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The *Mabinogi* Effect:

The Mythologization of the Nonhuman

in Re-Imaginings of Medieval Literature

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Abstract

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This thesis studies the mythologization of the nonhuman in re-imaginings of the Middle Welsh texts *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* (the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*). The texts considered range from the first complete translation into English by Lady Charlotte Guest in the mid-nineteenth century to the most recent twenty-first-century version, encompassing a corpus of ninety-four re-imaginings in both English and Welsh. Previous studies on re-imaginings of the *Mabinogi* have consistently worked from the premise that the texts are myths, part of a mythology, or remnants of myths. Their starting point has thus not been the medieval texts themselves; rather, it has evolved from the mythologization which surrounds the *Mabinogi* in popular culture. This thesis investigates the consequences of approaching the *Mabinogi* as myth, which is here termed the *Mabinogi* Effect. Through this perception of a mythic narrative, the writers of the re-imaginings, in their turn, create and propagate their own myth of the *Mabinogi*. As the chapters of this thesis move through the different elements of the *Mabinogi* Effect, they reveal that the idea of a specific nonhuman concept plays a fundamental function in the creation of the myth. The nonhuman is not simply animal or landscape, but encompasses nature, super-nature and the artificial, bridging the divide between cyborgs and goddesses. It is a very specific idea of the nonhuman which pervades the corpus of re-imaginings. The simultaneous

fear of and fascination with this multifarious nonhuman, this thesis argues, can reveal the specific impulses which lie behind each re-imagining.

Chapter One discusses the nonhuman otherworld and its otherworldly creatures and deliberates the transferral of otherworldliness to Wales itself in the context of nineteenth-century views of Wales and the perceived nonhumanness of the Welsh. Chapter Two considers the Welsh language and its link to the nonhuman, which the corpus creates through the use of place-names. These place-names are discussed in the context of the two-fold status of the Welsh language, as a fabled, ancient tongue on the one hand, and as a political and symbolical tongue on the other. Chapter Three turns to the nonhuman in the form of human-animal relationships and human to animal transformations, the analysis of which reveals the simultaneous anxiety and fascination with the nonhuman which dominates the corpus. Chapter Four examines the conception of Blodeuwedd – the woman created out of flowers and later turned into an owl in the Fourth Branch – and the significance of her simultaneous humanness and nonhumanness for the re-imaginings.

This thesis concludes that the *Mabinogi* myth has been created, upheld and encouraged by generations of re-imaginings out of two particular desires. First, in order to establish and propagate a national Welsh body of myths; and second, to facilitate the appropriation of the stories outside of Welsh literary culture. The specific nonhuman which stands at the centre of this corpus is fashioned to further these precise narratives. This analysis offers an alternative view to the idea that the popularity of the *Mabinogi* derives from its human and moral elements.

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Introduction: The *Mabinogi* Effect

'The function of the artist is the mythologization of the environment and the world.'[1]

In the autumn of 2015 the British Museum opened its doors to an exhibition called *The Celts: Art and Identity*. It was an expansive display with objects which have become well-known beyond academic circles: the Battersea Shield, the Gundestrup Cauldron, the Snettisham Hoard. These objects are at once 'Celtic' and not 'Celtic', depending on the definition used. The strictest academic designation of Celtic (the lack of quotation marks indicates the accepted academic usage) refers to a linguistic group, while the widest, popular definition combines Welsh, Irish, Scots, Manx, Cornish and Breton within a questionable national 'Celtic' heritage.[2] The idea of what 'Celtic' signifies lies at the heart of the discussion of the ninety-four texts which make up the corpus of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings, with which this thesis concerns itself.[3] The term 'Celtic' can be and indeed is used in so many varying ways, that it has, for the most part, lost its meaning, while at the same time preserving a very specific and frequently political and sentimental importance. In the same way, the *Mabinogi*

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[1] Susan Cooper, quoting Joseph Campbell in 'Fantasy in the Real World' (1988), in Cooper, *Dreams and Wishes: Essays on Writing for Children* (New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1996), pp. 57-71 (p. 61).

[2] For an in-depth view of the terms 'Celtic' and the 'Celts', see Kim McCone, *The Celtic Question: Modern Constructs and Ancient Realities* (Dublin: School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (hereafter DIAS), 2008). See also *Mysticism, Myth, and Celtic Identity*, ed. by Marion Gibson, Shelley Trower and Garry Tregidga (London: Routledge 2013). Thomas Clancy made a passionate defense of the term 'Celtic' in academia in response to the British Museum exhibition in the 2015 Angus Matheson Memorial Lecture at the University of Glasgow. See <http://cscs.academicblogs.co.uk/on-our-terms-celtic-and-celts/> [accessed March 21 2016]. See also Clancy, 'How Celtic got a Bad Name – and why you should care', *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/how-being-celtic-got-a-bad-name-and-why-you-should-care-44540> [accessed April 11 2016].

[3] In this thesis, Celtic (without quotation marks) indicates the accepted academic definition describing a linguistic group, while 'Celtic' (with quotation marks) is employed for the popular definition of the term with varying meanings. On the difficulty of speaking of nationalist tendencies with regard to this group as a whole, see Gibson, Trower and Tregidga, 'Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity', in *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity*, pp. 1-20.

stories have come to represent differing and often opposing meanings. The concept of the 'Celtic' and the *Mabinogi* stories themselves have become myths, re-invented and re-fashioned to fit their immediate purpose.

This thesis investigates the re-casting of the *Mabinogi* – a set of four medieval court narratives – into a specific myth. This re-fashioning reveals the ideals, beliefs and values of the writers re-shaping the *Mabinogi*. The disconnect between the medieval version and later re-imaginings, which is the focus of this thesis, reveals the motives, aspirations and ideologies of the *Mabinogi* corpus of re-imaginings. This re-imagining is also a selecting and discarding of certain thinking. Questions of identity, especially the division between human and nonhuman identity, provoked through the medieval strangeness, loom large in these re-imaginings.[4] Therefore, the emphasis on the nonhuman in this thesis is a fluid progression of the writers' own questioning of these topics.

This corpus of re-imaginings encompasses ninety-four versions. The present thesis views these texts in dialogue with each other. From the earliest existing version found in fourteenth-century manuscripts to a nineteenth-century version for American boys, from an early twentieth-century Welsh play to a twenty-first century English-language science fiction novella, this thesis combines medieval manuscripts, novels, plays, poems and graphic novels in Welsh and English. Two appendixes provide an overview of the corpus: the first is a thematic compendium, the second a chronological one. Throughout the chapters, references will be supplied to both of these.[5] This is the first comparative study to trace the narratives from the medieval to the most recent versions, and the first to examine the process of mythologization

[4] On the strangeness of the Middle Ages, see Darren Oldridge, *Strange Histories: The Trial of the Pig, the Walking Dead, and Other Matters of Fact from the Medieval and Renaissance Worlds* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005).
[5] Appendix I, pp. 320-32; Appendix II, pp. 333-37.

which has established the *Mabinogi* firmly as a specific myth in the popular imagination.

The effect of reading the *Mabinogi* as myth or a mythic text is the focus of this study and has been here termed the *Mabinogi* Effect. The consequences of the *Mabinogi* Effect will be examined throughout the chapters. By perceiving the *Mabinogi* as myth, the texts are re-created as myth, and so the myth of the *Mabinogi* is proliferated. The *Mabinogi* myth then, is the idea of a specific mythic text which is created within the corpus of re-imaginings.

Each chapter focuses on one of the consequences of the *Mabinogi* Effect. In the first chapter, the creation of otherworlds and their nonhuman inhabitants in the re-imaginings is examined as a way of shaping specific text worlds which create or reject certain narratives. In the second chapter, the use of place-names as links to a mythic time and the establishment of the Welsh language as a means to connect to the nonhuman in this imagined landscape is discussed. In the third chapter, the human-nonhuman relationship is examined through inter-species transformations and associations, picking apart the simultaneous desire and anxiety surrounding the concept of the nonhuman that pervades the corpus. Finally, the fourth chapter examines the nonhuman in the human itself through the character of Blodeuwedd, who is re-created diversely as an emblem of Wales itself and as a universal, mythical figure. All of these effects of reading the *Mabinogi* as an imagined, mythical narrative, result in specific versions being told, specific modes of thought championed and others rejected. It is this dialogue found in the corpus which shapes the texts – not so much re-tellings of the *Mabinogi*, but re-imaginings, reacting against or responding to certain aspects of the *Mabinogi* narratives – the centre of which revolves around a

particular idea of the nonhuman. What this nonhuman is and why it stands at the heart of the corpus will be unravelled in this thesis.

This thesis maintains that the mythologization of this corpus of re-imaginings has occurred because of a simultaneous fear of and fascination with the nonhuman – in much the same way that the Welsh mountains 'had fascinated and appalled the English in equal measure' in the mid-sixteenth century.[6] Indeed, the specific nonhuman found in the corpus serves a precise purpose for each re-imagining. It is in mythic re-imaginings that ontological questions about what it means to be human are posed, leaning on the thought that re-imaginings are always a product of their own time rather than a mirror into the past.[7] This connection between myth and the nonhuman comes full circle in that our pertinent questions about what it means to be human in the Anthropocene can be better understood through mythical narratives.

The Myth of the *Mabinogi*

Ritske Rensma writes of Joseph Campbell's work that '[o]ne of the most important reasons to justify studying his ideas is a sociological one: just why exactly are so many people drawn to his work?'[8] The same question can be asked for this study with regard to the popularity of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings. *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* (the Four Branches of the *Mabinogi*), the set of four medieval Welsh texts, which remain the basis and starting point for all other texts discussed in this study, are four tales of

[6] Stewart Mottram and Sarah Prescott, 'Introduction', in *Writing Wales: From the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Mottram and Prescott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 1-20 (p. 2).
[7] Indeed, see the following for recent studies on the relation between ecocriticism and myth: Jill da Silva, 'Ecocriticism and Myth: The Case of Erysichthon', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 15.2 (Summer 2008), 103-17; Patsy Callaghan, 'Myth as a Site of Eocritical Inquiry: Disrupting Anthropocentrism', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 22.1 (Winter 2015), 80-97.
[8] Ritske Rensma, *Innateness of Myth: A New Interpretation of Joseph Campbell's Reception of C.G. Jung* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), p. ix.

earthly and supernatural adventures, centred on the courtly worlds of Dyfed and Gwynedd. The *Mabinogi* consists of the following tales: *Pwyll* (the First Branch), *Branwen* (the Second Branch), *Manawydan* (the Third Branch) and *Math* (the Fourth Branch).[9] Belonging to the wider *Mabinogion* (which consists of seven other tales, which include Arthurian romance settings, quest narratives and a comedy), they are found mainly in two manuscripts: The White Book of Rhydderch (*Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*), c. 1350, and in The Red Book of Hergest (*Llyfr Coch Hergest*), c. 1400.[10] These stories are believed to date back to the eleventh or twelfth century, but are generally accepted to be the written versions of earlier, orally-transmitted narratives.[11] The manuscript versions found in the Red Book and White Book are so similar in content, that it is assumed they are copies of an earlier version composed in the twelfth or eleventh century.[12] This version seems to have been something similar to a work of historical fiction with a pre-conquest, pre-Christian setting; thus, the first re-imagining of the stories.

First translated in full by the intellectual and avid linguist Lady Charlotte Guest in the mid-nineteenth century, they have been frequently reworked, retold and

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[9] For the purposes of this thesis, the term *Mabinogi* or the English designation 'the Four Branches' will be used throughout to denote *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*. When referring specifically to each tale, the English-language titles will be used. When referring to the names of the characters this thesis follows Sioned Davies' spelling, unless the names deviate in individual re-imaginings. Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[10] Sioned Davies, 'Mabinogi/Mabinogion', in *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. by John T. Koch, 7 vols (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), I, pp. 1231-32 (p. 1231). 'Mabinogion' is Guest's nomenclature for the collection, and has been widely adopted. See Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, 'Introduction', in *The Mabinogion*, new rev. edn (London: Dent, 1993), pp. ix-xli.

[11] Davies, 'Mabinogi/Mabinogion'. For the debate on dating, see: T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 48 (1970/1971), 263-293; Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977); Catherine McKenna, 'Revising Math: Kingship in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* (hereafter *CMCS*), 46 (Winter 2003), 95-118; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Submission of Irish Kings in Fact and Fiction: Henry II, Bendigeidfran, and the Dating of *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*', *CMCS*, 22 (Winter 1991), 31-61. On the oral background, see for example Sioned Davies, *Crefft y Cyfarwydd: Astudiaeth o Dechnegau Naratif yn Y Mabinogion* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995).

[12] See R.L. Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet,* ed. by Thomson (Dublin: DIAS, 2010), pp. xi-xxxi (p. xxx); Simon Evans, 'Introduction', in Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh* (Dublin: DIAS, 2006), pp. xvi-xliv (p. xxx).

adapted in nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century English, Welsh and American literature, as well as several other European languages (listed in the appendixes).[13] Although the four stories show no unequivocal connection to each other, they are generally treated as a collection, which is mainly due to each branch ending with a variation of the same formula: *Ac yuelly y teruyna y geing honn o'r Mabinogi* ('And so ends this branch of the *Mabinogi*'), and the character of Pryderi appearing, in however slight a fashion, in each tale.[14] The meaning of 'mabinogi' remains obscure, but the most plausible explanation to date is that while it might have originally been derived from the word *mab* signifying 'boy', 'son'; its denotation became much broader, transforming to represent a tale, a folktale, or fairytale.[15] Certainly, the Four Branches cannot be classified as tales of youth in terms of their subject matter.[16] As R.L. Thomson writes, '[t]his is partly etymological speculation and partly the result of a feeling that tales into which magic and the supernatural enter largely are fit only for children. If we can put aside our own prejudices against magic and the supernatural, it must be obvious to us that the tales dealt with adult life in an adult way.'[17] So while the term might have meant 'childhood tales' at some point, at the time the Four Branches were composed, it would probably have been employed

[13] Lady Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion: From the Llyfr Coch O Hergest, and Other Ancient Welsh Manuscripts*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans; Llandovery: William Rees, 1849). Printed initially by W. Rees of Llandovery in seven numbers, 1838-46, and later bound in three volumes. For an overview, see D. Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion: Some Notes on the Work and its Translator, with Extracts from her Journals* (Carmarthen: Spurrell and Son, 1921), p. 8. For Guest's biography, see Erica Obey, *The Wunderkammer of Lady Charlotte Guest* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2007); Revel Guest and Angela V. John, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life*, new edn (Stroud: Tempus, 2007).

[14] For this line of argument see: William J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon: An Inquiry into the Origin of the First and Third Branches of the Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1953); Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi*. For the origin and meaning of the word 'Mabinogi', see Diana Luft, 'The Meaning of 'mabinogi', *CMCS*, 62 (Winter 2011), 57-79.

[15] See Ian Hughes, 'Introduction', in *Math uab Mathonwy: The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*, ed. by Hughes (Dublin: DIAS, 2013), pp. xxviii-xxxiv. See also Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1930), p. xlvii.

[16] Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. xvii. See also Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. xliii-lii for a wider discussion of the meaning.

[17] Thomson, 'Introduction', in *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. xvii.

with the possible later meaning of a folktale or fairytale. Yet, the connection between children and the supernatural with the *Mabinogi* is a theme which continues to loom large in the corpus of re-imaginings.

The tales first became accessible to a wider audience when Guest published her translation into English between 1838 and 1849, situating the tales within the wider Arthurian Revival, in which myths and legends became vehicles for forging national identity.[18] The inclusion of the four *Mabinogi* texts in Guest's Mabinogion collection, together with the romances, the latter bearing influence from European medieval traditions, means that the *Mabinogi* are associated with Arthurian matter, and thus mythical and national stories.[19] While some of the tales of the wider *Mabinogion*, namely *Peredur*, *Gereint, Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Owein*, are indeed placed at the court of King Arthur (and he also features in *Breudwyt Ronabwy*), the other tales do not mention the folk hero at all.[20] In particular the setting of the *Mabinogi* seems to be entirely removed from Arthurian matter. Yet the link to Arthurian legends can also be seen in one of the first versions published after Guest – Sidney Lanier's *The Boy's Mabinogion* [YA1], published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1881 and in 1884 as *Knightly Legends of Wales*, the second title an obvious attempt to situate it within the Matter of Britain – and it persists well into the twentieth century in some versions of the corpus, most notably Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is*

[18] See Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xxvii. The first translation was started by William Owen Pughe but it was never completed: *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, ed. by Owen Jones, Pughe and Edward Williams, 3 Vols (London: Rousseau, 1801-7). On Guest's version, Arthurian romance and her international reach, see Donna White, *A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's Literature* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 4. On Arthurian legend and national identity, see Stephanie Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. chapter two pp. 45-80.

