

Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyright material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction not be "used for any purposes other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that use may be liable for copyright infringement.

THE EVERYMAN
LIBRARY

The Everyman Library was founded by J. M. Dent in 1906. He chose the name Everyman because he wanted to make available the best books ever written in every field to the greatest number of people at the cheapest possible price. He began with Boswell's 'Life of Johnson'; his one-thousandth title was Aristotle's 'Metaphysics', by which time sales exceeded forty million.

Today Everyman paperbacks remain true to J. M. Dent's aims and high standards, with a wide range of titles at affordable prices in editions which address the needs of today's readers. Each new text is reset to give a clear, elegant page and to incorporate the latest thinking and scholarship. Each book carries the pilgrim logo, the character in 'Everyman', a medieval morality play, a proud link between Everyman past and present.

72

THE MABINOIGION

Translated by
GWYN JONES AND THOMAS JONES

1991

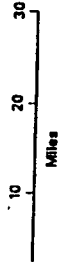
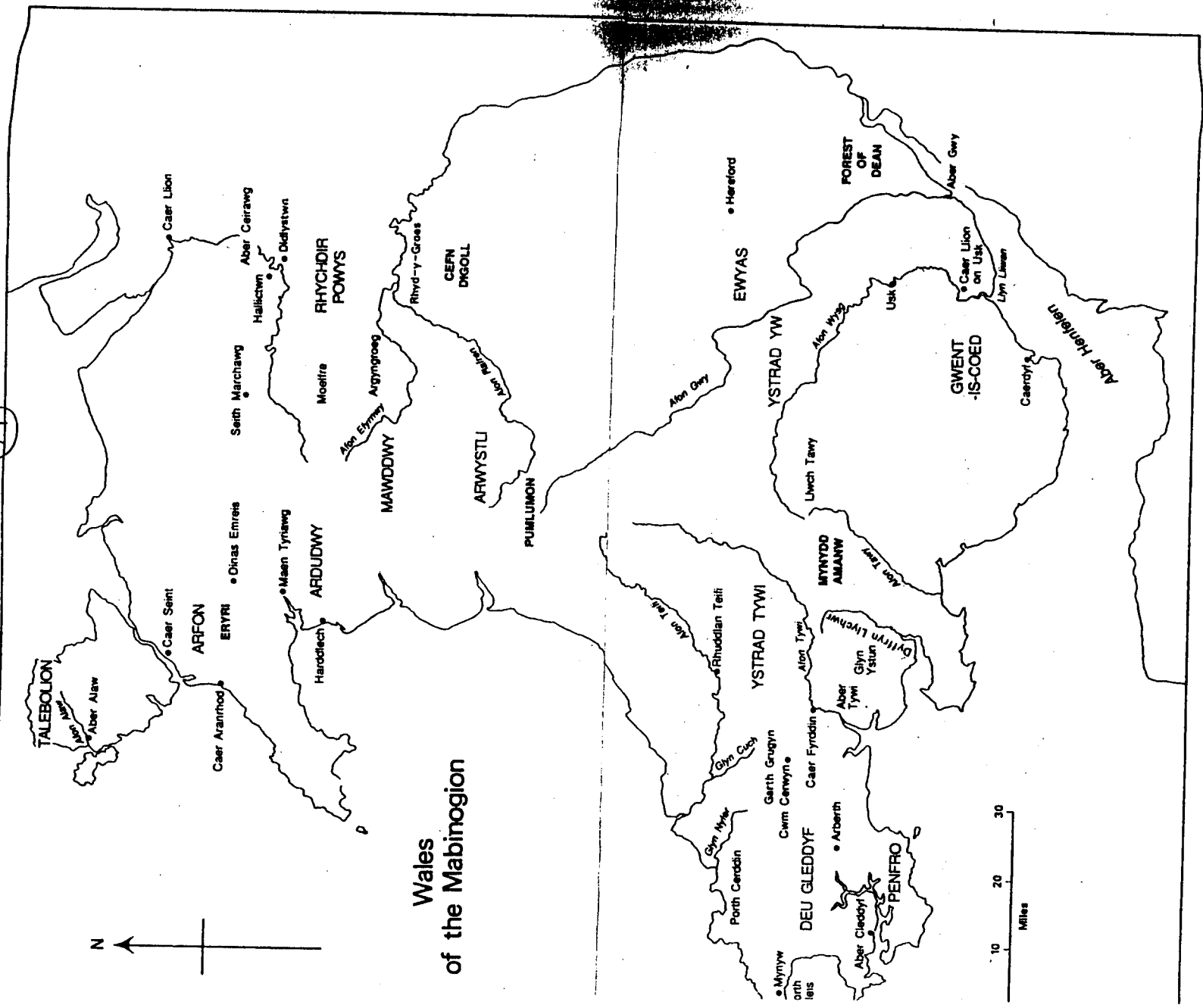


