwydion was the best *cyfarwydd* in the world. And that night he entertained the court with pleasant conversations (*ymddiddan*) and anecdotes (*cyfarwyddyd*) until he was approved of by everyone of the court. And pleasantly did Pryderi converse with him.

We can easily understand this as Gwydion entertaining with anecdotes, not versions of our tales. The idea that the performers at court were not reciting tales from a repertoire is also suggested by a passage in Gerald of Wales's *Descriptio Kambriae*. Gerald's dates are c.1146–1223. At the end of book 1, chapter 17, he describes a certain Bledri:

When fishermen are on their way to the river, or going home, they have the primitive habit of carrying their coracles on their backs. Bledri, the well-known story-teller (*famosus fabulator*), who lived a little before our time, used to describe this in the most amusing way: 'There are among us men who, when they go a-hunting, carry their

³⁷ This has been noticed by a number of commentators. See, for instance, Sioned Davies, *Crefft y Cyfarwydd* (Cardiff, 1995), 129–30.

³⁸ WM, 56. 35.

³⁹ Sioned Davies, *Crefft y Cyfarwydd*, 189–91.

horse on their shoulders until they come near to their quarry. Then, to catch their prey, they mount their steeds. When they have finished, they lift their horses back onto their shoulders and carry them home again.'⁴⁰

The sort of performance given by Bledri, seeing as it is reported by a near-contemporary of his, is much more likely also to describe the activities of Gwydion, than that of a reciter of classic literature. This ties in quite well with the analysis of Rachel Bromwich that, 'There is no evidence which suggests that the twelfth-century *Gogynfeirdd* narrated stories at the courts of the princes'.⁴¹ Without the evidence provided by the Gwydion episode any possible era of storytellers at the courts is pushed to the remote past at the least. Indeed, there seems to be no reason to postulate the existence of oral storytellers until more evidence comes to light.

Let me conclude with a text always considered a scribal error, but which is not. Consider the following listing of the superscriptions and colophons to the *Four Branches*.

Pwyll

RB Title: *llyma dechreu mabinogi*

RB Colophon: *Ac uelly y teruyna y geing honn or mabynnogyon*

WB Colophon: *Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing hon yma or mabynnogyon*

Branwen

RB Title: *llyma yr eil geinc or mabinogi*

RB Colophon: *A llyna ual y teruyna y geinc honn or mabinogi*

WB Colophon: *A llyna ual y teruyna y geing honn or mabinyogi*

Manawydan

RB Title: *llyma y dryded geinc or mabinogi*

RB Colophon: *Ac uelly y teruyna y geinc honn yma or mabinogi*

WB Colophon: *Ac y uelly y teruyna y geing honn yma or mabinogy*

Math

RB Title: *honn yw y bedwarded geinc or mabinogi*

RB Colophon: *Ac velly y teruyna y geing honn or mabinogi*

WB Colophon: *Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing honn or mabinogi*

Ifor Williams argued that the form *mabynnogyon* found in the White and Red Book colophons of *Pwyll*, must be a scribal error for *mabinogi*.⁴² He suggested that the scribe mistakenly copied the last part of the word *dyledogyon* which occurs a little earlier in the manuscript. This view has remained unquestioned, but I believe that it is very difficult to sustain. Though the scribes do occasionally make mistakes, the type of error suggested – adding the wrong ending to a word through the scribe's, or possibly the reciter's eye wandering to a similar section of text – is, as far as I can determine, otherwise unattested. Even if another instance of this type of error has eluded me, it is exceedingly rare. Moreover, one would still have to account for the initial *mabynn-*, instead of *mabin-*. Further, even an error-prone scribe is not likely to make a mistake on the very last word

⁴⁰ Trans. in Lewis Thorpe, *Gerald of Wales, The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales* (London, 1978), 282.

⁴¹ Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (2nd edn, Cardiff, 1978), p. lxxxiv.

⁴² PKM, p. xlii.

of a text. It goes well beyond the bounds of credibility to say the Red and White Books have independently made the same unlikely mistake. It cannot be that the Red Book is merely copying the White or a common source for the two differ in three ways in this sentence alone. Rather, it must be that the White and Red Books are using exemplars with the reading *mabynnogyon*. In addition, comparing the manuscripts, we know that the Red Book is not afraid to correct mistakes.⁴³ This demonstrates that the scribes did not view *mabynnogyon* as a mistake or inferior reading. Indeed, the scribes were not mere clerks with calligraphic skills, but scholars and completely conversant in the material they penned. Such an error would have instantly caught their notice.

Eric Hamp has suggested that *mabinogi* is a collective noun in *-i*, and tacking *-on* on to this would be out of the question.⁴⁴ It seems to me this assertion is undone by the incident of the imprisonment of Pryderi and Rhiannon in the vanishing fortress and designated 'mabinogi mynweir a mynord' (*WM*, 81. 16–17, *Manawydan*), Mabinogi of the Collar and Mynord (?). *Mabinogi* is clearly understood here as a singular. There is also a text found in the White Book and the even earlier Peniarth 14 with the title 'Llyma vabinogi Iessu Grist', where *mabinogi* translates the Latin *infantia*.

A better treatment for *mabynnogyon* is to accept that it is what it appears to be, simply a common plural formation in *-yon*. *Pwyll* provides seven other plurals of this type: *cochyon* 'red' (pl. adj.) (*WM*, 2.2), *morynnyon* 'maidens' (18. 33), *marchogyon* 'riders' (22. 15), *kerdoryon* 'musicians' (25. 7, 26. 20), *dynnyon* 'men' (32. 23), *guastrodyon* 'grooms' (33. 25), and *dyledogyon* 'rulers' (38. 8). My understanding of the colophon is now 'And thus ends this branch here of the *mabinogis*'. This shows that each branch was itself considered a *mabinogi*. A good model for all the evidence is to assume that, as mabinogis coalesced, they still continued to be regarded as compositions of the mabinogi type. Eventually, four tales emerged, each a mabinogi. The four tales were linked together, each becoming a *keing* 'branch' of a single composition which itself became known as *Mabinogi* – the mabinogi *par excellence*.

⁴³ For example in *Manawydan*, where the White Book reads, 'Pam y kymerwn inheu hynny gan y tayo-geu lladron' (*WM*, 68. 12–13), incorrectly using *inheu* 'I'. The Red Book displays, 'Paham y kymerwn nin-

neu hynny ygan y taeogeu lladron' (*RM*, 49. 10–11).

⁴⁴ Eric Hamp, 'Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1975), 246.