[19] On the Mabinogion and Arthurian re-imaginings, see Helmut Birkhan, *Nachantike Keltenrezeption: Projektionen Keltischer Kultur* (Vienna: Praesens Verlag, 2009), p. 254.

[20] The idea that pagan themes survived in the Arthurian canon, creating a further link to medieval Welsh literature, was first expressed in the late nineteenth century by Sir John Rhys, Professor of Celtic at Oxford. See John Rhys, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Celtic Heathendom* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1888). See also Ronald Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities', *CMCS*, 61 (Summer 2011), 57-85 (p. 59).

Rising Sequence (1965-77) [YA4].[21] Before the nineteenth century, the tales seem to have been accepted as narratives concerning the medieval Welsh nobility. In an entry for 'mabinogi' in the *Archaeologia Britannica* from 1707, Edward Lhuyd calls them 'fabulous short accounts concerning a number of members of the ancient nobility of the Britons.'[22]

It is no coincidence that beyond academic editions, the first re-imaginings were English-language versions written mostly by non-Welsh writers, such as Lanier's *The Boy's Mabinogion* (1880) [YA1], Kenneth Morris' *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914) [N1], and Thomas Evelyn (Scott-) Ellis, *The Cauldron of Annwn* (1922) [D1]. The *Mabinogi*, belonging to medieval Welsh 'unauthored and therefore unauthorized' prose, was perhaps consequently more appealing to outsiders, re-imagining a mythical 'Celtic' literature, than to Welsh writers, who only later, after several versions by non-Welsh writers had appeared, began to re-claim the narratives for themselves.[23] These two gravitational pulls will be discussed in this thesis: the nation-building of the Welsh writers versus the universalising of the non-Welsh writers.

The Creation of a Myth

From literary re-imaginings to academic scholarship, the popular perception of the Four Branches is, at most, as a body of mythology, representing older gods and

[21] As well as being part of the corpus of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings, Susan Cooper's work is equally included in studies on Arthurian re-imaginings, see for example Norris J. Lacy, 'The Arthur of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 120-35 (pp. 123-24).

[22] Quoted in Luft, 'The Meaning of "mabinogi"', p. 65. Edward Lhuyd, *Archaeologia Britannica: Giving Some Account Additional to what has been hitherto published of the Languages, Histories and Customs of the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain*, (Oxford: [n. pub.], 1707), p. 262. See Luft for detailed account of early usage of the term 'Mabinogi'.

[23] Helen Fulton, 'Matthew Arnold and the Canon of Medieval Welsh Literature', *The Review of English Studies*, 63.259 (2011), 204-24 (p. 214).

goddesses and their marvellous lives, and at least as texts which contain mythical elements. A myth can be defined variously as 'any collective story that encapsulates a world view and authorizes belief'; or as 'a telling of a traditional tale, in which the teller shapes the traditional material in response to his context and audience, and in which aspects of the culture's models of the world are selected or rejected by the teller […].'[24] Several writers of the re-imaginings offer their own interpretations of myth, often in connection with the *Mabinogi*. In his seminal introduction to *Welsh Verse* from 1967, Tony Conran [P6, D6] classifies the Four Branches as 'Brythonic myth euhemerized into legend'.[25] Alan Garner [YA2] states that he employs the word 'myth' not to denote '"fiction or "unhistorical", but as a complex of story that, for various reasons, human beings see as demonstrations of the inner cause of the universe and of human life.'[26] He explains further: 'Myth encapsulates the nearest approach to absolute truth that words can speak.'[27] Cooper [YA4] quotes Joseph Campbell on the meaning of myth in a lecture she gave in 1988 in New York: 'Myths are "stories about the wisdom of life. […] They are archetypal dreams, and deal with great human problems".'[28] In an interview for the New Welsh Review, Lloyd Jones [Na5] asks in response to the poor reception of his environmental novel *Y Dŵr* by Welsh universities, whether 'they think that climate change is a Mabinogi-style myth?'[29] In a 2012 version [D8], Welsh writer Phillip Clayton-Gore describes the

[24] Brian Attebery, *Stories About Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 2, see also p. 9; Radcliffe G. Edmons III, *Myths of the Underworld Journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the "Orphic" Gold Tablets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 7. For a similar definition of myth, see Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 16. On the differenc between myth and fairytale, see Jack Zipes, *Fairy tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).
[25] Conran, 'Introduction', p. 33.
[26] Alan Garner, 'Aback of Beyond' (1991), in *The Voice That Thunders: Essays and Lectures* (London: Harvill, 1997), pp. 19-38 (p. 27).
[27] Garner, 'Aback of Beyond', p. 28.
[28] Cooper, 'Fantasy in the Real World', p. 61.
[29] Ffion Lindsay, 'Interview with Lloyd Jones', *New Welsh Review*, 101 (Autumn 2013), 1-3 (p. 3).

Mabinogi as 'survivors of what may have been a substantial corpus of myth belonging to Bronze Age (and earlier) inhabitants of Britain'.[30] In one of the most recent translations by Matthieu Boyd [S34], the Four Branches are described as follows: '[…] the stories seem to have their roots in pre-Christian myth'.[31] Finally, in collections of 'Celtic' tales the *Mabinogi* and wider Mabinogion are generally classed as mythologies.[32]

The definition of myth is malleable and changes depending which writer or critic one is examining.[33] For the writers of the re-imaginings too, myth can mean different things, but as we will discover through the chapters, the *Mabinogi* myth is connected to the primordial, to language, and to the nonhuman. The writers, in turn, are creating their own myth of the *Mabinogi*, for which these three components are essential.

Yet, not every writer or poet who re-imagines the tales names the *Mabinogi* as mythic. Some acknowledge the medieval manuscript source, such as Ogmore Batt [Na1], who writes: '"The Mabinogion" is the title in everyday use for a collection of eleven Welsh tales, written down some time between 1050 and 1170, and this anonymous medieval manuscript has long been recognized as a masterpiece of European prose literature.'[34] Nevertheless, even in this sober approach to the narratives, the mythic creeps in: '[t]his is pre-Roman Welsh History. This is pre-

[30] Phillip Clayton-Gore, 'To the Reader', in Clayton-Gore *Masques from the Mabinogi* (Wellington: Penhydref Press, 2012), pp. i-iii (p. i).
[31] Matthieu Boyd with Stacie Lents, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2017), p. 7.
[32] See for example Thomas William Rolleston, *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race,* (New York: Crowell, 1910); Miranda J. Aldhouse-Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992); Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Mammoth Book of Celtic Myths and Legends* (London: Robinson, 2002). For a useful overview of the interpretation of pagan motifs in Welsh literature, see Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities'.
[33] For a good overview of the changing definition of myth, see chapter one: 'Contexts: Theories of Myth' in Susan Seller, *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 1-34.
[34] Ogmore Batt, 'Introduction: Mimicking *The Mabinogion*', in Batt, *Blodeuwedd: A Novel Retelling of the Legendary Welsh Tale* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2001), pp. ix-xiii (p. ix).

Christian Myth. This is a Very Old Welsh Story.[35] Juliette Wood writes: 'If myth is viewed essentially as a sacred narrative, primary in time to folk-tales, then it is easy to see tales such as the Four Branches as de-sacralized narratives which still convey some of the symbolic forces of myth.'[36]

If, as Dumézil states, the function of a myth is 'to express dramatically the ideology under which a society lives', then the re-imaginings are expressing the ideologies of their time, not that of the medieval *Mabinogi*.[37] This thesis does not set out to examine whether the *Mabinogi* narratives should be labelled as myth or not. The important question for this study is: What kind of idea of a myth do many writers and poets construct with their re-imaginings? For this study it is significant that an overarching myth of the *Mabinogi* is created through the corpus.

Within Celtic Studies, and especially the Irish branch, a transition has taken place in the way these texts are approached, from the earliest readings of the medieval texts to today. This is generally termed the nativist and the non-nativist debate, which is, in essence, a divergence in the approach of the primary material, with a nativist reading looking to discover pre-Christian and pre-medieval characteristics in a mythological cycle, and a non-nativist reading situating the texts within their socio-historical environment and taking a more text-based approach.[38] This debate is not clear-cut; instead both schools overlap each other and both still exist, in muted forms, in academic discourse today. The earliest texts from the end of the nineteenth- and start of the twentieth century – such as John Rhys, *Lectures on*

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[35] Batt, 'Introduction', p. xi.
[36] Juliette Wood, 'The Horse in Welsh Folklore: A Boundary Image in Custom and Narrative', in *The Horse in Celtic Culture: Medieval Welsh Perspectives*, ed. by Sioned Davies and Nerys Ann Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 162-82 (p. 170).
[37] Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of the Warrior*, transl. by Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 3.
[38] For an overview, see Victoria Simmons, 'Nativism', in *Celtic Culture*, IV, pp. 1343-44.

the Origin and Growth of Religion (1888) and William J. Gruffydd, *Math vab Mathonwy* (1928) – saw in the characters remains of divinities and regarded the texts themselves as remnants of mythological cycles.[39] Later examples can be found in Gerard Murphy's *Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland* (1955) and Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson's *The Oldest Irish Tradition* (1964).[40] In 1977 Pronsias Mac Cana interpreted Rhiannon, Aranrhod and Blodeuwedd as 'literary reflexes of the Celtic goddess in some of her many aspects'.[41] Robert Graves also defined Rhiannon as 'a corruption of Rigantona' in *The White Goddess* (1948) [S13], and while his work has never been accepted in academic circles, it has been hugely influential in popular culture.[42] In contrast, non-nativist readings of these materials can be found in James Carney's *Studies in Early Irish Literature and History* (1955) and Kim McCone's *Pagan Past and Christian Present* (1990).[43] In the 1990s scholarship turned away from mythological and folklore-based readings to literary interpretations, such as Joanne Findon's *A Woman's Words* (1997), which examines the speech patterns of the female characters in the Ulster Cycle and situates these within medieval society.[44] For *Mabinogi* studies, a similar analysis can be found in Fiona Winward's

[39] Rhys, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*; Gruffydd, *Math vab Mathonwy: An Inquiry into the Origins and Development of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi, with the Text and a Translation* (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press Board, 1928).
[40] Murphy, *Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland* (Dublin: At the Sign of the Three Candles, 1955); Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964). See Jonathan M. Wooding, 'Reapproaching the Pagan Celtic Past – Anti-Nativism, Asterisk Reality and the Late-Antiquty Paradigm', *Studia Celtic Fennica*, 6 (2009), 61-74 for a recap of the debate.
[41] Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977), p. 55.
[42] Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (1948), ed. by Grevel Lindop, 4th edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 376.
[43] James Carney, *Studies in Early Irish Literature and History* (Dublin: DIAS, 1955). See Simmons, 'Nativism', p. 1344; Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, An Sagart: 1990).
[44] Joanne Findon, *A Woman's Words: Emer and Female Speech in the Ulster Cycle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

'Some Aspects of the Women in *The Four Branches*' (1997), in which, for example, the social roles of the female characters are analysed.[45]

Matthieu Boyd summarizes the complicated nature of the *Mabinogi*: '[…] it is part pre-Christian myth, part fairytale, part guide to how nobles should act (in the genre of the *Speculum Principum* or "Mirror for Princes"), and part dramatization of political and social issues that affect the real Wales in historical time.'[46] While Celtic scholars have now come to the general conclusion that these tales are not myths in the traditional sense, but works of literature to be studied in the same vein as contemporary medieval texts such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the perception of the *Mabinogi* as remnants of an older body of myths, unreliably transmitted, prevails. Even though the question remains as to how far the medieval redactor considered him/herself to be creating a work of literature, the merits of the narratives as 'literary texts' in their composition and style, renders the question unnecessary.[47]

A great influence in the establishment of 'Celtic' literature as evidence of a prehuman, primordial culture – 'instinct with the very breath of the primitive world' – as well as the idea of the Mabinogion as fragmented texts – 'the medieval storyteller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret' – was Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literatures*, published in 1867.[48] At the same time, Arnold was highly influential in showing the wealth and worth of the medieval

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[45] Fiona Winward, 'Some Aspects of the Women in *The Four Branches*', *CMCS*, 34 (1997), 79-106. See also Roberta L. Valente, 'Gwydion and Aranrhod: Crossing the Borders of Gender in *Math*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 35 (1988), 1-9; Sioned Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi= Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1993); Erica J. Sessle, 'Exploring the Limitations of the Sovereignty Goddess through the Role of Rhiannon', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* (hereafter PHCC), 14 (1994), 9-13.
[46] Boyd, *The Four Branches*, p. 10.
[47] On this question and in regard to medieval Irish texts, see Mark Williams, *Ireland's Imortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 76-78.
[48] Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature and Other Essays* (London: Dent & Sons, 1910), pp. 49 and 54.

material.[49] Yet, his work can be read as a simultaneous downgrading of the texts as well as a permission to take apart and alter. Indeed, in the 1901 volume *Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance and Folk-Lore*, Ivor B. John quotes the above passage by Arnold, stating with reference to the Mabinogion: 'These words of Matthew Arnold express with marvellous insight the impression left upon the reader by the medieval Welsh tales […].'[50] Ellis, author of *The Cauldron of Annwn* (1922) [D1] writes: 'I have a fancy that it was the very evasive nature of the tales which drew me to them; the queer vivid glimpse of ancient peoples, stirred by motives apparently inexplicable […]'.[51] Similarly, Ludwig Mühlhausen, editor of the German version *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (1925) [S8], notes: 'Von inhaltlicher Auseinandersetzung mit dem Stoff ist nichts zu spüren […]' (No thematic engagement with the material can be observed).[52] In academic circles, this approach is epitomized in the introduction to *The Mabinogion* (1949) [S12], in which Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones present the texts as 'mythology in decline and folklore'.[53]

Even in late twentieth-century versions, such as the theatre production 'On the Tongue of a Bird' (first performed in 1996) [D7]) the director notes: '[t]he original myth is curiously motiveless'.[54] While Batt writes in the introduction to his *Blodeuwedd* (2001) [Na1]: 'The simplicity of the narration gives the story immediacy, dignity, pathos: and this is what makes the story historically objective, standing free of the anonymous narrator, distanced by its own independence and use of past tense,

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[49] Fulton, 'Matthew Arnold and the Canon of Medieval Welsh Literature', p. 219.
[50] Ivor B. John, *Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance and Folk-Lore: No. 11* (London: Nutt, 1901), p. 1.
[51] Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, 'Preface', in Scott-Ellis, *The Cauldron of Annwn* (London: Werner Lauri, 1922), pp. v-xvii (p. ix).
[52] Ludwig Mühlhausen, *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi*, rev. by Stefan Zimmer (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), p. xii [my translation].
[53] Jones and Jones, 'Introduction', p. x.
[54] Derek Cobley, 'Director's Introduction', in 'On the Tongue of a Bird: The Story of Branwen', West Glamorgan Youth Theatre and Dance Company, first performed 1996 (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1998), pp. 9-18 (p. 11).

but linked, still, to the present, by a direct connection and that link is Welsh geography and Welsh topography.'[55] In Lloyd Jones' *See How They Run* (2012) [Na5], the text plays with the idea of the Celts as 'prone to disorder, like their myth cycles.'[56]

Indeed, Arnold's influence can be directly seen at the end of the twentieth century in Lloyd Alexander's description of the tales. He writes that the medieval tales have been 'irreparably tampered with, like so many pictures, old and new, cut apart and pasted every which way.'[57] In a recent review from 2017 of Matthew Francis' *The Mabinogi* [P10], Rowan Williams writes of the medieval Four Branches that '[…] they contain intense lyrical and elegiac emotion and incomprehensible survivals of what seems to be pre-Christian, pre-Roman mythical themes.'[58] Robert Graves, whose *The White Goddess* influenced several of the versions of the second half of the twentieth century, take this view of the fragmented nature of the *Mabinogi* further and exemplifies a method of copying and pasting: for a constructed poem he calls 'Hanes Blodeuwedd', he takes elements from *Cad Goddeu* ('The Battle of the Trees', a Middle Welsh poem from *The Book of Taliesin*), from the Fourth Branch, and other Mabinogion tales.[59]