EVERYMAN
J. M. DENT • LONDON
CHARLES E. TUTTLE
VE.....JN1

7A

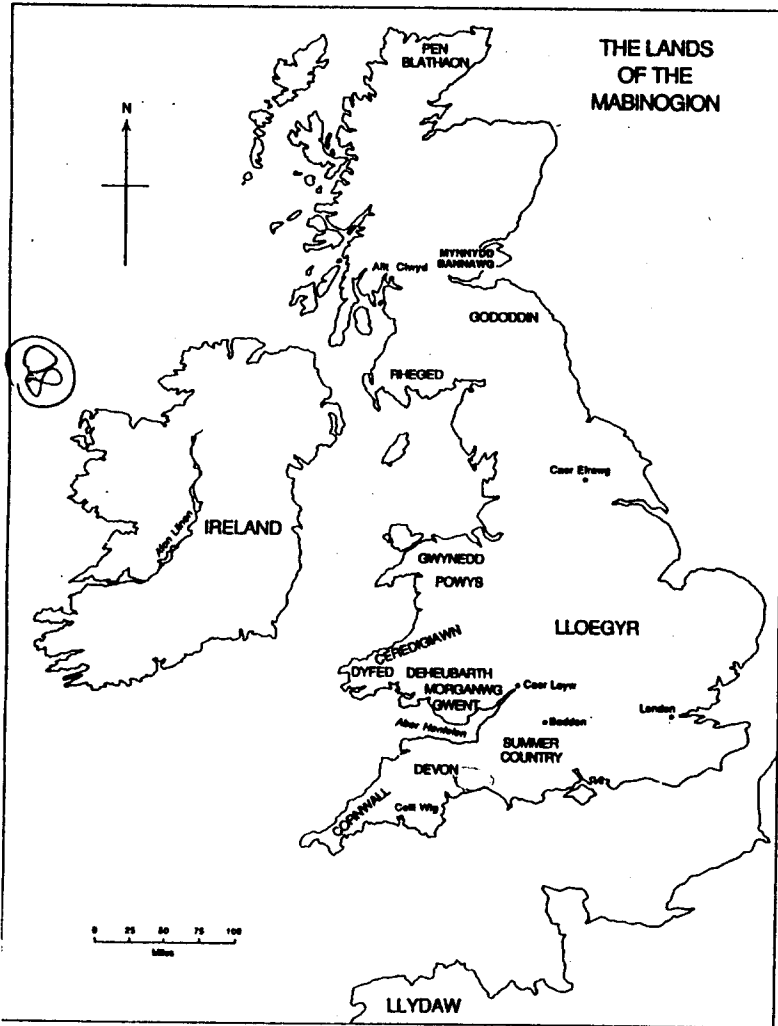


Wales of the Mabinogion



INTRODUCTION

The eleven prose tales upon which the title 'Mabinogion' has been at once happily and arbitrarily bestowed are among the finest flowerings of the Celtic genius and, taken together, a masterpiece of our medieval European literature. Their excellence has been long, if intermittently, celebrated, and their influence deeply felt and widely recognized. The stories have been preserved in two Welsh manuscript collections, the White Book of Rhydderch (*Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*) written down about 1300–25, and the Red Book of Hergest (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*), of the period 1375–1425. The White Book is preserved in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, the Red Book in the Library of Jesus College, Oxford. In addition, MSS. Peniarth 6, 7, 14 and 16 (all in the National Library of Wales) contain portions of various of the stories, some of them written down a hundred years before the White Book. Certain of the stories must have been known in their present (that is, their latest) redaction well before the time of the earliest of these manuscripts. The likeliest date for the Four Branches would appear to be early in the second half of the eleventh century; *Culwch and Olwen* is earlier still – its orthography, glosses, vocabulary and syntax, and its glimpses of a more primitive social code, take parts of it back a further hundred years; and no one doubts that much of the subject matter of these stories is very old indeed, coeval maybe with the dawn of the Celtic world. But paradoxically the title 'Mabinogion', by which the stories are now collectively known, is a modern one. It was used by Lady Charlotte Guest as the title of her translations from the Red Book of Hergest and of the *Hanes Taliesin* (first found in a sixteenth-century copy). She understood it to be the plural of *mabinogi*, to which in common with the Welsh scholars of her time she attributed an incorrect meaning. But the word *mabynogyon* occurs once only in the manuscripts, and it is as certain as such things can be that it is a scribal error of a common



enough kind. In any case, the term *mabinogi* can apply only to the Four Branches of *Pwyll*, *Branwen*, *Manawydan* and *Math*, and not to the other contents of the White Book or the Red. Thus Lady Guest's title was really a misnomer twice over; but it has proved so convenient (rather like the Old Icelandic *Edda*), and is now so well-established in use, that it would be the sheerest pedantry to replace it with a clumsier if more correct alternative.