While Arnold and subsequent literary and popular scholars of the early twentieth century, as well as writers of later re-imaginings as seen above, provide an impression of the fragmented nature of the texts, Graves' *The White Goddess* offers a troubling and questionable meaning and value – a poetic truth – which can be layered upon this fragmented collection. Garner [YA2], Cooper [YA4] and Alexander [YA3]

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[55] Batt, 'Introduction', p. ix.
[56] Lloyd Jones, *See How They Run* (Bridgend: Seren, 2012), p. 34.
[57] Lloyd Alexander, 'The Flat-Headed Muse', *Horn Book*, 41 (1965), 142-43.
[58] Williams, 'In the Court of King Arawn', *Literary Review*, 455 (July 2017), p. 35.
[59] On Graves' poetic method, see Matthew Smith, '"There is One Story and One Story Only": Robert Graves's Attempt to Spearhead a Literary Renaissance in 1940s Wales', *International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*, II (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 131-46.

have acknowledged direct influence from Graves; and it is safe to say that all of the texts published in the second half of the twentieth century belong to a tradition of viewing the *Mabinogi* established by Graves. Graves' text confirmed the medieval texts as a body of mythology in the (informed) popular imagination, just as Gruffydd did for Celtic Studies in the first half of the twentieth century, and Jackson in the 1960s.[60] The subtitle of his work, *A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, indicates the importance of three themes in Graves, which are given similar prominence in the three re-imaginings mentioned as well as in the entire corpus of re-imaginings: language, poetic license, and myth. The Welsh poet Sally Roberts Jones writes of Graves' influence on Conran being especially the concept of 'early Celtic mythology, the figure of the muse goddess and the duty of the poet.'[61] Graves writes: 'The poetic language of myth and symbol used in ancient Europe was not, in principle, a difficult one but became confused, with the passage of time, by frequent modifications due to religious, social and linguistic change, and by the tendency of history to taint the purity of myth […]'.[62] For the authors of the re-imaginings, the idea of the 'unpolluted' status of myth must have been a powerful draw; to re-establish the ancient myth, 'a vehicle of insight into a timeless realm of transcendental values'.[63]

The problematic angle of such an approach is debated by John Stephens and Robyn McCallum. In their discussion on classical myth, they write that 'the latent value of story is apt to be expressed in the cliché that myths embody timeless and universal significances, and this in turn is combined with the second significance

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[60] Jackson mapped story lines taken from the Four Branches onto international folktale motifs. Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961); Gruffydd, *Math*; Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*.
[61] Sally Roberts Jones, 'The Poet as Mentor', in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, ed. by Nigel Jenkins (Llanishen: Welsh Union of Writers, 1995), pp. 13-19 (p. 18).
[62] Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 97.
[63] Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. xii.

(again a cliché) commonly attributed to classical myth, namely that it forms part of "our" cultural heritage.'[64] These traits are recognizable in re-imaginings of the *Mabinogi*. Even before Graves, as is evident in the writings of Evangeline Walton (who published her first re-imagining in 1936) [N3], these ideas of primordial truths and a shared cultural heritage predominated. The *Mabinogi* is thus approached from the perspective of discovering its core, its essential meaning, which leads to possible mythical elements of the Four Branches being enhanced and other elements discarded.

It is vital to keep in mind that the medieval scribes were also re-fashioners of the *Mabinogi* – and authors in their own right of the Four Branches.[65] As Ian Hughes states on the Mabinogion, '[t]he result of this process of collecting and editing heterogeneous material is *Pedeir Keinc*, it was not the starting point.'[66] Poignantly, as E.P. Goldschmidt points out, for the medieval writers 'the exact point at which they ceased to be "scribes" and became "authors" was not at all clear.'[67] Discussing the Old Irish *Táin Bó Cuailnge* Ann Dooley describes 'three intersected issues that may be deemed to constitute the textual ground of the Táin: oral tradition; scribal literacy traditions, with their full baggage of Irish monastic literary interests; and finally […], individual invention.'[68] In a similar way, both the medieval and the later *Mabinogi* re-imaginings are constructed from the perception of the narratives themselves and the texts' oral origins, the writer's own cultural environment, and the individual purpose for their versions.

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[64] John Stephens and Robyn MacCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Culture* (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 63.
[65] On the redactor, see Jones and Jones, 'Introduction', p. xix.
[66] Ian Hughes, 'The King's Nephew', in *150 Jahre "Mabinogion" – Deutsch-Walisische Kulturebeziehungen,* ed. by Bernhard Maier and Stefan Zimmer with Christiane Batke (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 55-65 (p. 56).
[67] E.P. Goldschmidt, *Medieval Tales and their First Appearance in Print* (Oxford: Bibliographical Society at the University Press, 1943), p. 113.
[68] Dooley, *Playing the Hero: Reading the Irish Saga Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 101.

The Multifarious Nonhuman

In this thesis, the nonhuman is approached as a concept rather than a specific animal, supernatural being or a place in the landscape, for the abundant insight into the texts this definition can afford. The nonhuman is that which stands opposite the human, it is an idea that threads its way through the corpus, in the enlargement or rejection of it. In this corpus, the nonhuman resides in the otherworld, in the remote landscapes of Wales, in the Welsh language, and in the human characters themselves. The nonhuman in these texts stands in close proximity to ideas of the child, of nature, of myth and of Wales. In contrast to the argument that it is the human and moral element which has attracted so many writers and poets to the *Mabinogi*, this thesis will show that it is the nonhuman which stands at the heart of the re-imaginings.[69]

The nonhuman is at once feared and desired. Analogous to the figure of 'the outlaw in the wilderness', the nonhuman is 'a transgressive figure who highlights tensions and ambiguity in normative definitions of the human and the natural.'[70] The nonhuman is contained in the otherworld (Chapter One), it is sought out in remote places (Chapter Two), is placed within reach in the shape of a bird (Chapter Three), and the boundary seems finally to have been overcome in the shape of the woman of flowers (Chapter Four).

The nonhuman encompasses not simply animal, the nonhuman also comprises nature, super-nature and the artificial, bridging the divide between cyborgs and goddesses, and connecting 'the world of "artefacts/things" and the world of

[69] On the centrality of the human and moral element, see e.g. John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of the *Mabinogi*', *Landscapes*, 10.2 (Autumn 2009), 37-60 (p. 58); Emyr Humphries, *The Taliesin Tradition* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 2000), p. 25; Penny Thomas, 'New Series from the Mabinogion: Introduction', in Lloyd Jones, *See How They Run*, pp. 7-9 (p. 7).
[70] Sarah Harlan-Haughey, *The Ecology of the English Outlaw in Medieval Literature: Frem Fen to Greenwood* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 3.

"wild/raw/unmanufactured/undomesticated nature"'. [71] Like Timothy Morton's strange stranger, the nonhuman is almost beyond classification or categorization – it is foremost an idea, a concept, something that is desired and feared simultaneously.[72] These dramatic renderings of the nonhuman are staged against the backdrop of the questioning of Welsh identity, adding to the entanglement of individuality and collectivity as a species and as a people.

The nonhuman takes the form of the monstrous, the animal, the cyborg, the automaton, the more-than-human world, but equally the supernatural, the magical, the divine. They are all separate entities, but they are all linked through the idea of the nonhuman. The automaton is not uniquely an automaton, but a vegetal one. The animal is not solely an animal but a supernatural one.

The nonhuman in the re-imaginings has its basis in Romanticism.[73] Contested terms, such as nature, supernatural and artifice, are used to show this link, while also drawing attention to the relationships between these three terms in the context of the re-imaginings. Indeed, at first glance and on the surface it seems that a reading of the nonhuman, be it nature or the supernatural, must show that the re-imaginings propagate ideas directly influenced by Romanticism. The individual texts which make up this corpus are, in essence, reactionary. It *is*, in many ways, a romanticized view of the more-than-human world that they portray, and the perspective is ever into the mythic past.

Many studies of the re-imaginings – such as Kath Filmer-Davies' *Fantasy Fiction and Welsh Myth* or Donna White's *A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's*

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[71] Nina Lykke, 'Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science', in *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*, ed. by Lykke and Rosi Braidotti (London: Zed Books, 1996), pp. 13-29 (p. 22).
[72] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
[73] For a study on the nonhuman and Romanticism, see Catherine E. Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2004).

Literature – have highlighted the close relationship of the medieval texts to the tangible landscape of Wales, and the influence the physical geography has on the re-imaginings.[74] Analysing the specific idea of the nonhuman which pervades the corpus, this thesis will show that any connections the texts seem to entertain with the landscape of the *Mabinogi* are spurious.

While the term nonhuman is often used to denote nonhuman animals, this seems a limiting approach for this thesis, especially because it does not include the supernatural, one of the most prominent actors in the medieval as well as the modern texts. The term nonhuman is often utilized as an opposition to the human – when describing the nonhuman world – which is a useful construct here too.[75] While ecocritics continue to grapple and argue with the problematic terms of 'nature', 'culture', 'animal' and 'environment' for example, there is no point in not using and discussing these terms, if they accurately describe those concepts found in the relevant primary material. In other words, what is the point of stating that the concept of 'nature' must be removed from 'ecology', if 'nature' with all its difficult meanings is present in the texts analysed?[76]

Overall, it is vital to make the following point: Both medieval and modern texts dealt with here grapple with contemporary attitudes and beliefs, as indeed all literature does.[77] In no instance does this study wish to portray the medieval *Mabinogi* as a particularly 'green' text; that is, as a text which champions the nonhuman or the

[74] To date there has been only one book-length study of Celtic literature and its landscape that includes the *Mabinogi*, namely Siewer's *Strange Beauty* (2009).
[75] Examples abound, such as: Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, 'Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory', in *Material Feminisms*, ed. by Alaimo and Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 1-19; Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (New York: Macmillan, 2009); Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[76] See Morton, *Ecology Without Nature* for a discussion of the problems of 'nature', esp. the introduction 'Toward a Theory of Ecological Criticism', pp. 1-28.
[77] Ken Hiltner argues succinctly why literature is pivotal for environmental criticism. Hiltner, 'General Introduction', in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*, ed. by Hiltner (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. xii-xvi.

environment. Nor indeed does this study wish to represent the modern re-imaginings as 'ecocentric' or 'environmentally friendly'. Morton writes in his *Ecology Without Nature* that theory 'is not supposed to make you a "better person"', but '[i]t is supposed to expose hypocrisy, or if you prefer, to examine the ways in which ideological illusions maintain their grip.'[78] It is critical to point out that medieval society was wrestling with much the same concepts as we are today, even if the environment has changed radically. Indeed, the distance that is generally perceived between medieval society or indeed a pre-medieval world and today's is also a subject of many re-imaginings.

With regard to texts based on medieval Welsh stories, the concept of the nonhuman takes on a deeper meaning – leaning on the warped view, popular in the nineteenth and even twentieth century, of the 'Celtic' Welsh as 'other' and nonhuman. The publication of the *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales Appointed by the Committee of Council on Education* in 1847, also known as the Blue Books, which purported to examine the Welsh people and their lives and language, is an example of this.[79] The *Reports* became notorious for their demeaning and derogatory tone, such as comparing the Welsh language to the sounds of animals and their lifestyle to those of animals.[80] The feeling of betrayal, which arose from the Blue Books, emanated primarily from the association of 'educational deficiencies to Nonconformity, to the Welsh language and to the perceived characteristics of the Welsh people by methods which implied causal

[78] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, p. 12. See also Dana Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture and Literature in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 3.
[79] Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: Wales and Colonial Prejudice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 3.
[80] See Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*, p. 30.

connections'.[81] Therefore, the readings of the re-imaginings in this thesis will be attuned to moments when the historic-cultural environment of the texts becomes entwined with the constructed text worlds. For, to analyse what is nonhuman, one cannot ignore what has been labelled 'not human' outside of the texts.

The Nature of the Corpus

The corpus consists of ninety-four *Mabinogi* re-imaginings, ranging across all literary genres, including academic editions. The five book-length studies of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings published to date choose a limited number of texts to conduct their readings with, mostly concentrating on the English-language fantasy novels published from the 1960s to 80s [YA3, N3, YA4, YA2, and YA5].[82] This study aims to be all-encompassing as well as selective. This has been achieved by reading across the entire range of texts, while conducting close readings on those works most relevant for the individual chapters. Only by reading across all of the re-imaginings, can the industrial nature of the *Mabinogi* Effect, that is, the widespread creation and manufacture of a *Mabinog*i myth – be revealed.

The corpus of re-imaginings begins with the medieval version, continues with Guest's nineteenth-century version and ends with the most recent title, published in 2017. Seven distinct waves have been identified in this corpus; these will be shown in

[81] Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*, p. 210. For reactions against the Blue Books in Welsh language periodicals, see: *Y Diwygiwr*, 11 (1847/ 1848); *Dysgedydd Y Plant* (April, July 1847/ May 1848); *Yr Haul* (March 1847, April, August, September 1848); *Seren Gomer* (Jan, March, July, Oct 1847); *Y Traethodydd* (1849, July 1850). See *The Language of the Blue Books*, p. 210.

[82] White, *A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's Literature*; C.W. Sullivan III, *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989); Kath Filmer-Davies, *Fantasy Fiction and Welsh Myth: Tales of Belonging* (London: Macmillan, 1996); *Welsh Mythology and Folklore in Popular Culture: Essays on Adaptations in Literature, Film, Television and Digital Media*, ed. by Audrey L. Becker and Kristin Noone (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011); Dimitra Fimi, *Celtic Myth in Contemporary Children's Fantasy: Idealization, Identity, Ideology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

the conclusion of this thesis.[83] These waves reveal that the *Mabinogi* has become a fluent, malleable text, re-imagined anew for each generation, and with previous versions in mind.

The body of texts encompasses prose, verse and illustrations, texts marketed at children, young adults and adults, in English and in Welsh. Verbatim translations are included for their subtle linguistic interpretations, alongside fantasy re-imaginings that only use certain aspects of the medieval material. The majority of the non-academic re-imaginings, thirty-seven out of fifty-eight, are composed solely in the English language (while an additional seven are published in both English and Welsh), a topic which will be addressed throughout Chapter Two of this thesis.

The essential criteria for the selection of primary texts are their relevance to the medieval narratives as well as the role they play in the mythologization of the *Mabinogi*. Appendix One of this thesis gives a complete overview of the texts grouped according to genre.[84] The corpus begins, after Guest, with early scholarly editions – such as Isaac Foulkes' *Y Mabinogion Cymreig* (1880) [S2] – as well as children's versions from the 1880s and 90s – the first of these being Lanier's *The Boy's Mabinogion* (1881) [YA1]. From the beginning, the *Mabinogi* is linked with children's literature, and it is this genre which has had the most enduring appeal to re-imaginers throughout the history of the corpus. Children's versions, followed closely by academic translations, have generated regular publications from the end of the nineteenth century to the start of the twenty-first. This is indicative of the close relationship between the themes of myth, the nonhuman and the child which thread their way through the corpus.

[83] See 'The Corpus of the Mabinogi: Looking to the Past' in the conclusion.
[84] Square brackets in the text link to the entries in the appendix.

The end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century saw a wave of scholarly editions and translations appear and the first European versions in German [S7, S8] and French [S4]. 1930 saw the seminal Middle Welsh version *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* by Ifor Williams [S10] published, which remains to this day the primary edition. In the second half of the twentieth century the group of fantasy texts were published, which are the most well known of the versions. Among these are Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2], Alexander's *The Prydain Chronicles* (1964-8) [YA3] and Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising Sequence* (1965-77) [YA4].

The 1980s saw a number of poetry versions appear, which mostly chronicled the lives of the female characters of the Four Branches, such as verse by Gillian Clarke (1985) [P4, P7], Hilary Llewellyn-Williams (1987) [P5] and Tony Conran (1980s) [P6, D6]. The start of the twenty-first century saw the publication of a Seren series which sought to 'update' the *Mabinogi*, with postmodern texts such as Russel Celyn Jones' *The Ninth Wave* (2009) [Na3]. What becomes clear here already, however, is that the re-imaginings are in dialogue with each other, reacting against or with certain trends, and with contemporary cultural movements. The *Mabinogi* is a vehicle, equipped with certain characteristics which lend themselves to tell very specific narratives, as will be explored in the chapters of this thesis.

Appendix Two of this thesis provides a complete, chronological list of the texts, showing the development of the corpus, with the current number being ninety-four. This number includes thirty-five academic texts [appendix One, S1-35], four novels [N1-4], five Young Adult texts [YA1-5], five novellas [Na 1-5], one graphic novel [G1], eight plays [D1-8], eleven works of poetry [P1-11], and twenty-four children's illustrated texts [C1-24]. The scholarly editions are included in the corpus for reasons of comprehensiveness: they are not re-imaginings in the strictest sense,

since their objective, in most cases, is to provide a complete and faithful version of the Four Branches. However, they offer a view of the current cultural and academic trends of the period in which they were published, and therefore belong in the study of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings. Furthermore, they are, in many cases, the texts on which writers of later re-imaginings base their knowledge of the *Mabinogi*.

Apart from the scholarly editions, the corpus also includes texts which cannot be classified as re-imaginings without a caveat. Thus, Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising Sequence* (1965-77) [YA4] is included for two reasons, even though it is strictly speaking not a re-imagining: One, because it is traditionally included in studies which examine 'Welsh Myth', often discussed alongside Garner's *The Owl Service*, and therefore part of the corpus.[85] Two, because Cooper's *Sequence* makes use of elements from many different 'mythical' sources, one of which is the *Mabinogi* and the wider Mabinogion. As Dimitra Fimi argues for the inclusion of Cooper in her 'study of "Celtic" myth and Celticity', Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising Sequence* 'presents us with a specific incarnation of Arthur', namely 'the "Arthur of the Welsh" […].'[86]

There are a few other texts which are included in the corpus, which like *The Dark Is Rising Sequence* are not re-imaginings, but are incorporated for other reasons. One such text is a 1974 poem by Harri Webb called 'A Crown for Branwen' [P2], which references Branwen as a symbolic figure. Another example is George Moor's poem 'Moon-Rider' (1981) [P3], in which Rhiannon is portrayed as an emblematic divinity. Apart from the reasons outlined above, the inclusions of these non-re-imaginings allows for a complete presentation of the *Mabinogi* Effect, even outside of texts which actively re-fashion the Four Branches. Numerous fleeting references to

[85] See note 82.
[86] Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, p. 219.

the *Mabinogi* in theatre or poetry especially, are outside the scope of this thesis. Yet, some examples, like the two above, are included to give a representative idea of the wide-spread nature of the corpus.

It is testament to the wide-ranging effect which the *Mabinogi* texts have produced that there are ninety-four re-imaginings in seven languages (Welsh, English, German, French, Italian, Cornish and Polish). The seven other Middle Welsh narratives which Guest included in her wider Mabinogion have not received the same attention outside of Celtic and Welsh academic circles. Considering the storylines and correspondences with Arthurian romance of the seven tales, this is remarkable. This concentration on the *Mabinogi* texts is a twentieth-century development. The first nineteenth-century versions, as well as those written around the turn of the century, incorporate the entire eleven Mabinogion tales into their versions [S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, YA1, and C1]. Yet, the characters of the Four Branches in particular seem to have attracted a special fascination from the early stages of re-imaginings. The painter Christopher Williams rendered just three images from the Mabinogion in the early twentieth century: Ceridwen from the Tales of Taliesin, Branwen from the Second Branch and Blodeuwedd from the Fourth, indicating not only the prominence of the Four Branches but also the widespread fascination with the female characters especially, as will become evident throughout the chapters. Overall, while there are numerous literal versions which include the entire Mabinogion corpus in the academic versions in particular [S1-36], most fantastical or non-literal re-imaginings concentrate on the Four Branches.[87]

The corpus is, what one could call, an industry of re-imaginings, in that a central idea, that of the *Mabinogi* myth, is crafted by the individual versions and so

[87] See for example S1, S5, S9, and C1 which include all eleven Mabinogion tales.

manufactured on a large scale. The corpus needs to be regarded as a whole in order to tease out the creation and influence of the *Mabinogi* myth. Some versions are analysed in more depth than others, chosen for their prominent role in the crafting and propagation of the myth; some are, while included in the corpus, excluded from close analysis because they are texts produced for an academic readership, and as such, in their nature, resist the temptation for extensive re-imagining.

Approaching the Texts

The re-imaginings in this study are read within the corpus of the existing *Mabinogi* versions to date. They are analysed against this body of texts. Comparative reading between periods is the main mode of approach. Due to the large number of texts within the corpus, certain texts are highlighted and concentrated on in more depth than others. This choice is made deliberately, selecting representative texts, in order to give a full understanding of the complex nature and diverse texts which make up the corpus of re-imaginings. This is not a study which compares the general similarities and disparities between texts re-imagining the same source text. This study concentrates on a specific element found in all of these texts: that of the nonhuman. As Mark Williams writes in his study on the history of the Gods of Irish Myth: '[…] writing a long work of systematizing scholarship places the author in the alarming role of arch-ventriloquist, aiming to modulate sympathetically the voices of many writers – poets, annalists, antiquarians, monastics, and mystics – over fifteen hundred years. But it is precisely this long process of development and reclamation which makes the Irish gods so fascinating, and which is one reason for the book.'[88] For this study also, it is the fascination and consistency with which the *Mabinogi* have been

[88] Williams, *Ireland's Immortals*, p. xviii.

re-imagined over centuries, both within and outside Wales, which calls for a comprehensive study of this phenomenon.

The term 're-imagining' has been chosen primarily to describe the various versions of the *Mabinogi* for its link with the imagination, and because it does not hold the same connotations as 'rewriting', as Lyotard puts it, 'of starting the clock again from zero'.[89] The alternative term 're-vision' has also been rejected because it implies a critical approach to 'looking back', which as a corpus, the *Mabinogi* re-imaginings do not realize.[90] The wish to preserve or extract core values and/or truths from the *Mabinogi* stories means that many versions bypass current issues to preserve a certain 'timelessness'. And yet, on a political level some of the re-imaginings are indeed re-visions, but these singular cases, which will be discussed individually, stand out starkly against the corpus as a whole. Even while these labels are used for reasons of clarity, they should not distract from the fact that the work of the medieval storyteller is not a template, not a prototype to compare later versions to, but also a re-imagining of earlier versions.

The focus on the nonhuman developed organically, out of the fascination and anxiety found in the texts themselves with that which is not human. Ecocritical and posthumanist discourse provide the conceptual scaffolding in order to situate this study within a theoretical framework. But this thesis is foremost a work tracing the evolution of the *Mabinogi*, from medieval court narrative into myth. It does not do so chronologically, but thematically, for the creation of a myth is non-linear. This study sits between a work of reception – such as Williams' *Ireland's Immortals* – and a

[89] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, transl. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 26.
[90] On a definition of 're-vision', see Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision', *College English*, 34.1 (1972), 18-30 (p. 18).

thematic study – such as Fimi's *Celtic Myth* – in that it combines both a thematic reading of the texts as well as conceptualizing relevant socio-historical material.

Ecocriticism and posthuman discourse provide this thesis with a focus on the 'decentering of the human' from which to direct initial inquiries.[91] As Gillian Rudd writes in the introduction to her work *Greenery*, 'exploration of ideas [is] here conducted with the premise that the arguments need to be led by what is in the individual texts themselves, with the aim of revealing what ecocriticism can bring to the fore that is usually either relegated to the background or simply overlooked altogether.'[92] This thesis further takes its lead from an essay by Paul Sheehan entitled 'Posthuman Bodies' (2015) in which he undertakes close-readings of texts such as Shelley's *Frankenstein*, by 'looking to myth and the question of hybridity for cues, rather than to science and technology.'[93] Sheehan argues that it is 'myth, rather than science, that best illuminates and exemplifies' the 'principle of transformation' which defines the 'otherness' of the posthuman as the '*other than human*.'[94] This thesis is not arguing for a political rewriting of the nonhuman in the vein of Val Plumwood's work.[95] Instead, it considers the nonhuman in all its components: natural, supernatural, and artificial. Indeed, the close association of the mythical and the

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[91] Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. xvi. See also Helena Feder, 'Ecocriticism, Posthumanism, and the Biological Idea of Culture', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism,* ed. by Greg Garrard (NewYork: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 225-40.

[92] Gillian Rudd, *Greeney: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 4. For a similar approach, see Richard Kerridge, 'Introduction', in *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. by Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 1-9 (p. 5). See also Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 7-8.

[93] Paul Sheehan, 'Posthuman Bodies', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. by David Hillman and Ulrika Maude (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 245-60 (p. 246).

[94] Sheehan, 'Posthuman Bodies', p. 246. For the role of technology in the exploitation of nature, see for example Vandava Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed Books, 2002). In contrast, an argument for the inclusion of the urban can be found in Michael Bennett and David W. Teague, 'Urban Ecocriticism: Introduction', in *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments*, ed. by Bennett and Teague (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), pp. 3-14.

[95] See Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993).

nonhuman in the texts discussed here proves that this link must be considered when debating the nonhuman. Gillian Clarke writes on Bendigeidfran from the Second Branch: 'He embodies the power and strangeness of natural phenomena.'[96]

Each chapter considers texts from a wide range of periods; these socio-historical backgrounds necessarily form a part of the analysis. The chapters are not chronological, as they would be in a reception study, not historical, as they would be in a historicist work, but nonlinear and thematic. This enables the comparative narratological cross-reference between the many primary texts across periods, as well as the careful examination of the central themes. In addition, one of the main motifs which has emerged out of this study, as will become clear throughout the chapters, is the nonlinear approach to the medieval text of the *Mabinogi*. Transgressing linear time through the potency of the myth is a popular theme in many versions; stories are primarily connected to (imaginary) places, with a backward glance into the ever present past. This study does, however, follow the shift from author-text to text-reader, which reception theory sets up, in that the writers of the re-imaginings are the readers of the *Mabinogi* text.[97] Indeed, within each thematic chapter, the texts are approached with their chronological position in the corpus in mind. Further, the notion of a continuous exchange and development between text and reader, 'a never-completed unfolding of its [the work's] effective history', is an important aspect of the *Mabinogi* versions.[98]

One of the main quandaries to be addressed when writing a thesis on re-imaginings of a national Welsh treasure is how to marry the problematic historical

[96] Gillian Clarke, *At the Source* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), p. 15.
[97] See Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*, new edn (London: Routledge, 2003); Linda Hutcheon with Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
[98] Holub, *Reception Theory*, p. 148.

implications with the actual topics of the study, those of the texts themselves. Looking to previous studies in this area mentioned earlier, by White, Sullivan or Filmer-Davies, these texts tend to skirt around any historicist reading of the material, while in a more recent study, Fimi's *Celtic Myth* (2017), the socio-historical implications of the term 'Celtic' are made the subject of the study. For this thesis, while the focus lies on the primary texts, the socio-historical background of each text is deemed a vital feature of the analysis, and the primary texts themselves are acknowledged as works of reception. Therefore, while the texts are taken as the starting and ending points of the analysis, the wider historical implications of the international scope of texts must also be taken into account. As Karen E. Waldron writes: 'Close reading here is not simply the skill of focusing *in* but the skill of focusing *both in and out*.'[99]

The Chapters: Function and Content

The starting point for every chapter in this thesis is the medieval text. From there, each chapter progresses chronologically through the corpus, while keeping the genres of the various re-imaginings in mind. The two appendixes at the end of this thesis reflect this. The themes of all four chapters are not only selected for their relevance to the overarching topic, but also for their prominence in Celtic Studies. This thesis will also chronicle the changing academic approach to the *Mabinogi*, drawing parallels between the preoccupations of the literature and those of the critics. The chapters show the dominance of the nonhuman – otherworlds, place names, transformations and the culmination of all those: the woman made from flowers – and they illustrate the obsession with that which is not quite human which threads its way through the

[99] Karen E. Waldron, 'Introduction: Toward a Literary Ecology through American Literary Realism and Naturalism', in *Towards a Literary Ecology: Places and Spaces in American Literature*, ed. by Waldron and Rob Friedman (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2013), pp. xv- xxxix (p. xxvii).

re-imaginings. Overall, the four chapters progress from an all-encompassing reading of the margins of the nonhuman and the idea of the otherworld in Chapter One, to a close focus on one of the characters from the *Mabinogi* in Chapter Four: the creation of Blodeuwedd.

Chapter One begins by considering the perception of the mythic otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi* as a whole and its transferral to Wales itself, revealing that the otherworld is a construct used in the re-imaginings to create a non-specific, origin story in some versions, and a 'Celtic' narrative in others, while those which wish to update the *Mabinogi*, reject the otherworld construct entirely. Chapter Two discusses the use of place-names to distance the *Mabinogi* from its geography, creating a nonhuman, rural landscape in the process. This is countered in more recent re-imaginings which reject the place-names established by earlier fantasy versions. Chapter Three considers interspecies transformations and relationships, exposing the specific impulses – such as the coding of Nature as female – in the anxiety and fascination of the nonhuman prevalent in the corpus. Chapter Four focuses on a close-up of the creation of Blodeuwedd, the woman made from flowers, and discusses her as a vegetal automaton, revealing the fear of the nonhuman in the human itself.

Each chapter considers a representative number of texts from the corpus, while also focusing on those texts which interact meaningfully with the topic discussed. Thus, in Chapter One the fantasy texts are analysed in detail, in Chapter Two English-language versions are focused on, Chapter Three emphasizes drama and verse, while Chapter Four includes all genres.

Each chapter analyses one aspect of the *Mabinogi* Effect, of the specific way the *Mabinogi* is approached through the belief that the narratives are mythic. From

Chapter One to Four, the creation of the *Mabinogi* myth is scrutinized, presenting a comprehensive picture of the re-imaginings corpus, showing that it is, in essence, an industry of *Mabinogi* versions. At the centre of each chapter stands the nonhuman, the nature of which will be teased out in the analysis of the otherworld and otherworldliness, of place-names and language, of birds and beasts, and culminating in the woman created out of flowers, the ultimate nonhuman-human hybrid. Alongside these enquiries into what the nonhuman represents in this corpus, questions about what it means to be human are necessarily posed; each chapter probes the human-nonhuman divide: what is 'other', language, animal, and what is a woman made of flowers?

1. 'And for the spoils of Annwn gloomily he sings:' The Idea of the Otherworld, the Margins of the Nonhuman and the Myth of Wales

Otherworldliness is inherent in the *Mabinogi* corpus, for it is a compendium of tales which are set in another time, another place. The otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi* springs from its unknown creation story, its unknown creators, as well as its sparse prose and references to a mostly unknown parallel narrative network.[1] This otherworldliness is sometimes blatantly exploited in the re-imaginings, creating versions which are works of high fantasy; sometimes it is barely referred to, yet it lingers within the corpus, a constant backdrop against which every new version must define itself.

The perception that the *Mabinogi* stories are myths or texts with mythic remnants stems from this otherworldliness, this strangeness, this quality of the unknown. In turn, one of the consequences of approaching these texts as mythic entities can be seen in the creation of specific otherworlds in some versions, as well as the nonexistence of otherworlds in others. This is the first *Mabinogi* Effect examined here. The otherworld, as a traditional marker for a mythic story, becomes an important place of observation.[2]

The otherworld, however, does not exist as a specific, easily definable space in this corpus. Rather, it takes on a myriad number of forms: in Alexander's *Prydain*

[1] On the question of authorship of the *Mabinogi*, see Hughes, 'Introduction', in *Math*, pp. xxi-xxiii for a summary of the debate.
[2] On the otherworld as a marker for specific stories, see e.g. the essays in *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, 2 vols, ed. by Bruce Stewart (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998); Siewers, *Strange Beauty*.

(1964-8) [YA3], the otherworld is a clearly defined geographical location inhabited by otherworldly creatures, while in Katy Cawkwell's *The Story of Rhiannon* (2007) [C19] it is a parallel secondary world, occupying grass-covered mounds and inhabited by divinities or fairies, and set apart through time and not through space. In Walton's *Prince of Annwn* (1974) [N3] it is a monster-filled place of the undead and the gods, and in Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2] it does not exist as a space at all; instead Blodeuwedd, a character from the *Mabinogi*, is an otherworldly, invisible, unknowable entity who haunts the female characters.

All of these differences point to the otherworld being understood as a construct, as an idea, rather than a specific place. Reading the otherworld in the *Mabinogi* corpus as a concept rather than a location, can reveal what modes of thought are rejected and which are supplemented in the different versions. This otherworld construct created in the re-imaginings will be compared with what is called the 'otherworld' in the earliest, the medieval version. In fact, as this chapter will show, no *other*world exists in the medieval version. The otherworld concepts found in later re-imaginings have been created purposely to suit the specific stories they want to tell. For many of the re-imaginings the concept of an otherworld opens up the possibility of taking hold of the *Mabinogi* narratives, of possessing the stories within an imagined and mythic text world. For non-Welsh versions, in which the otherworld is especially prominent, this concept allows for a text world divorced from any actual geographical location.