The eleven stories of the Mabinogion present a remarkable diversity within their medieval pattern. They fall into obvious groups: the Mabinogi proper, composed of the Four Branches of *Pwyll*, *Branwen*, *Manawydan* and *Math*; the two short pieces, *The Dream of Macsen Wledig* and *Lludd and Llefelys*; the incomparable and unclassifiable *Culhwch and Olwen*, the earliest Arthurian tale in Welsh; *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, a romantic and sometimes humorously appreciative looking-back by favour of the author's dream convention to the heroic age of Britain; and the three later Arthurian romances proper, *The Lady of the Fountain*, *Peredur* and *Gereint Son of Erbin*, with their abundant evidence of Norman-French influences.

This diversity should not, however, tempt us to overlook a substantial unity — a unity which is imposed both by their subject matter and their social and literary milieu. The matter is primarily mythology in decline and folktale, though it is unlikely that the story-tellers were themselves often, if ever, aware of this. But that such personages as Bendigeidfran, Rhiannon, Math and Mabon son of Modron, to name but a few, are in both the literary and mythological sense of divine origin, is so conclusively proved from the Mabinogion itself, from the rich and extensive Irish analogues, and from our knowledge of the myth-making and myth-degrading habits of our remote world-ancestors, that the theme needs no development at our hands. Euhemerized though such personages are, they remain invested with a physical and moral grandeur which amply bespeaks their godlike state and superhuman nature. The evidences of a pervading mythology are neither so numerous nor so striking in the later romances, but these too are seldom far from folktale. Other Arthurian elements common to all or most of the tales are those styled onomastic, the attempts to explain place-names, and the historical, in so far as the references to Arthur and heroic story of non-divine origin may be called historical.

That Wales had its bards is a circumstance known to most. So too that the bards celebrated their patrons in verse. That oftentimes these bards were also story-tellers whose medium was prose or prose and verse is an item of knowledge as well-authenticated though rather less widely diffused. The eleven tales of the Mabinogion are not the only examples of their craft which have survived, and the craft flourished during no shorter period than from the sixth century to the fifteenth. We know that the *cyfarwydd's*, or story-teller's, stock-in-trade included many elaborate saga-cycles in which prose was the medium of narrative and description, and verse, often of the englyn type, of monologue and dialogue. Other tales were entirely in prose, and we are encouraged to guess at their number when we remember that the Irish *ollamh* was required, as a professional qualification, to know three hundred and fifty such. The triads and later verse, as well as 'authorities' like Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth, suggest that the Welsh story-tellers yielded to none in amplitude of material. Their tales were delivered orally, and centuries passed before some of them were committed to writing. They had thus no fixed and inviolable form, but took shape and colour from a hundred minds, each with its human disposition to variance and mutability. The *locus classicus* for the art and practice of these court story-tellers is in *Math* which informs us how, when Gwydion and his eleven companions set off for Rhuddlan Teifi, to trick Pryderi, they travelled in the guise of bards. "Why," said Pryderi, "gladly would we have a tale from some of the young men yonder." "Lord," said Gwydion, "it is a custom with us that the first night after one comes to a great man, the chief bard shall have the say. I will tell a tale gladly." Gwydion was the best teller of tales in the world. And that night he entertained the court with pleasant tales and story-telling till he was praised by every one in the court, and it was pleasure for Pryderi to converse with him. What tales Gwydion told, like what songs the Syrens sang, are not beyond all conjecture. They 'admit a wide solution' by such relics and fragments of Celtic tradition as have survived the steep mortality of the years. And so, natural and pious as it is to lament our lost heritage of story, we contemplate with the more pride and affection such treasures as are so happily preserved to us in the White Book and the Red.

he gives them manhood, womanhood. Rhiannon, half contemptuous of, half pitying the lying women who accuse her of destroying her son; the impetuosity of the youthful Pryderi contrasted with the middle-aged caution of Manawydan before the magic caer (so admirably sustained in Manawydan's attitude towards the jealous craftsmen of Lloegy and his bargaining with the bishop); Blodeuedd, who betrayed Llew Llaw Gyffes with Gronw Bebyr, and 'under pretence of importunity of love' drew from him, like Dalilah from Samson, the secret of how he might be slain — he never fails to explore their individual quality. And third, his vision of life must be stressed, clear, sincere, and noble. He has pondered long the destiny of mankind, its griefs and triumphs, its mystery and pain. Sometimes he touches heights at which comparison and comment are futile. He did so in the superb sentences which describe the death of Branwen; and later in the same story, in his account of the sojourn at Gwales in Penfro and the opening of the third door that looked on Cornwall and Aber Henfelen, he achieved that effect of illumination and extension of time and space which lies beyond the reach of all save the world's supreme story-tellers. That we know nothing of him personally, save that, as appears from the internal evidence of his masterpiece, he was a man of Dyfed and shaped his great work at the beginning of the second half of the eleventh century, is of little or no significance. Our concern with him is as artifex of a monument more lasting than brass, a classic of European literature, a glory of the Celtic world.