Overall, the otherworld trope in the corpus of re-imaginings can be defined as a notion steeped in imagined mythological traits, which always encompasses an otherworldly nonhuman entity, often a fantastical setting and frequently the fictional concept of the 'Celtic'. The 'Celtic' otherworld is part and parcel of the idea of

'Celtic' myth, and the idea of a 'Celtic' otherworld pervades both the popular imagination and some scholarship as will be shown below. As will be discussed in this chapter, a 'Celtic' otherworld enables a re-fashioning of the *Mabinogi* without the consequences of a Welsh background. Crucially, in the medieval *Mabinogi* the popular definition of the 'Celtic' otherworld, as a specific place found in medieval Welsh and Irish texts and demarcated by certain features, does not appear at all.[3]

These otherworld creations are one of the results of reading the *Mabinogi* as a myth – one of the several consequences that this thesis has termed the *Mabinogi* Effect.[4]

The prominence of the otherworld trope in many re-imaginings demonstrates the importance of the nonhuman concept. As Morton writes, '[h]umans maintain the human-animal boundary by erecting rigid walls made of quasi-humans, humanoids, hominids, ambiguous nonhumans, or unhumans.'[5] The otherworld provides the re-imaginings with a place to contain and question ontologically ambiguous aspects of the nonhuman. In this chapter the nonhuman takes the shape of the otherworld itself and its inhabitants. Moving through the chapters of this thesis, it will become evident that the human-nonhuman boundary in the corpus is at once desired and feared. By erecting an otherworld, an attempt is made to contain certain nonhuman creatures, but at the same time the otherworldly nonhuman acts out a particular fascination. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes: 'The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us. In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is

[3] On the difficulty of defining the medieval Irish and Welsh otherworlds, see Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms,' in *Celtic Languages, Celtic Peoples: A Festschrift for Eric P. Hamp*, ed. by A.T.E. Matonis and Daniel F. Melia (California: Van Nuys, 1990), pp. 57-84. For an overview of the otherworld in the Celtic tradition, see John Carey, 'Otherworld,' in *Celtic Culture*, IV, pp. 1403-06.
[4] On the definition of the *Mabinogi* Effect, see p. 3.
[5] Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, p. 88.

an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant but originate Within.'[6] Comparably to Cohen's monster, the nonhuman found in the re-imaginings embodies the wish to be kept at a distance and to be simultaneously drawn in.

The overwhelming number of re-imaginings which create an otherworld construct, are English-language texts. Out of the fifty-eight re-imaginings, excluding the thirty-six scholarly publications, which for obvious reasons, stay close to the medieval text, twenty-one are Welsh-language versions (seven out of those are published in both English and Welsh).[7] Out of those twenty-one, not one version has an enlarged and defined otherworld, distinct from the thisworld. However, out of those twenty-one, fifteen are children's editions, which necessary to their genre are shortened in style and form, which conditions the number of expanded otherworlds. The other five Welsh-language versions are Saunders Lewis' plays 'Blodeuwedd' (1923-5) [D3], 'Branwen' (1975) [D5] and 'Eisteddfod Bodran'/ 'Gan Byll' (1952) [D4], Robert Williams Parry's poem 'Drudwy Branwen' (1952) [P1] and Mike Collins' graphic novel *Y Mabinogi* (2002) [G1]. The graphic novel is the only Welsh text which creates an otherworld out of the entire world of the *Mabinogi* into which the modern-day characters enter. However, several of the Welsh-language children's versions use 'Celtic' markers to create an otherworld of their entire text world and, in extension, of Wales.

In contrast, in texts in which Welsh is a strange tongue, the otherworld is especially prominent. Ten of the thirty-seven English-language versions (this number excludes the seven versions in both languages, see above) construct an enlarged

[6] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 3-25 (p. 7).
[7] Those seven are: D3, P1, C10, C15, C16, C17, and C24.

otherworld. The otherworld construct and the perceived otherness of Wales are, as we will see, in direct correlation with each other. The otherworld in these versions exemplifies the dissonance, the disconnect between the medieval, local tale, and the universal, often archetypal myth of the *Mabinogi* the re-imaginings create.

The first part of this chapter discusses the definition of the 'Celtic' otherworld and shows that it is not present in the earliest, medieval re-imagining of the *Mabinogi*. It then analyses some of the otherworlds existent in later versions, both by Welsh and non-Welsh writers, laying bare what kind of world these versions are building. The last section of this chapter takes a closer look at the otherworldly creatures inhabiting these otherworlds and what modes of thought are rejected through these nonhuman entities. The otherworld, perhaps more so than any other characteristic of the *Mabinogi*, is both a concept found in the different versions, and an idea which applies to the indistinct world of the *Mabinogi* in general: the writers, poets and illustrators enter a magical, otherworldly realm when approaching the material.

Celtic Otherworlds: What is the Otherworld?

The imprecise term 'Celtic otherworld' generally refers to secondary worlds found in Irish and Welsh medieval and modern literature and folklore. Certain shared characteristics, which are explored below, mean that the term is applied to a wide range of texts, and that, in popular culture, it has gained both political and cultural meanings which are made use of in the corpus of re-imaginings. Comparing the ambiguous concept of the otherworld in the Welsh and Irish tradition, we can ask how this otherworld relates to the one found in the medieval *Mabinogi*.

In the Irish tradition, the otherworld is a realm of the *not living*, which is often both geographically and temporally separated from the thisworld.[8] Here the otherworld is a specifically demarcated place, where time has a different (or no) meaning and where the inhabitants are definitely not human.[9] There is Conle who follows a fairy woman to the otherworld and never returns, or the tale of Finn's visit to a fairy hill, or Oisín's journey over the sea into fairy land. In modern re-imaginings of medieval Irish tales, this concept of a timeless place is continued.[10] In *The New Policeman* by Kate Thompson, published in 2005, JJ Liddy enters fairyland through a traditional fairy hill, in which time stands still.[11] The otherworld in the Irish canon is also clearly demarcated from the mortal world through an enlargement of landscape features, inhabitants' characteristics or through the situatedness of the world in a specific place recognizable for its otherworldly location. 'Otherworld beings are depicted as living within hills, beneath lakes, or the sea, or on islands in lakes or off the coast'.[12]

In the Welsh tradition the otherworld is generally entitled *Annwfn* or *Annwuyn*; in Modern Welsh it is *Annwn*. The term is composed of the root *dwfyn* meaning first

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[8] James E. Doan, 'The Otherworld Journey: A Celtic and Universal Theme', in *That Other World*, ed. by Stewart, I, pp. 49-65 (p. 50).

[9] See for example *The Voyage of Bran* (*Immram Brain*). Kuno Meyer, *The Voyage of Bran, son of Febal, to the Land of the Living: An Old Irish Saga*, 2 vols (London: David Nutt, 1895-1897). For a comparative study of Irish and Welsh Otherworlds, see Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For a discussion of the otherworld in *Immram Brain*, see Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The Sinless Otherworld of Immram Brain', *Ériu*, 27 (1976), 95-115.

[10] For the otherworld in contemporary Irish Literature see the essays in the collections *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts, vols. 1 & 2*, ed. by Stewart.

[11] Thompson, *The New Policeman* (London: Red Fox Books, 2005).

[12] John Carey, 'The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition', in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. by Jonathan M. Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 113-19 (pp. 116-17). On the 'Celtic' otherworld see also John Carey, 'Time, Space and the Otherworld', *PHCC*, 7 (1987), 1-27 (pp. 6-7); Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, trans. by Myles Dillon (London: Methuen, 1949).

'deep' and later 'world', with the prefix as either *ande-* 'in' or *an-* 'not, un'.[13] We will encounter one re-imagining, Matthew Francis' *The Mabinogi* (2017) [P10], which uses the term 'Unworld' to denote his otherworld, but a far more common concept of the otherworld is that of a separate, often darker place. Patrick Sims-Williams states that '[o]ur useful, but probably misleading, modern term *Otherworld* seems to derive partly from unconscious analogy with the Christian dichotomy of *this world*/ *the other world*'.[14] In 1911 J.A. MacCulloch writes of the conflicting meanings of the term *Annwfn*, generally denoting 'an abyss' or 'beneath the earth,' but he states that this description does not at all match the *Annwfn* in the *Mabinogi*, 'save in so far as it has been confused by Christian redactors with hell […].'[15]

Within Welsh folklore, the otherworld itself is usually called *Annwfn*, or a version of that name, and it exists predominantly underground and is home to either the dead or the *not human* and *not living*.[16] A brief perusal of varying Welsh sources, from the twelfth century to today, show different images of the otherworld, yet in all examples the otherworld is a distinctly separate place. In the twelfth century, Gerald of Wales records the story of the encounter of a young boy with the land of fairy, which is described as situated underground and wonderful to behold.[17] The fairies lead the boy:

> *per viam primo subterraneam et tenebrosam, usque in terram pulcherrimam, fluviis et pratis, silvis et planis distinctissimam, obscuram tamen, et aperto solari lumine non illustratam.*

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[13] Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', p. 62; Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature*, p. 57; Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 100; John T. Koch, 'Annwn/ Annwfn', in *Celtic Culture*, I, p. 75; Rachel Bromwich and Simon D. Evans, *Culhwch and Olwen: An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale* (Cardiff: University Press, 1992), p. 135.
[14] Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', p. 60.
[15] J.A. MacCulloch, *The Religion of the Ancient Celts* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1911), p. 367.
[16] For the location of the Otherworld, see Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', pp. 57-84.
[17] For a discussion of fairy in Welsh tradition and this tale, see Robin Gwyndaf, 'Fairylore: Memorates and Legends from Welsh Oral Tradition', in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. by Peter Narváez (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), pp. 155-95.

> (through a dark underground tunnel and then into a most attractive country, where there were lovely rivers and meadows, and delightful woodlands and plains. It was rather dark, because the sun did not shine there.)[18]

The poem *Preiddeu Annwn* (The Spoils of Annwn), found in the fourteenth-century Book of Taliesin (*Llyfr Taliesin*), briefly mentions Annwn, attributing negative connotations to the term: *A rhac Preiddieu Annwn tost yt geni / Ac yd frwd parahawd yn barddweddi* ('And for the spoils of Annwn gloomily he sings, / And till doom shall continue his lay').[19] In the medieval Mabinogion's *Culhwch ac Olwen* ('How Culhwch won Olwen', not part of the *Mabinogi* proper) the character Ysbaddaden Bencawr speaks of the *dieuyl Annwuyn* ('demons of Annwfn') in direct opposition to God: *Duw aryal dieuyl Annwuyn yndaw rac rewinnyaw y bressen* ('God has put the spirit of the demons of Annwfn in him').[20] In her nineteenth-century translation of the *Mabinogi* Guest herself describes the otherworld as 'the Lower regions', while in his 1910 collection of *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race* T.W. Rolleston classes *Annwfn* as denoting Hades or Fairyland, Abyss or Chaos.[21] In a version of the folktale *Tylwyth Teg (The Fairies) of Pentrefoelas*, *Annwfn* has a very specific location. Called the 'underworld' it 'is close to the surface, near the village of Pentrefoelas' and the home of the Tylwyth Teg, 'who are neither good nor bad'.[22] Finally, the extensive collection of stories in *The Welsh Fairy Book*, first published by W. Jenkyn Thomas in 1907, shows that the otherworld of fairies features heavily in Welsh folktales.[23]

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[18] *Giraldi Cambriensis*, ed. by James Dimock, 8 vols (London: Longmans and Dyer, 1868), VI: 'Itinerarium Kambriae et Descriptio Kambriae', I. 8 (p. 75); Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales; and the Description of Wales*, transl. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1978), I. 8, pp. 130-34 (p. 133-34).
[19] 'Preiddeu Annwn' in *Taliesin or The Bards and Druids of Britain*, transl. by D.W. Nash (London: Smith, 1858), pp. 211-14.
[20] Bromwich and Evans, *Culhwch and Olwen*, ll. 714-15 (p. 27); Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 199.
[21] Guest, *Mabinogion*, III (1849), p. 75; Rolleston, *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*, pp. 333, 422.
[22] Graham Watkins, *Walking with Welsh Legends: North-Eastern Wales* (Llwyndyrys: Llygad Gwalch, 2013), pp. 121-27.
[23] William Jenkyn Thomas, *The Welsh Fairy Book* (New York: Dover, 2001).

Adding to these diverse images of the otherworld in the Welsh tradition, the question of the King or ruler of this realm is also open to debate. The folklore historian and poet Robin Gwyndaf names Gwyn ap Nudd as the King of *Annwfn*, which he titles the 'Underworld' or 'the deep'.[24] Yet, Erich Poppe mentions Gwyn ap Nudd only once in connection with *Annwfn*: he appears as king of the otherworld in the *Life of St Collen*, from the 1536 Hafod MS 19.[25] Both Gwyn ap Nudd and Arawn occur prominently in Welsh folklore as the rulers of the otherworld. Arawn and his hounds appear in the folktale of *Mallt-y-Nos* (Matilda of the Night): Matilda loves to hunt and says one day that she did not want to go to heaven if she could not hunt there, and so is doomed to ride with Arawn after her death.[26] The entry for 'Nantmel, Powys' in his *Chwedlau Gwerin Cymru* (Welsh Folktales) by Robin Gwyndaf tells of Llyn Gwyn which is connected to Gwyn ap Nudd, 'King of the Fairies and Lord of the Underworld'.[27] In John Rhys' 1901 *Celtic Folkore*, Gwyn ap Nud (spelled here with one 'd') is cited in a story by John Pughe published in the *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1853, in which Gwyn ap Nud is described as 'the mythic king of the fabled realm', Annwn, in connection with a folktale about a 'stray cow of Llyn Barfog'.[28] Rhys notes, however, that he cannot 'vouch for the accuracy of Mr Pughe's rendering of this [*Annwn*] and the other Welsh names which he has introduced: that involves difficult questions'.[29] Finally, in *Culhwch ac Olwen* (part of the wider

[24] Gwyndaf, 'Fairylore', p. 160.
[25] Erich Poppe, 'Nōdons/ Nuadu/ Nudd', in *Celtic Culture*, IV, pp. 1359-61 (p. 1360); Cardiff, Central Library, MS 2.629 (RMWL Hafod 19).
[26] Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-lore and Folk-stories of Wales* (London: Stock, 1909), p. 49.
[27] Robin Gwyndaf, *Chwedlau Gwerin Cymru* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1989), pp. 69 and 73.
[28] John Pughe, 'Gwragedd Annwn – The Dames of Elfin Land: A Legend of Llyn Barfog', in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 4 (1853), 201-05 (p. 203). Cited in John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 141-46.
[29] Rhys, *Celtic Folklore*, p. 143, n. 1.

Mabinogion mentioned above), Gwyn ap Nudd is to be found as one of Arthur's men.[30]

Even though there is no homogenous otherworld in the Irish and Welsh traditions, one characteristic can be found in all examples: that of a separate *other*world, whether geographically, locationally or temporally distinguishable from the thisworld.

Considering the examples from Irish and Welsh medieval and folklore texts given above, one could conceivably speak of a 'Celtic' otherworld, in that these secondary worlds share this one characteristic. However, the *Mabinogi* narratives that are the subject of this thesis – generally classed as late eleventh- or early twelfth-century texts, albeit surviving in fourteenth-century manuscripts – are an exception.[31] While the term *Mabinogi* relates to the wider name Mabinogion as given to the eleven tales by Guest, the *Mabinogi* proper or the Four Branches, show many distinct features which do not occur in the other seven narratives. One of these is the construct of an otherworld which is, in general, not separate from the thisworld. Confusingly however, it is also called *Annwuyn*. Yet, it possesses no deathly implications, it is simply a neighbouring country, and certainly entertains no association with hell, the fairies or an 'underworld.' Instead, as will be shown below, the concept of *Annwuyn* – and it is never made clear what this term actually denotes in the text world of the *Mabinogi* – is used to showcase various social dramas. One could further argue that the redactor of the medieval version deliberately constructed a wondrous world without an otherworld, in order to create a Wales which is full of wonder. As Sioned Davies has argued, the author of the Branches writes their own version of the material

[30] Bromwich and Evans, *Culhwch and Olwen*, ll. 713-14 (p. 26-27), see also p. 134; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 184.
[31] See Introduction, 'The Myth of the Mabinogi'.

they have on hand, and updates it for their own time.[32] Indeed, the redactor's glance into an idealized past thus mirrors that of many re-imaginings of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries.

Yet the notion of a concrete otherworld found in the medieval *Mabinogi* suffuses some scholarship.[33] In his *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (2009) – the first and to date only book-length environmental study of medieval Celtic material which includes the Four Branches – Alfred K. Siewers undertakes an ecocritical reading of the 'Otherworld trope' in what he calls 'early Irish Sea narratives', conflating the otherworlds of Irish texts such as *Tochmarc Étaíne* with that of the medieval *Mabinogi*.[34] As Barry J. Lewis points out in his review of Siewers, the otherworld in medieval Welsh literature is a 'contentious trope', and thus the reading of an imagined geography of it in itself arguably impossible.[35] The depth of the association of the *Mabinogi*'s *Annwuyn* with an underworld can be seen in the blurb of Russell Celyn Jones' *The Ninth Wave* [Na3], a 2009 re-imagining of the First Branch, which takes its title from Taliesin's *Kat*

[32] Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-visiting the *Mabinogi*', in *Writing Down the Myths*, ed. by Joseph Falaky Nagy, CURSOR 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 157-79.
[33] See e.g. Christa Maria Löffler, *The Voyage to the Otherworld Island in Early Irish Literature*, 2 vols (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1983), I-II, p. 332. It has even been suggested that Annwfn 'corresponds to the Overworld, the world of heavenly constellations.' E.A. Rees, *The Mabinogi Decoded* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2012), p. 28.
[34] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*. See also Doan, 'The Otherworld Journey: A Celtic and Universal Theme', which discusses Irish and Welsh otherworlds under the umbrella term of 'Celtic' (not mentioning the *Mabinogi* however). There have been a number of studies on the environment in the Middle Ages and its literature, see for example Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (London: Elek, 1973); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1983); *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* ed. by Barbara Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008); Sarah Stanbury, 'Ecochaucer: Green Ethics and Medieval Literature', *The Chaucer Review*, 39.1 (2004), 1-16; William E. Woods, 'Nature and the Inner Man in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *The Chaucer Review*, 36.3 (2002), 209-27; Francesco Benozzo, *Landscape Perception in Early Celtic Literature* (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies, 2004); Corinne Dale, *The Natural World in the Exeter Book Riddles* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017).
[35] Barry J. Lewis, 'Celtic Ecocriticism', *CMCS*, 59 (Summer 2010), 71-81 (p. 74).

Godeu.[36] Jones' re-imagining is a dystopian work and Wales a world in which medieval customs mix with guns and motorways. No otherworld is visible in this version. Arawn, a king of *Annwuyn* in the medieval *Mabinogi*, is here a neighbouring ruler and his realm is 'the land east of the river'.[37] The blurb on the back cover, however, claims Arawn as 'the king of the underworld.' While we can assume that Jones might have had a say in the formulation of this, it is equally likely that using the term 'underworld' is a marketing ploy, designed to provide a recognizable context in the form of the otherworldly *Annwuyn* found in Welsh folklore, and is not a reflection of the actual novella. As we will see, the *Annwuyn* of the medieval *Mabinogi* is a very different place.

The Medieval Mabinogi's Hybrid World

In contrast to the 'Celtic otherworld' found in Irish and Welsh folklore texts, the medieval *Mabinogi* does not construct a recognizable otherworld. Instead, a single text world is created in which courtly behaviour and etiquette stand at the forefront of any interaction between characters. This is all the more remarkable for the fact that the otherworld is such a prominent feature in so many re-imaginings. Comparing the medieval 'otherworld' to those of the later versions, the extent of the divergence between early and later texts becomes evident. The otherworld, if one can rightly call it that, for a distinct *other*world does not exist in the medieval version – certainly the distinctions between humans and otherworldly creatures cannot be made here – is only an otherworld because it is named *Annwuyn/ Annwn/ Annwfn* which has come to be identified with the meaning of an *other*world in *other* texts, especially *later* ones,

[36] *Kat Godeu* (Book of Taliesin 23.9-27.12), l. 162. Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, 2nd edn (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2015), p. 182.
[37] Russel Celyn Jones, *The Ninth Wave* (Bridgend: Seren, 2000), p. 22.

such as the folktales outlined above.[38] The interaction between Pwyll Prince of Dyfed and Arawn king of Annwfn in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi* shows that this is a version which wishes to emphasize the Welsh court as a wide-ranging and international environment firmly rooted in courtly customs, while at the same time evoking an earlier, possibly more magical era. As Jeffrey Gantz writes, the redactor aims to portray 'a misty Celtic past of has been and never was.'[39] Thus, any interaction with the place called *Annwuyn* serves to showcase certain behavioural patterns and customs.

The First Branch [B1] follows the story of *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* (Pwyll Prince of Dyfed), as he exchanges places with *Arawn urenhin Annwuyn* (Arawn king of Annwfn) and meets his future wife Rhiannon.[40] Their son Pryderi is stolen from them, but they are reunited at the end of the Branch. At the start of this tale, Pwyll is out hunting on his land, where he encounters the strange-looking hounds of Arawn in a forest clearing.[41] *Ac o'r a welsei ef o helgwn y byt, ny welsei cwn un lliw ac wynt*. ('And of all the hounds he had seen in the world, he had never seen dogs of this colour […].')[42] Pwyll drives Arawn's dogs away without realising whose they are, because they had brought down the stag he was hunting, and puts his own dogs to feed on the prey. Arawn arrives and chastises Pwyll for his deeply discourteous behaviour.

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[38] For example in the First Branch Arawn introduces himself as *Arawn urenhin Annwuyn*; in the Fourth Branch we have Arawn called *Arawn Urenhin Annwn.* Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 2 and 68. See also Williams' note on Annwuyn, Annwn, p. 99, n. 25. Sioned Davies uses the term *Annwfn* in her translation which will be used here, unless, for etymological reasons, it is necessary to use a different version.

[39] Jeffrey Gantz, *The Mabinogio*n (New York: Dorset Press, 1976), p. 10.

[40] The motif of kings exchanging their forms is listed as D45.1 'Kings exchange forms and kingdoms for a year' in *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: a Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, ed. by Stith Thompson, 6 vols (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex Corporation, 2000), II, p. 11.

[41] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 1-2.

[42] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.

At this point we have two rulers with their pack of dogs happening upon each other on the border of their two realms. One pack of dogs is distinctly supernatural: They are white in colour with red ears, which regularly indicate unearthly animals in Welsh folklore: *[s]ef lliw oed arnunt, claerwyn llathreit, ac eu clusteu yn gochyon.* ('[…] they were a gleaming shining white, and their ears were red.').[43] This is a complex social situation, which demonstrates Pwyll's lack of manners, or at least, his lack of awareness of the correct behaviour. The magical flavour only adds interest to this highly political situation. After Pwyll has agreed to compensate Arawn for his irregular behaviour by fighting Arawn's enemy, Arawn magically exchanges their forms, so that they take on each other's appearance. Pwyll travels to Arawn's court and is shown to be overwhelmed by its richness and beauty, which provides an opportunity for the author to elaborate on the social structure of the place:

> *Ac yn llys ef a welei hundyeu ac yneuadeu, ac ysteuyll, a'r ardurn teccaf a welsei neb o adeildadeu. Ac y'r neuad y gyrchwys y diarchenu. Ef a doeth makwyueit a gueisson ieueinc y diarchenu, a phaup ual y delynt kyuarch guell a wneynt idaw.*
>
> (He saw sleeping-quarters there and halls and rooms and the most beautifully adorned buildings that anyone had seen. And he went to the hall to take off his boots. Chamberlains and young lads came to remove his boots, and everyone greeted him as they arrived.)[44]

The formula *a welsei neb* – also seen as *ny welsynt eiryoet* ('they had never seen') – is used regularly to denote a wondrous and/or supernatural event in medieval Welsh literature.[45] It is seen for example in the Third Branch when Pryderi, Manawydan, Rhiannon and Cigfa wander through Dyfed: *Ac wrth rodyaw y wlat ny welsynt eiryoet*

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[43] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.
'[R]ed and white are colours traditionally associated with the supernatural in Welsh and Irish tradition'. Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 228. See for example 'the devil dogs' in the folktale *The Devil Dogs of Marchwiel*, in Graham Watkins, *Walking with Welsh Legends: North-Eastern Wales*, pp. 95-103.
[44] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 4; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 5.
[45] See Sioned Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, p. 30 for the relationship between oral storytelling and formula.

wlat gyuanhedach no hi [...] ('As they wandered through the land they had never seen a place more pleasant to live in […]').[46] Another example is found in a scene in *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* ('The Dream of the Emperor Maxen') found in the wider Mabinogion, in which it is said that in his dream: *e vot en kerdet dyffrynt er avon hyt e blaen en e menyd uchaf o'r a welsei eryoet* ('he was travelling along the river valley to its source until he came to the highest mountain he had ever seen […]').[47]

The description of the court concentrates on the social structures of the space, the different rooms, sleeping arrangements, the social hierarchy, and the role which chamberlains play. Despite the richness of Arawn's court, both Pwyll and Arawn rule each other's lands well – which is part of the bargain they made – so we can assume that the realms are socially and culturally similar. Indeed, Arawn acknowledges this similarity by stating that Pwyll will easily be able to navigate around his castle. There is no interest here in building up a secondary otherworld, instead the focus lies on the human social machinations of the unknown court.

In the following scene from the medieval First Branch, Pwyll encounters a supernatural mound, a frequent marker for the otherworld in the Welsh and Irish folktale tradition, soon after he has returned to his own realm after leaving Annwfn, and it is here that he meets Rhiannon, his future wife:

> *kynnedyf yr orssed yw, pa dylyedauc bynnac a eistedo arnei, nat a odyno heb un o'r deupeth, a'y kymriw neu archolleu, neu ynteu a welei rywedawt.*
>
> (the strange thing about the mound is that whatever nobleman sits on it will not leave there without one of two things happening: either he will be wounded or injured, or else he will see something wonderful.)[48]

[46] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 51; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 36.
[47] Brynley F. Roberts, *Breudwyt Maxen Wledic* (Dublin: DIAS, 2005), p. 1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 103.
[48] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 9; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 8.

Sims-Williams suggests that the mound 'plays a clearly supernatural role, though it is not absolutely clear that supernatural beings dwelt within it.'[49] Yet, no attempt is made in the text to establish an otherworld within the mound. Instead, the hill neatly combines two important messages that this version wishes to convey. One, the nature of encounters between the members of the Welsh court, here between Pwyll and Rhiannon; two, the magical aspect of these narratives, which give the impression that this court, and Wales itself, is a wondrous and prestigious place.

The meeting between Rhiannon and Pwyll is staged as a test. No man is able to catch her on her horse, until Pwyll calls out to her and asks her whether she might stop:

> *y maestir guastat a gauas, ac ef a dangosses yr ysparduneu y'r march. A ffei uwyaf y lladei ef y march, pellaf uydei hitheu e wrthaw ef.*
>
> (He came to the open, level plain, and set spurs to the horse. And the more he spurred the horse, the further she drew away from him.)[50]

The question here is not: where is the Otherworld and what does it look like? The question is: how does Pwyll deal with Rhiannon's magical horse? He does not do it particularly well, chasing her for a considerable time and at a considerable cost to his own horse, before finding the right words to ask her to stop. This scene is a display and a comic rendering of Pwyll's general frustration and potential ineptitude. Furthermore, the Gorsedd itself is located *uch law y llys* 'above the court,' it is connected linguistically and geographically to Pwyll's own court.[51] The text makes it very clear that this feature belongs to the same environment as Pwyll and his men. Any magical aspects enhance the one text world, a Wales of a time gone by, a mystical Wales.

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[49] Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', p. 64. See this text also on mounds in medieval Irish literature, which are inhabited by otherworldly creatures.
[50] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 10; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 9.
[51] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 9; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 8.

The magical qualities in this version, namely Arawn and Rhiannon's supernatural powers, do not serve the purpose of establishing an otherworld. Instead, they heighten the courtly mannerism of the protagonists in both a comical and dramatic way, and serve further to showcase Pwyll's clumsiness. It has been suggested that the influence on the social landscape of the turmoil of the invasion prompted the redaction of the medieval stories.[52] There is, however, another aspect of the narratives, which proves itself more readily a direct result of the political and social upheaval of the eleventh to twelfth centuries. That is a longing for a *locus amoenus*; in short, the very ideal or hope that might have driven many of the writers in the last century and today to re-imagine the tales. It is just possible that the absence of a concrete otherworld in the medieval version is a direct result of the author's view of the entire *Mabinogi* world as a kind of otherworld, which allows for an idealized backward glance into the lost past of its society. It is fascinating to see that the medieval and earliest surviving version of the *Mabinogi* works according to the same goals as many of the later re-imaginings.

This section shows that the otherworld trope used extensively in the later re-imaginings, as will be discussed in the next section, is not found in the earliest version, but is a concept which has been created through the practise of approaching the *Mabinogi* as myth, highlighting the dissonance between the medieval version and the later texts. Moving onto the first re-imaginings in the nineteenth century, and the implications that the term 'otherworld' carries with it, we can see that the *Mabinogi* has been, from the beginning, re-fashioned with a specific agenda in mind.

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[52] See Alfred K. Siewers, 'Writing an Icon of the Land: the *Mabinogi* as a Mystagogy of Landscape', *Peritia*, 19 (2005), 139-28; Alfred K. Siewers, 'Reading the Otherworld Environmentally', in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* ed. by Hiltner, pp. 301-09 (p. 303); Catherine McKenna, 'The Theme of Sovereignty in *Pwyll*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 29 (1980-81), 35-52; Kay, 'Gendered Postcolonial Discourse in the Mabinogi'.

Otherworlds and the Myth of Wales

The notion of an *other*-world, or 'underworld', the defining characteristic ascribed to certain otherworlds in the re-imaginings, is problematic, in that the inhabitants of this world are not simply nonhuman, but inhuman or subhuman – a tricky connotation when discussing the Welsh narratives, which have their roots of revival in the nineteenth century. The term 'under-world' was used in the Blue Books report, a biased account of Welsh education, published in 1847, to describe the working-class Welsh-speaking citizen: 'He is left to live in an under-world of his own, and the march of society goes so completely over his head […]'.[53] Gwyneth Tyson Roberts notes that:

> [t]he hyphen in 'under-world' is important, since without it the word could indicate a criminal subculture; the implication here is rather of a separate world, which might function effectively enough in its own terms but which was completely cut off from the 'real' world, and was located firmly and permanently beneath it.[54]

Furthermore, as Jane Aaron points out, '[i]t must have seemed all too appropriate that in the 1840s, when these reports were being drawn up, the south Wales coalfield was revealed to be the most extensive in Britain; labouring underground in 'an underworld' of their own, was clearly the fate of the Welsh.'[55] The Welsh person's attribution to a nonhuman environment is also a feature in this corpus, yet in the re-imaginings it has become a positive trait, as we will see in the following chapters.