The two shorter pieces, *The Dream of Macsen Wledig* and *Lludd and Llefelys*, fall together in the mind rather by virtue of their brevity than for any correspondences of subject or treatment. *Macsen* is a joy, with its firm outlines, good proportions, high finish, and delicate yet glowing workmanship. Its one flaw is the none-too-skilful onomastic addition which tells of Cynan's exploits in Brittany. *Macsen* is the Spanish-born Magnus Maximus, who served with Theodosius in the British wars and rose to high military command in this Island; in 383 he invaded Gaul to oust Gratian, then emperor of Rome, and after Gratian's assassination and the flight of Valentinian became master of Italy, but was himself put to death in 388 by Theodosius, at Aquileia. The excursion of Elen's brothers to Rome is historically on a par with Arthur's expedition thither, as related by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory, but the story shows a

strong and indeed nostalgic interest in the old Roman grandeur, and the (exaggerated) contribution to it of British fighting-men. *Lludd and Llefelys* is an attractive little folktale which calls for no particular comment. Its account of the dragons stirs echoes of Nennius; one judges it a late representative of a class of magical tales of rather wider appeal than the mingled subtlety and precision of the Four Branches.

The author of the Four Branches, we have said, was an artist who concealed his art. Not so the author of *Culhwch and Olwen*, who deploys with gusto every resource of language and style to heighten the colour and deepen the character of the fantastic and primitive world his creatures inhabit. It is a world in which birds and beasts are as important as men, a world of hunting, fighting, shapeshifting and magic. Immemorial themes of folktale are here: the jealous stepmother, the swearing of a destiny, asking a boon, the fulfilment of tasks, the helping companions, the oldest animals, the freeing of the prisoner, the hunting of the Otherworld beast, all strung along the controlling thread of Culhwch's winning the giant's daughter to wife — itself one of the oldest themes of all. The zest of this unknown story-teller still hits one like a bursting wave; there is magnificence in his self-awareness and virtuosity. One feels how he rejoiced in being equal to all his occasions: the gallant picture of young Culhwch and his steed, the bombast of Glewlwyd Mighty-grasp, the poetic beauty of the episode of the oldest animals, the savage grotesquery of Ysbaddaden Chief Giant, the headlong rush of the hunting of Twrch Trwyth, the lyricism of the description of Olwen. Now he is bare, hard, staccato; now he luxuriates with adjectives, compounds, puns even. It is not surprising that his story is rather loosely held together: his delight in its parts has affected its unity. Twice there appears to be an attempt to bind the diverse elements together, but each time on the dubious principle that the wider you throw your net the more surely you bring things together. When Culhwch first goes to Arthur's court, the narrator supplies a list of personages which is at once an index to cycles of lost story and a glimpse into his own teeming imagination; and second, at the court of Ysbaddaden, he finds place for a list of some forty tasks, presumably each one of them the hook on which a story might be hung. Arthur's warriors and Ysbaddaden's demands are each a mytho-heroic assemblage, and one reads them with the sensation that here,

tantalizingly glimpsed, is a vast rolling panorama of lost Celtic story. Less than half the tasks are fulfilled, and of those, three do not figure in Ysbaddaden's list. It is probable that the list of tasks has been extended and not the accomplishments reduced. The personages of Arthur's court, surely the oddest retinue of any court in the world, and the list of tasks, would between them justify almost any wanderings of an author's furious fancies, but we are left with the impression of a conception too great for one man's powers. Unless indeed we have to do with a mutilated version of a masterpiece. What is left, however, is unique, a native saga hardly touched by alien influences, exciting and evocative, opening windows on great vistas of the oldest stuff of folklore and legend. After the Four Branches, it is the one story of the Mabinogion whose loss would not be made good by any other product of the medieval art of story-telling.