Connotations of Wales as the Virgin land, the otherworld, the fairytale land, where magic and the supernatural can and do exist, are not only problematic because

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[53] *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, Nineteenth Century House of Commons Sessional Papers (1847), I, p. 3. Quoted in Roberts, *The Language of the Blue* Books, p. 189.
[54] Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*, p. 190.
[55] Jane Aaron, *Welsh Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), p. 52.

it renders Wales, the country, obsolete; but more importantly because it plays into nineteenth-century visions of an unchanging place – not to mention connotations of 'new' and 'old' worlds and Columbus' Otro Mundo.[56] In the context of Wales' postcolonial history, the idea of a country which is an *otro mundo*, an other world where the inhabitants are not quite human, a kind of paradise on earth, actively calls to mind colonial views of the primitive 'other', the exotic and the childlike, as famously discussed by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*.[57] But the connotations go even further back than this: Keith D. Lilley writes on the Anglo-Norman construction of Wales and Ireland as 'other', as an 'outer "fringe"', which impacted greatly on the countries' own sense of self.[58] Giving examples from texts such as Gerald of Wales' twelfth-century *Journey through Wales* and the anonymous mid-twelfth-century *Gesta Stephani*, which concentrates mainly on South-West England, Lilley shows how the Welsh were marginalised as living a pastoral rather than the Anglo-Saxon 'urban' life style and that they were 'animal-like' and thus untrustworthy.[59] Book One of the *Gesta Stephani* reads:

> *Est autem Walonia terra siluestris et pascuosa, ipsi Angliæ proxima uicinitate contermina, ex uno eiusdem latere in longum iuxta mare protensa, ceruorum quidem et piscium, lactis et armentorum uberrima; sed hominum nutrix bestialium, natura uelocium, consuetudine bellantium, fide semper et locis instabilium.*
>
> (Now Wales is a country of woodland and pasture, immediately bordering on England, stretching far along the coast on one side of it, abounding in deer and fish, milk and herds; but it breeds men of an animal type, naturally swift-

[56] On Columbus, see Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 29. See also Tzvetan Todorov, *La Conquête de l'Amérique: La Question de L'autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), referenced in Warner.
[57] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).
[58] Keith D. Lilley, 'Imagined Geographies of the "Celtic Fringe" and the Cultural Construction of the "Other" in Medieval Wales and Ireland', in *Celtic Geographies: Old Culture, New Times*, ed. by David C. Harvey, Rhys Jones, Neil McInroy and Christine Milligan (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 21-36 (pp. 22-3).
[59] Lilley, 'Imagined Geographies', pp. 24 and 25; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales; and the Description of Wales*; *Gesta Stephani*, transl. by Kenneth R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

> footed, accustomed to war, volatile always in breaking their word as changing their abodes.)[60]

However, one must also note that a certain 'auto-exoticism' comes from inside Wales itself, something that is visible in the corpus of re-imaginings, as we will see.[61] With its roots in the nineteenth century, as so many other trends pertaining the corpus are, the idea of 'auto-exoticism' was coined by Joep Leerssen to apply to nineteenth-century writers in Ireland, who, as Mark Williams writes, had the tendency 'to represent Ireland as a repository of mystery and uncanniness, as strange to itself as to outsiders […].'[62] Leerssen's definition of auto-exoticism is 'a mode of seeing, presenting, and representing oneself in one's otherness […]'.[63] For Leerssen, this auto-exoticism is a trend found in romantic Anglo-Irish fiction, in which the auctorial voice or the focalizer is non-Irish, often English, and thereby experiences Ireland from the outside.[64] It is also found in the corpus of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings, thus, certain children's versions, such as Jac Jones' illustrations in *Branwen* (1997) [C16] use La Tène art to create a pre-medieval 'Celtic' world, while a writer like Morris creates a mystical 'Celtic' otherworld of Wales [N1]. But there is also a reverse auto-exoticism at play in the corpus, in which non-Welsh writers construct a non-Welsh-Welsh identity for their work – that is, they create an identity which is British but has its roots in Welshness, yet which nevertheless views Wales from the outside. An example for this would be Cooper's *Sequence* (1965-77) [YA4]. These texts will be discussed in due course.

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[60] *Gesta Stephani*, I.8 (pp. 14-15).
[61] Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp. 35-38; 225. Quoted in Williams, *Ireland's Imortals*, p. 292, n. 45.
[62] Williams, *Ireland's Imortals*, p. 292.
[63] Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 37.
[64] Ibid., pp. 35-38.

Associations of the subhuman and inhuman accompany the inhabitants of the otherworld. Like the notion of a Virgin Wales, the nonhuman inhabitants are archaic, primordial, mythic and spiritual (which is to say pre-Christian), and they reflect back onto the human protagonists whose text world they share. A similar situation is evident in Irish literature, especially children's literature, as Robert Dunbar writes: 'The perception of Ireland as a totally unpredictable country may seem at first to be little more than a romanticized excuse for the creation of children's fiction where no concession at all need to be made to any notion of reality […].'[65]

The tension between the creation of a separate otherworld and its otherworldly creatures in many re-imaginings and the socio-historic environment of the *Mabinogi* itself pervades the corpus and can be explored through the otherworld trope. A constant anxiety between the situated knowledges of the socio-historic setting of the narratives and the perception of the *Mabinogi* as myth has shaped the construction of the otherworld.[66] The greater this anxiety, especially prominent in non-Welsh versions, the more dominant the otherworld appears in their texts. Indeed, as we will see in the next section, the socio-political circumstances surrounding the romanticism of the Celtic Revival played a major role in creation of the first translation of the *Mabinogi* into English.

Charlotte Guest and Nineteenth-Century Romanticism

For a discussion of the nineteenth- to twenty-first-century versions, starting with Guest in the mid-nineteenth century, we have to briefly turn to the Romantic era. It is here that many of the values pervading the otherworlds found in the re-imaginings

[65] Robert Dunbar, 'Ireland and its Children's Literature', in *Children's Literature and National Identity*, ed. by Margaret Meek (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2001), pp. 79-88 (p. 80).
[66] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,' *Feminist Studies*, 14.3 (Autumn 1988), 575-99.

originate. After all, the creation of mythological material is a highly Romantic notion.[67] Arm in arm with the romanticization of wild Wales lies the idealization of the noble nonhuman, and finally, the concept of the innocent child. These three views are so closely bound up with the corpus that in many of the texts they have become transposable – a possible reason why there are so many children's versions. Excluding scholarly editions, out of the fifty-eight re-imaginings, twenty-four are works of children's literature. In addition, there are also five works which are young adult texts, and one play which is a Youth Theatre production. That means that out of fifty-eight, thirty re-imaginings are written for or marketed at the children's and young adult market. It is especially noticeable, and it will be explored in depth in the next chapter, that the children's section of re-imaginings has more Welsh language versions that any other. Indeed, some of the versions for young children are learner editions, created especially for the purpose of learning or teaching the Welsh language in the early twentieth century. Examples of these are John Young Evans, *Pryderi Fab Pwyll: A First Welsh Reader* (1914) [C2], and Ellen Evans, *Mabinogion I'r Plant* (1924-9) [C5]. Thus, for many writers and publishers, a child readership seems the natural audience for the narratives. Indeed, the third, fourth and fifth versions after Guest were Lanier's *The Boy's Mabinogion* (1881) [YA1], Meta E. Williams' *Tales from the Mabinogion* (1892) (which includes only *Culhwch ac Olwen* from the wider Mabinogion), and J.M. Edwards, *Mabinogion* (1896) [C1], all aimed at a young adult and child audience respectively. As will become clear throughout the chapters, the three leitmotifs of childhood, myth and nature are topics that are returned to again and again throughout the corpus. The draw of these topics is the same as the reason for the

[67] For a discussion of the influence of German Romanticism on fantasy narratives, see William Gray, *Fantasy, Myth and the Measure of Truth: Tales of Pullman, Lewis, Tolkien, MacDonald and Hoffman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). On Romanticism and myth, see Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*. On the *Mabinogi* and the nineteenth century, see Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-visiting the *Mabinogi*', pp. 160-62.

centrality of the nonhuman: they are at once human and not human, they reside in intermediate states, before rationality and adulthood, and so are perceived as not as something that needs to be grappled with, but as something that can be moulded into any desired shape. The motifs of childhood, myth and nature are, in this corpus, often coupled with an imagined idea of 'Welshness', throwing up associations which can be traced back to the early days of the Celtic Revival.

Late eighteenth-century Wales, like Scotland or Ireland, was a hotpot for romantic re-imaginings of the past, where the re-writing of the 'Celtic' past was emerging in a rich, invented literature, forged by poets such as Iolo Morganwg, who 'manipulated the very myths and motifs that had become popular in the Romantic imagination to rehabilitate Wales's image.'[68] Further, texts such as Evan Evans' publication *Some Specimen of the Ancient Welsh Bards* in 1764 'refueled interest in the bardic past of Wales and added a Welsh accent to the "Celticism" movement of the mid-eighteenth century.'[69] Just before Evans, the two works appeared which arguably created the Celtic Revival in the eighteenth century in Ireland, Scotland and then Wales: Thomas Gray's *The Bard* (1757) and James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands* (1760).[70]

The romanticized attitude towards the Welsh and their country as a scenic or sublime place seems to have prevailed throughout the nineteenth century, so much so

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[68] Cathryn A. Charnell-White, *Bardic Circles: National, Regional and Personal Identity in the Bardic Vision of Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 3. On Wales in the Celtic Revival, see Geraint H. Jenkins, 'The Eighteenth Century', in *A Nation and its Books: A History of the Book of Wales*, ed. by Philip Henry James and Eiluned Rees (Aberystwyth: The National Library of Wales, 1998), pp. 110-12. On the Irish Celtic Revival see for example, Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Language, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 98-113. On Ireland and Scotland, see Tania Scott, 'The Fantasy of the Celtic Revival: Lord Dunsany, Fiona McLeod and W.B. Yeats', in *Border Crossings: Narration, Nation and Imagination in Scots and Irish Literature and Culture*, ed. by Colin Young (Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 125-41.

[69] Sarah Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. xix. On the beginnings of 'Celticity' (with an emphasis on Ireland), see Williams, *Ireland's Imortals*, pp. 292-305.

[70] Cronin, *Translating Ireland*, p. 98.

that in a report on the nature of the Welsh commissioned for the Blue Books report, R.R.W. Lingen, the secretary to the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education, feels the need to comment on the lack of these attributes in the population of Redberth, Pembrokeshire: 'a population which exhibits no picturesque or in any wise sentimental character, but very much the reverse.'[71] This is certainly the tradition from which Guest's version of the otherworld arises.

Guest, 1812-1895, a scholar of Middle Welsh, who wanted to popularize the *Mabinogi* outside of Welsh scholarly circles, was both English by birth and upbringing, and Welsh by marriage and residency; thus she was bilingual and all her children were born in Wales.[72] Like many Welsh writers who write in English, Guest therefore straddles both an outsider and an insider position, and this is obvious in her characterization of the otherworld. The otherworld in her version is fused, as it is in most versions by Welsh writers, with the country of Wales, yet at the same time, it is a place of imaginary abundance. One cannot speak of a distinct otherworld in her version, published between 1838-45 as *The Mabinogion* [S1], in much the same way as one cannot for the medieval version; instead, magical manifestations occur at random. As in the earlier texts, they give an impression of the kind of story Guest is aiming to tell.

In a scene from Guest's version of the Third Branch [B3] in which a mysterious mist descends on Dyfed, the protagonists marvel at the countryside: 'And as they went through the country, they had never seen lands more pleasant to live in, nor better hunting grounds, nor greater plenty of honey and fish.'[73] While this is an almost word for word translation of the medieval text, Guest has added the phrase

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[71] Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*, p. 181. Quoted from *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, I, p. 437.
[72] Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte* Guest, pp. 15-16; 97-117; and 49-55.
[73] Guest, *The Mabinogion, III* (1849), p. 165.

'greater plenty of honey', which in Middle Welsh simply reads as *amlach y mel* ('a lot of honey', from *amyl* 'many a'), while Sioned Davies in her 2007 translation uses the term 'abundant in'.[74] In Middle Welsh the sentence reads as follows: *Ac wrth rodyaw y wlat ny welsynt eiryoet wlat gyuanhedach no hi, na heldir well, nac amlach y mel na'y physcawt no hi.* ('As they wandered through the land they had never seen a place more pleasant to live in, nor better hunting ground, nor land more abundant in honey and fish.').[75] The use of the phrase 'greater plenty' by Guest suggests fruitfulness, prosperity and a general sense that the land is overflowing with goodness. In fact, this 'land of plenty' alludes to a paradisiacal environment, a biblical land of milk and honey. Guest is upgrading Wales to a desirable, rich place. The following scene in which a mist descends on the countryside is an especially pertinent passage for this analysis, because it portrays the extent of the otherworldliness of the environment Guest creates.

When Manawydan and his friends climb the Gorsedd mound in Guest's version of the Third Branch, the following occurs: '[a]nd as they sat thus, behold, a peal of thunder, and with the violence of the thunderstorm, lo there came a fall of mist, so thick that not one of them could see the other.'[76] The Middle Welsh reads as follows: *Ac ual y bydant yn eisted yuelly, llyma dwrwf, a chan ueint y twrwf, llyma gawat o nywl yn dyuot hyt na chanhoed yr un ohonunt wy y gilid.*[77] In Middle Welsh the word *twrwf* can mean a 'crowd' or a 'tumult', as well as signifying 'noise'; therefore not specifying a thunderstorm, but rather a loud and inexplicable sound.[78] Guest here intensifies the dramatic aspect of the appearance of the mist in her version

[74] On 'amlach/amyl', see Mühlhausen, *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi*, p. 72; Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh*, p. 16; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 36.
[75] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 51; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 36.
[76] Guest, *Mabinogion, III* (1849), p. 165.
[77] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 51.
[78] Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh*, p. 13; Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet,* p. 68.

by adding the phrase 'with the violence of the thunderstorm.' In contrast, Davies' more faithful translation reads thus: 'As they were sitting they heard a tumultuous noise, and with the intensity of the noise there fell a blanket of mist so that they could not see each other.'[79] While the arrival of the mist in the medieval text is sudden and contains no drumroll, Guest's dramatic rendering of the story calls for a thunderstorm to announce the entrance of the unexpected. Her theatrical interpretation, although comparatively restrained, is reminiscent of contemporary texts from the Celtic Revival, in which nature and the 'Celt' became linked.[80]

In her dedication to her sons, Guest expresses her love for the 'free mountains' of Wales, and connects these to chivalry and honour, thus situating her work within the tradition of Arthurian romance.[81] Indeed, in the preface to the second edition of 1877, Guest writes that her translation from 1838 was read by the scholars of Romance, both in England and on the continent.[82] Certainly, it seems to be her intention to portray the tales in a more popular light than they would have been received in in manuscript form. She states in her journal that she herself found the translation from the Red Book difficult, but that she believes 'it will be a popular number if I can bring it out properly.'[83] Guest composed these texts after a series of violent uprisings in Merthyr, which occurred just two years before her marriage, during which her husband, John Josiah Guest, was ironmaster of the Dowlais Iron

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[79] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 36.
[80] On the linking of Nature and the 'Celt', see Gerard Murphy, 'The Origins of Irish Nature Poetry', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 20 (1931), 87-102 (p. 93). For more critical approaches to 'Celtic' nature poetry, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Early Irish Hermit Poetry', in *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, ed. by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Kim McCone (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1989), pp. 251-67 (p. 264); Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Invention of Celtic Nature Poetry', in *Celticism*, ed. by Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 97-124. See also more recently, Heather Williams, 'Ecofeirniadaeth i'r Celtiaid', *Llenyddiaeth Mewn Theori*, 3 (2008), 1-28.
[81] Guest, *Mabinogion*, I, p. iii.
[82] Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion: From the Welsh of the Llyfr Coch O Hergest*, 2nd edn (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1877), p. vii.
[83] Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, p. 104. Taken from Guest's Diary entry for 4 December 1836.

Company, one of the largest in the world.[84] Revel Guest and Angela V. John write that she saw the protest in a romanticized light in the same way that she romanticized the Welsh, but she was also genuinely concerned for the unemployed: 'What is to become of our unemployed? I was almost going to say our uncared for!', she writes in her journal on 9 March 1848.[85] In that position she was at the forefront of the industrial revolution. An Arthurian collection of tales featuring knightly bravery and valour must have seemed especially appealing at this point in time. Guest uses her work to paint a picture of Wales as a heroic nation with a vibrant mythological past; a counterweight to the turbulent recent past which she experienced.[86]

Most importantly, it was her publication that presented them as *stories*. As stories, rather than histories, these texts could more easily be assimilated into mythic narratives. Through her naming of the texts as 'venerable relics of ancient lore' and as 'chivalric', as well as through her rhythmic language, Guest re-introduces the tales as entertaining narratives:

> Pwyll prince of Dyved, was lord of the seven Cantrevs of Dyved; and once upon a time he was at Narberth his chief palace, and he was minded to go and hunt, and the part of his dominions in which it pleased him to hunt was Glyn Cuch.[87]

The use of an overt literary (and bookish) language has equally contributed to their acceptance as stories. Instead of breaking up the beginning of the First Branch quoted above into several sentences, as Sioned Davies does in her more accurate translation, Guest crafts a winding, rhythmic sentence, in which Arberth/Narberth is Pwyll's more

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[84] Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, p. 42. On the risings, see Gwyn A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising* (London: Crown Helm, 1978).
[85] Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, pp. 69 and 71.
[86] On the rewriting of the Welsh past in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 43-100.
[87] Guest, *Mabinogion*, I (1849), p. iii; III (1849), p. 37.

romantic palace rather than his court.[88] In addition, the illustrations accompanying Guest's version will also have added to the recognition of these tales as stories. The wood engravings, cut by Essex-born Samuel William (1788-1853), portray the characters in knightly splendour 'Figures [1] and [2]'.[89]

After the medieval text, hers was the second recorded step in the mythologization of the *Mabinogi*. It is also one of the few examples by a non-Welsh writer which presents the *Mabinogi* as a national Welsh Celtic tale. Not only the *Mabinogi* itself, but, in direct correlation, the concept of the 'Celtic'/ Celtic is used for two directly opposing stories throughout the corpus. On the one hand, it is used to create a national Welsh tale, which is entrenched in the Nationalist Celtic Revival, depicting the *Mabinogi* as a distinctly Welsh myth, not always but often in direct contrast to English and in companionable relation to 'Irish myth.'[90] Here the Celtic (no quotation marks) is used to symbolise that the *Mabinogi* has a place in the Celtic tradition; that is the Celtic heritage of the British Isles, which is in the first instance linguistic, but is more often taken to encompass a disparate culture from that of the English. This concept of the Celtic stems from the fact that Welsh literature is a postcolonial literature, and that re-imagining a narrative written in a minority language always carries with it connotations of power-struggles, especially when the re-imagined piece is written in the colonizer's tongue.[91] Indeed, Davies makes the

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[88] As a comparison, this is Davies recent translation: 'Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, was lord over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed. Once upon a time he was at Arberth, one of his chief courts, and it came into his head and his heart to go hunting.' Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.