This is not the place to discuss the historical and pseudo-historical references to Arthur to be found in the *Historia Brittonum* associated with the name of Nennius, and in the *Annales Cambriae*. But it would be an omission not to stress that *Culhwch and Olwen* is a document of the first importance for a study of the sources of the Arthurian legend. The Arthur it portrays is, of course, remarkably unlike the gracious, glorious emperor of later tradition, whether exemplified in the literatures of France, Germany or England, or for that matter in the concluding Arthurian romances of the present volume, subject as they have been to Norman-French influences. But when we recall that Arthur was not a French, German or English, but a British king, it is not unreasonable to emphasize the significance of British (which in this connexion means Welsh) material relating to him. British material, that is, uncontaminated by the cycles of Romance, though necessarily affected by the vast complex of Celtic myth and legend. It consists for the most part of some exceptionally difficult poems, and of *Culhwch and Olwen* itself. In one of the poems, the so-called *Preideu Annwfn* from the thirteenth-century Book of Taliesin (p. 54), we hear of Arthur's raids in his ship Prydwen upon eight caers (strongholds) in the Otherworld.

Perfect was the imprisonment of Gweir in Caer Siddi,
According to the Tale of Pwyll and Pryderi;
No one before him went to it . . .

Three freights of Prydwen went we into it,
Save seven, none came back from Caer Siddi.

In the second verse there is mention of the Cauldron of the Head of Annwn, which 'boils not the food of a coward'.

And when we went with Arthur . . .
Save seven, none came back from Caer Feddwyd.

In the fifth we read of the Ych Brych, the 'Speckled Ox' of *Culhwch and Olwen*.

And when we went with Arthur, sad journey,
Save seven, none came back from Caer Fandwy.

And so to the last verse:

When we went with Arthur, sad contest,
Save seven, none came back from Caer Ochren.

In this context belongs the poem beginning *Golychafi gulwyd*, which has been quoted from earlier, and the poem beginning *Pa gur* from the thirteenth-century Black Book of Carmarthen (p. 94) — though the poem is considerably older than the manuscript itself. In *Pa gur* we find Arthur seeking entry into a 'house' of which Glewlwyd Mighty-grasp is porter.

- A. What man is porter?
- G. Glewlwyd Mighty-grasp.
What man asks it?
- A. Arthur and Cei Wyn.
- G. Who goes along with thee?
- A. The best men in the world.
- G. Into my house thou shalt not come
Unless thou disclose them (?).
- A. I shall disclose them,
And thou shalt see them.

And so Arthur names his followers: Mabon son of Modron, Cysteint son of Banon, Gwyn Godyfrion, Manawydan son of Llŷr ('of profound counsel'), Mabon son of Mellt, Anwas the Winged, Llŵch Windy-hand, Bedwyr Four-teeth and Llacheu. As in *Culhwch and Olwen* pride of place is given to Cei and his exploits. Here too he is the great warlock-warrior.

Cei pleaded with them
While he slew them three by three . . .

Though Arthur was but playing,
 Blood was flowing
 In the hall of Wrnach
 Fighting with a hag . . .
 An army was vanity
 Compared with Cei in battle . . .
 When he drank from a horn
 He would drink as much as four;
 Into battle when he came
 He slew as would a hundred.
 Unless God should accomplish it,
 Cei's death would be unattainable
 Cei Wyn and Llacheu
 They used to make battles
 Before the pangs of the blue spears . . .
 Cei pierced nine witches.
 Cei Wyn went to Môn
 To kill lions.
 Polished was his shield
 Against Palug's Cat . . .
 Nine score warriors
 Would fall as food for her . . .

Clearly these poems and *Culhwch and Olwen* are much of a piece. They tell of the same people, and the events described are of a kind too. The account in *Preideu Annwfn* of Arthur's sea-voyage to the Otherworld, and the mention of the *peir pen annwfn*, remind one strongly of the account in the prose tale of Arthur's sea-voyage to fetch the cauldron of Diwrnach from Ireland; and the portion of *Branwen* which recounts Bendigeidfran's expedition to Ireland, the uses of the Cauldron of Rebirth, and the return of seven men to Wales, Pryderi being one of them, is a parallel which challenges the imagination. The feats attributed to Arthur's followers in the Glewlwyd dialogue would not be out of place in *Culhwch and Olwen*: the slaying of hags, monsters, witches. Cei and Bedwyr are consistent characters throughout, the former bearing little resemblance to the discourteous and ineffective buffoon of later romance. And what of Arthur himself? His nature is unmistakable: he is the folk hero, a beneficent giant, who with his men rides the land of other giants, of witches and monsters; he undertakes journeys to the Otherworld to rescue prisoners and carry off treasures; he is rude, savage, heroic and protective. And already he is attracting

to himself in myths of early gods and the legends of early heroes. In other words, he is at the centre of British story; he is the very heart of it, both for his fame as *dux bellorum* and protector of Roman Britain against all its invaders (the historical and pseudo-historical Arthur), and for his increasingly dominating role in Celtic folklore and legend. It is remarkable how much of this British Arthur has survived in the early twelfth-century *Historia of Geoffrey of Monmouth* and the mid-fifteenth-century *Morte Darthur* of Malory. Arthur setting off with Kaius and Bedeuerus to slay the swine-eating Spanish giant, and bursting out laughing when the monster crashes like a torn-up oak, or his battle with the beard-collecting Ritho, are cases in point. The growth may be traced both backwards and forwards. Behind the royal features in Geoffrey and Malory may be discerned the ruder lineaments of the folk hero; in the folk hero of *Culhwch and Olwen* one observes adumbrations of king and emperor. This is one of the three chief glories of this astonishing tale: its importance as a well-head of Arthurian romance. The other two are its richness as a repository of early British story and its brilliance as prose narrative. For these things it is *sui generis*, by itself, alone.

Whether a story so complicated in structure and so diffuse in episode as *Culhwch and Olwen* was ever in its entirety narrated orally, is open to question. That the intricacies of the early thirteenth-century *Dream of Rhonabwy* were expected to defy the memory of both bard and *ysfarwydd* we have the colophon (even if it is a gloss) to prove. It may not be known 'without a book'. It is an artist's piece, a succession of illuminated pages, deficient in movement and character, but a tour-de-force of close observation and description. The first set-piece, the black old hall of Heilyn Goch, is in the vein of the 'February' *histoires* of Pol de Limbourgh and Jean Foucquet; nor do their bright masterpieces of January and May out-do in loving care and brilliance of execution the pictures of the squires who interrupt Arthur and Owein at gwyddbwyll. The advantage, however, lies with the miniaturists, whose paints and enamels do what all the coloured words in Wales must fail to do. In detail *The Dream of Rhonabwy* is impeccable, the portraits shine like jewels, but the whole hardly equals, much less exceeds, the sum of its parts. Yet for all its elaboration, it has its roots in the native tradition of the Heroic Age. The significance of the games of

gwyddbwyll between Arthur and Owein, like the nature and origin of Owein's ravens, has been the subject of much ingenious but unsuccessful speculation. What might have proved another difficulty, the author has himself cleared up for us. For as the author of *The Dream of Macsen Wledig* looked back with affection and respect to eternal Rome, so this later, self-conscious artist conjured up a vision of Arthur and the great men of the past, by way of comment on his own day. 'How sad I feel,' says Arthur, 'that men as mean as these keep this Island, after men as fine as those that kept it of yore.' Men as fine, that is, as Caradawg Stout-arm and Rhun son of Maelgwn Gwynedd, whom we know from history, or Goreu son of Custennin, Mabon son of Modron, Gwrhŷr Interpreter of Tongues, and Gwalchmei, Gweir and Menw – old friends out of *Culhwch and Olwen* – and Owein, Peredur, and Edern son of Nudd, with whose adventures we are to grow acquainted in the three romances to come. Towards these romances the manner and matter of *The Dream of Rhonabwy* provide a natural, though unintended, transition.

In *The Lady of the Fountain*, *Peredur*, and *Gereint Son of Erbin* there is at once apparent a change of interest, purpose and fashion. Norman-French influence is strong and obvious, in background and tone and characterization, in the social and ethical code, in clothes and armour and the *realien* generally, and in the vague topography which contrasts so strongly with the precision of scene in the Four Branches and the routes marked so accurately across the pages of *Culhwch and Olwen*, of *Macsen* and *Rhonabwy*. The opening section of *Rhonabwy* is a quite striking piece of realistic description of an intensely-realized setting. In place it is accurately sited in Powys; in time it belongs to the days of Madawg and Iorwoerth, the sons of Maredudd, lord of Powys, persons known to history (Madawg died in 1159, his brother six or seven years later). In all the dream-literature of the Middle Ages one cannot call to mind an author who took pains to establish his dreamer in a more credible or less comfortable bed, or a dreamer who proceeded with more precision to his destination. But in the three romances, once a hero leaves *Caer Llion* on Usk, he is travelling not in Gwent or the adjoining districts of Lloegyr, but 'the bounds of the world and its wilderness'. In this, as in other ways, the Norman-French influence on Welsh story-telling was

as unfortunate as it was inevitable. This is not to say that, considered as Arthurian romances, these three tales fall below the level of such tales elsewhere. They are excellent of their kind, and provide a variety of interesting episode free from the fashionable *longueurs* which make so much Arthurian romance determined reading to-day. It is significant too that their best passages are such as stem from the old root of native narrative: the remarkable parallel in *The Lady of the Fountain* to the vanishing of the court and later of Pryderi and Rhannon in *Manawydan*; the *enfance* of Peredur, with its delightful incident of the two hinds, and its well-sustained folk motif of the Great Fool; the hedge of mist, the apple tree, and the horn which Gereint blew. It is probable that their charm seems less to the Welsh than to the English reader, for the former the decline from the Four Branches to *Gereint Son of Erbin* would be not unfairly expressed in the difference between Branwen and Enid, or Manawydan and Gwalchmei. In the romances lay figures move through stock adventures in unlocalized places; they entertain but have little power to move or excite. The sorrows of Branwen touch one as close after a hundred readings, but one needs sentimentality rather than sympathy to feel pity for Enid. Bendigeidfran is hurt mortally with a poisoned spear, Pryderi is borne down by main strength and magic, the enigmatic Efnisien bursts heart and cauldron alike; but the knights invariably overthrow their thousands. (*Victrix causa deis placuit*)... But who for ever would wish to side with gods?

The connexion between the three Welsh prose romances and the *Yvain (Le Chevalier au Lion)*, *Perceval (Conte del Graal)*, and *Erec* of Chrétien de Troyes has been long and severely debated. It is part of the wider issue between the 'Continental' and the 'Welsh' schools of thought. The former has held that Wales contributed very little or even nothing of importance to the Arthurian legend as it developed in France and Germany and then England, and that the credit for the influence exerted by that legend upon the literature and culture of Europe must go to Chrétien and his disciples in France, and to Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried von Strassburg, and Hartman von Aue. On the other hand, there have been many scholars to maintain that the Continental romances were derived from Welsh sources, whatever the links and transmission. There seems little room for doubt that the argument is now swinging to the 'Welsh' side,

and that Chrétien's sources, little though we know of them, were derived from Welsh originals. The evidence of comparative folktale, of proper names and linguistics, and what may be reasonably if tentatively deduced from the methods of literary composition in the Middle Ages, is telling with increasing weight against the opposite view. The achievement of Chrétien and the German poets is not affected by this; their poems stand, their influence remains; their contribution to the Arthurian legend is impressive enough, though they are denied what they themselves never claimed, its origin and fountain-head.

Of the relationship between the three Welsh romances and Chrétien's poems it may be said that the romances are not translations of the *Yvain*, *Conte del Graal*, and *Erec*. It may be that they are compositions proceeding from the same ancient traditions, both oral and written, as provided Chrétien with the outlines of his stories. That the French-speaking Normans are in the direct line of transmission between Welsh tradition on the one hand and both Chrétien and the authors of the Welsh prose romances on the other, seems certain. By the twelfth century it is clear that matters Celtic were the rage in literature, and that for a variety of reasons Arthurian legend was the fashion. Arthur's dominating position in British story; Geoffrey of Monmouth's spectacularly popular *History*; the twofold advantage to the Normans of Arthur as a British, not an Anglo-Saxon, hero, with no unfortunate emotional or political connotations to his story, and the ease with which the imagination played about him rather than more defined figures like Charlemagne and Duke William; the skill of the Welsh and Bretons as storytellers (the thing is just as true of the Icelanders), and the indubitable excellence of the stories they told: all these were elements of the supremacy. Further, the professional men of letters of the twelfth century knew their business well; they developed their material and conventionalized it at one and the same time: chivalry and courtly love, knight-errantry and faerye, religion, society and morality, mysticism and poetry — place for them all was found in the Matter of Britain, whose mighty accumulations met the diverse requirements of feather-brained page, love-sick courtier, gallant warrior, gentle lady, reverend senior, the dreamer and the man of action, the artist and the student of affairs. It displayed the pattern of society and the web and woof of human behaviour; it was remote as Broceliande

and close as the nearest tilt-yard. It held a treasure for every seeker. And so, while the final miracle will always defy a logical and documented explanation, the Arthurian legend now became a priceless European inheritance, and part of the European imagination for ever. In this vast expansion of matter and significance the three Welsh prose romances now under discussion are quantitatively a humble affair. Their interest lies rather in their evidence of Welsh tradition underlying the continental expansion, and certain positive merits of narrative and construction which contrast with the deficiencies of Chrétien's storytelling. Assuredly they were popular performances, with their Norman-French characteristics imposed on the old Welsh virtues, and appealing more to their sophisticated audiences than the earlier, ruder tales of Owain, Peredur and Gereint had done. So popular indeed, that the earlier versions have yielded before them and fallen from human memory.

These then are the eleven stories of the Mabinogion. The present translation is the third into English. The pioneer in the field was Dr Owen Pughe, whose version of the first part of the tale of *Pwyll* (the episode of Pwyll and Arawn) appeared in the *Cambrian Register* for 1795, and with some slight verbal changes in the *Cambro-Briton* for February 1821. In 1829 he published a complete version of *Math Son of Mathonwy* in the *Cambrian Quarterly*. But it was left to Lady Charlotte Guest, with the help of Tegid, Carnhuanawc and others, to complete a translation of all eleven stories along with the 'Taliesin' (not found in the White Book or the Red), and publish them in three handsome volumes during the years 1838-49. Her translation was a charming and felicitous piece of English prose, and has been justly esteemed by every succeeding generation of readers as a classic in its own right. The present translators believe themselves to be in as favourable a position to assess her merits as anyone now alive, and they cannot too emphatically pay tribute to so splendid an achievement. But the absence of texts, the lack of strict scholarship, and the ever-present sense of an undertaking *ad usum filiioli* have left their tell-tale marks. Hers are beauties indeed, but too often they are not the beauties of her wonderful original. In 1887 Dr Gwenogvryn Evans and Sir John Rhŷs published a diplomatic edition of *The Text of the Mabinogion and other Welsh Tales from the Red Book of*

Hergest, and in 1907 Dr Evans published a diplomatic edition of *The White Book Mabinogion*, which made available to scholars an earlier and in many ways more fundamental text along with the variants supplied by other Peniarth manuscripts. The second edition of Professor Loth's brilliant French translation, *Les Mabinogion*, Paris, 1913, was a tribute to Dr Evans's inspiring labours. Then came the second English translation, by T. P. Ellis and John Lloyd, Oxford, 1929, which restored Lady Guest's omissions, corrected her softenings, and attained a far greater accuracy of detail. It was based upon a study of all the texts, but in the present translators' opinion still left the way open for a rendering which should aim to convey literature in terms of literature and yet endure the most rigorous scrutiny of contemporary scholarship.

This new translation, now reprinted from the Golden Cockerel Press edition in folio, July 1948, is based upon the White Book of Rhydderch, as the older and truer manuscript. Its omissions, which are considerable, including as they do the whole of *The Dream of Rhonabwy* and substantial portions of other stories, have been supplied from the Red Book of Hergest. Our method can best be described as the preparation of a critical text based on the White Book, with a collation of all other MSS., and the translation of that text. We have used the diplomatic editions already referred to, of both the White Book and the Red, and consultation of the White Book manuscript has yielded a number of correct readings now incorporated in a translation for the first time. The forms of all personal and place-names have been modernized in orthography but not in phonology; we have retained the epenthetic vowel, and so far as is practicable used one form only of a name in any one tale.

No translation of a Welsh classic has received warmer and more ample aid than this. There is a full account of the making of the Golden Cockerel-Everyman *Mabinogion* in the *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1989, which enumerates our three main sources of support from our country's foremost scholars in this field. During 1944-48 our outstanding benefactors were Professor J. Lloyd-Jones of the National University of Ireland, and Professor Sir Ifor Williams of our sister-college at Bangor, North Wales. Twenty-five years later, when Thomas Jones's illness and death threw all into

sorrow, dismay and confusion during our preparation of the revised Everyman edition planned for 1974, we were profoundly grateful to our former student, colleague and friend (and thereafter the National Librarian of Wales) Professor Brynley F. Roberts, not only for a number of valuable improvements, but for a careful overseeing of the entire edition. What the unremitting support of these three experts meant in terms of confidence and applied scholarship needs no stressing. Thomas Jones, this too I need hardly add, was a scholar cast in the same heroic mould as these our Helping Companions.

To Christopher Sandford, of the Golden Cockerel Press, for his vision, care and generous spirit, we shall always feel the deepest obligation. He was the prime mover in securing the widest possible audience for what he considered his masterpiece, and it was he who ensured its appearance in Everyman's Library.

Finally, the greatest debt of all requires a separate mention. It had always seemed to either translator that without the encouragement and furtherance of his wife this work could hardly have been carried through amid the duties and distractions of four troubled years. No adequate acknowledgement is possible, but with the few words left to me it is my privilege to speak for my friend Tom as much as for myself, and repeat with fondness and pride our Dedication of July 1948: 'TO ALICE AND MAIR'.

GWYN JONES

NOTE ON THE EDITORS AND THE TEXT

GWYN JONES and the late THOMAS JONES were, respectively, Professor of English at Aberystwyth 1941-64 and at Cardiff 1965-76; and Professor of Welsh at Aberystwyth 1952-70. They are the authors of numerous works of scholarship in Welsh and in English, and their *Mabinogion* has, from its first appearance in 1948, been recognised as a triumph of the translator's art and a classic in its own right.

This translation of the *Mabinogion*, made by Professors Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, was first published in 1948 in the Golden Cockerel Press edition-de-luxe, and appeared in Everyman's Library in 1949. since when it has been revised several times.