[89] Samuel William's work is mentioned in *The Rushton M. Dorman, Esq. Library Sale Catalogue (1886): The Study of the Dispersal of a Nineteenth-Century American Private Library*, ed. by Samuel J. Rogal, 2 vols (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2002), I, p. 394 (catalogue number 764).

[90] See the nativist debate in the Introduction, 'The Creation of a Myth'. See also Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Visionary Celt: The Construction of an Ethinic Preconception', *CMCS*, 11 (Summer 1986), 71-96.

[91] On power-struggles in colonial literature, see Cronin, *Translating Ireland*, p. 4. Quoted by Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*', p. 161. On the *Mabinogi* as postcolonial literature, see Morgan Kay, 'Gendered Postcolonial Discourse in the Mabinogi', *PHCC*, 24/25 (2004/2005), 216-28; Patricia Clare Ingham, 'Marking Time: *Branwen Daughter of Llyr* and the Colonial Refrain', in

point that part of Guest's motivation for her translation was to demonstrate the merits of Welsh literature in the European canon.[92]

On the other hand, the *Mabinogi* is re-imagined as an international myth, recast as a 'Celtic' story, where 'Celtic' signifies a shared history of the British Isles and by extension the United States. This interpretation of the meaning of 'Celtic' can be traced back to the use of 'Celtic' as the name for, a now disputed, group of Indo-Europeans who populated Central Europe and the British Isles and were then driven back by the Romans to the fringes of society.[93] This popular narrative often includes the artwork of the La Tène period whose spirals are habitually associated which 'Celtic' art. Continuing with the twentieth-century fantasy texts discussed below, the idea of the *Mabinogi* as a 'Celtic' myth is truly manifested in the popular imagination.

New Worlds: A Mabinogi Fantasy

While Guest's version is a product of rigorous academic research as well as stemming from a wish to distinguish her adopted cultural heritage within the European framework, the fantasists of the twentieth century look to re-imagine the *Mabinogi* as an ancient mythic body of texts, through the strong presence of archetypal otherworlds, as well as their use of place-names with which they create an imagined 'Celtic' landscape, discussed in the next chapter. Within the corpus of re-imaginings the following versions can be broadly defined as fantasy texts, owing to the use of external fantasy elements to enlarge the otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi*: the earliest

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The Postcolonial Middle Ages, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 173-92. On Welsh literature as postcolonial, see for example Diane Green, *Emyr Humphries: A Postcolonial Novelist?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009); Chris Williams, 'Problematizing Wales: An Exploration in Historiography and Postcoloniality', in *Postcolonial Wales*, ed. by Jane Aaron and Chris Williams (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), pp. 3-22.

[92] Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*', pp. 160-61.

[93] See Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtosceptism,' *CMCS*, 36 (Winter 1998), 1-35 (pp. 30-32).

is Morris' *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914) [N1] and his *The Book of the Three Dragons* (1930, but written at the start of the century) [N2], followed by Ellis' trilogy of plays, *The Cauldron of Annwn* (1922) [D1], which was also published as a libretto with music by Joseph Holbrooke called *Bronwen: A Music Drama* (1922) [D2].[94] Then come the big five of the re-imaginings – Walton's *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* (1936, 1964-74) [N3], Alexander, *The Chronicles of Prydain*, (1964-8) [YA3], Garner, *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2], Cooper, *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (1965-77) [YA4], and Jenny Nimmo, *The Snow Spider Trilogy* (1986-9) [YA5]. These are the texts which have, above all others in the corpus, become well known in popular culture, and they are all works of fantasy. These versions are entirely divorced from a medieval court setting and from a local Wales. While Guest helped to recast Wales as a place with a romantic heritage, the fantasists transform the country into a virgin, mythical other land.

The otherworld in these texts is a strange, dominant feature and does not solely exist in the texts themselves, but has mapped itself, or has been placed, upon the countenance of Wales. In creating a fantasyland, they replace the local aspect of the *Mabinogi*, so that it becomes an unspecific myth, enabling constructed versions of the characters to be recast as archetypal figures. These prototypical figures allow for certain versions to create a link between humans and nonhumans, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, based on imagined mythic allegories, which, in turn, serve to present a certain worldview or agenda. There is no doubt that the *Mabinogi* is at its most popular when it is made stranger and more otherworldly. Naturally, these fantasy versions have the advantage that they are written in English – any Welsh

[94] On fantasy and myth, see Attebery, *Stories about Stories*. On the fantasy *Mabinogi* re-imaginings in particular, see Charles Butler, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006); Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy*.

version could not compete with an international readership. That, as I will argue, is another curiosity which is directly derived from the *Mabinogi* Effect, from approaching the *Mabinogi* as myth: the second-hand transmission effected through the English language and the mysteriousness effected through the Welsh (especially in the Welsh place-names discussed in the next chapter), all add to the otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi* texts, and is one of the reasons why there are more re-imaginings in the English language, both by Welsh and non-Welsh writers.

We can see these trends starting with Welsh/ Californian writer Morris and his *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914) [N1], which is the first existing expanded re-imagining of the Four Branches. It is a confusing narrative, concentrating mainly on the adventures of Pwyll, Pryderi and Rhiannon, loosely following the *Mabinogi*'s plotlines. It is set in a text world populated by divine figures, in which the characters from the *Mabinogi* are gods and goddesses. It was not well received at its publication: a review in the *Welsh Outlook* from 1915 states that '[b]y far the best thing in the book is the rather lengthy preface […]'.[95] Morris later said that he was 'in a very Welsh mood' when he wrote it, and after that extensively re-wrote his *The Book of the Three Dragons*, which was published in 1930 [N2].[96] His statement of being in a 'Welsh mood' is indicative of the use of Welsh or Welshness as a marker for otherness both by Welsh and non-Welsh writers.

The Fates is certainly a text which plays on its inherent strangeness and mysticism. The following scene is Pwyll's meeting with Arawn in the forest clearing at the start of the First Branch. Pwyll finds himself in a place unknown to him: 'It was on the shore of a long, dim lake he was, in a great valley; and the clear water lapping

[95] A.F., 'Review of "The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed" by Cenydd Morus', *The Welsh Outlook*, 2.5 (1915), 205-06 (p. 206).
[96] Douglas A. Anderson, 'Introduction', in Kenneth Morris, *The Book of the Three Dragons* (New York: Cold Spring Press, 2004), pp. 11-12 (p. 12).

among the reeds, and on the pebbles at the mare's forehoofs.'[97] The otherworld encroaches like the water creeping up to the horse's hooves, atmospheric and ominous; the nonhuman landscape indicates the tone. Instead of a forest-clearing, the scene is set on the shore of a lake, echoing a trope found in 'Celtic' folklore – that of the otherworld found in bodies of water.[98] While Morris names Arawn's kingdom as part of the underworld, the transition between realms is so smooth, that Pwyll had not noticed he made it.

> While the king was speaking, a mist and a wild music were rising over the valley; and lake and woods and hills, and even Arawn himself, grew dimmer and dimmer before Pwyll's vision, beyond the dimness of the falling of the night. Shadowy, opal-colored multitudes stole forth from the mists and mountains, moving and waving in their vague dances.[99]

Echoing a *Fingal*-like mood, the transition is couched in mist, music and shadowy figures, creating a sharp contrast to the mundane treatment of this scene in the medieval material. Unknowable, nonhuman shapes appear at the transition between worlds – 'from the mists and the mountains' – dislocating the narrative from any specific local place. The otherworld establishes the *Mabinogi* as an ancient myth set in a wild, untameable place, a primordial environment. We find no space here for the intricate courtly social setting of the medieval version.

The American author Walton, born at the start of the twentieth century and, due to her ill health, a recluse all her life, initially published *The Virgin and the Swine*, a re-imagining of the Fourth Branch [B4], in 1936, just after Morris' second book. Yet, like Morris' version, it was highly unsuccessful.[100] It was not until the 1960s that Ballantine Books embarked on a search for the author of that volume to include it in

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[97] Kenneth Morris, *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (California: Newcastle Publishing, 1978), p. 7.
[98] See this chapter, 'Celtic Otherworlds'.
[99] Morris, *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*, p. 12.
[100] Betty Balantine, 'Introduction', in Evangeline Walton, *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* (New York: Overlook, 2004), pp. 7-12 (pp. 7-8).

their fantasy series, and found that she had written three other *Mabinogi* books which were never published.[101] The unpopularity of both Morris and Walton and the later re-discovery of their work, mirrors the *Mabinogi*'s own obscurity and re-discovery by Guest. The *Mabinogi* works closely with cultural trends, as will be discussed later in this thesis, mirroring them and being used to represent them.

In Walton's *Prince of Annwn* (1974), Book One of her *Mabinogion Tetralogy* [N3], a threatening gothic-medieval otherworld punctuates the protagonists' adventures, establishing her version as a re-imagining of an ur-myth torn out of an undefined past. In the following scene in which Pwyll meets Arawn, the landscape itself forewarns that a boundary between worlds has been crossed: '*This wood has always been thick*, Pwyll thought, puzzled. *But the last time I was here it was not nearly as thick*.'[102] As Pwyll wanders deeper and deeper into the forest, he comes to a place, which, like Morris' protagonist, he does not recognize: '*This place has never been here before. It cannot be the right place. Ought a man to go into it?*'[103] Like the otherworld landscapes in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Inferno*, the physicality of the landscape changes when the protagonist travels from one world to the next, mirroring the shadowy characteristics of the inhabitants, and creating an 'otherization' of the landscape.[104] The otherworld in Walton is the beginning and the end in the cycle of life, yet humans are able to escape this 'abyss' – curiously echoing Heidegger's 'abyss,' which separates humans from beasts – after going through several

[101] Balantine, 'Introduction', p. 9.
[102] Evangeline Walton, *Prince of Annwn* (1974), repr. in *The Mabinogion Tetralogy*, 4 vols (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2004) I, p. 16 [author's italics].
[103] Walton, *Prince of Annwn*, p. 17 [author's italics].
[104] Virgil, *Aeneid*, transl. by Frederick Ahl (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), VI, pp. 128-57; *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, transl. and ed. by Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), see e.g. Canto IV, ll. 127-29: 'Then making a wide arc we walked around / the pond between the dry bank and the slime, / our eyes still fixed on those who gobbled mud.' For the use of the term 'otherization', see Buell, *Environmental Imagination*, p. 21. On the otherworld in the *Aeneid* and Dante, see Kiera Vaclavik, *Unchartered Depths: Descent Narratives in English and French Children's Literature* (London: LEGENDA, 2010), p. 42.

transformations.[105] In the *Prince of Annwn* the otherworld is very much an underworld:

> […] Annwn, the Abyss; that primal womb in which all things first took shape. There a horde of nameless beings had struggled up, through form after form, until after untold ages, they were ready to be born upon earth as men. There most men returned at death, only a few being able to go on to a higher, brighter place.[106]

Annwn is the factory on whose production line creatures are churned out. Only after having reached an appropriate form, that of 'man', can they leave Annwn and travel to earth. This is a re-imagining of the beginning of the world, of life even. Walton divorces her creation narrative from any that has come before. Hers is akin to a mythological cycle in which every aspect of the world as we know it can be rewritten. Indeed, she describes Annwn as a template for earth: 'Nothing in your world but mirrors something that was first in Annwn.'[107] The description of Annwn quoted above is strikingly similar to a passage from Book II of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

> Into this wild abyss,
> The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave,
> Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
> […].[108]

Indeed, in Walton's text Arawn is described as 'the gardener who tends every garden.'[109] Milton's re-imagining of a Christian myth might well have served as Walton's template or inspiration for her own re-imagining of a pre-Christian myth.

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[105] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (San Franscisco: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 230. Quoted in Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) p. 121.
[106] Walton, *Prince of Annwn,* p. 21.
[107] Ibid.*,* p. 22.
[108] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, repr. edn (London: Penguin, 2003), II, 910-12.
[109] Walton, *Prince of Annwn,* p. 21.

Walton's *Mabinogi* version then, is one that posits as a narrative older than any we know, it goes back to the dawn of time, and so lays claim to be an 'original' origin story.

Throughout *Prince of Annwn* Walton extrapolates on her re-imagining of the world. Her language is as confusing as it is elaborate, and so it is often unclear what she is referencing in the construction of her world; yet, the resulting blurring of characteristics is perhaps precisely the point. At one stage she writes: 'Oaths had great power then; ages after the Welsh country-folk still knew of one so powerful that he whose lips took it might wither away and perish, however well he kept it.'[110] While the meaning of this sentence is obscure, we can nevertheless glean the defining characteristics of her world: this is a romanticized narrative which looks to the imagined values of an older fictional Welsh society. In line with this idea, Walton recasts Rhiannon in the form of a goddess, who, as we will see in Chapter Three of this thesis, is an archetypal symbol for Walton's origin myth.[111] Like the Celticists of the early twentieth century, Walton re-imagines the protagonists of the medieval Welsh court as gods and goddesses recast in a mythological cycle.[112] The otherworld in the re-imaginings by Walton and Morris creates a kind of vacuum in which the stories can be set without any socio-historical baggage that is attached to the medieval (and Welsh) *Mabinogi*. Both these authors were living in America at the time of writing (and Walton is American herself), and their otherworlds reflect the distance-creating universalising that their re-imaginings attain to.

The otherworldliness created in these texts discussed above is epitomized in the cover illustration of Ellis and Joseph Holbrook's operatic play 'Bronwen', first

[110] Walton, *Prince of Annwn,* p. 25.
[111] Chapter Three, 'Rhiannon: From Medieval Queen to Nature Personified'.
[112] See the discussion of mid-twentieth-century analyses by Gerard Murphy, Kenneth Jackson and Pronsias MacCana in the Introduction, pp. 11-12.

performed at Hudderfield in 1929 [D2] 'Figure [3]'. In front of an imposing gravestone, decorated with La Tène spirals and Branwen's name, stand two tall figures, probably Branwen herself and her brother Bendigeidfran. Both figures are wearing highly decorative jewellery and flowing gowns. In the background we can glimpse a storm on the horizon and a gnarly tree overshadows the scene. The music of this operatic play is equally sombre, with the Prelude beginning entirely with bass clef notes, played 'andante espressivo', a slow, powerful pace 'Figure [4]'.

Ellis, eighth Baron Howard de Waldon (1880-1946), adopted Wales as his home country and was a patron of the arts, especially of Welsh theatre.[113] His trilogy of operatic plays is very loosely based on the *Mabinogi*: the plays are dramatic (in all senses of the word) renderings with the characters from the Four Branches recast as divine figures in subliminal surroundings. The first operatic play is 'The Children of Don', performed at the London Opera House in 1912, the second, 'Dylan', performed in Drury Lane 1914, and the third, 'Bronwen,' at Hudderfield in 1929, but none of them were well received.[114] The score to these operas was written by Joseph Holbrooke [D2].[115] Already in the character descriptions for 'The Children of Don', do we find a similar wording to Walton: 'Nodes, God of the Abyss', 'Caridwen, Goddess of Passion', 'Don, The Earth Goddess', and 'Lyd, The Sea God'.[116] Equally, the setting for the prologue is a rough, rugged, *Fingal*-like cave, surrounded by stormy seas, while acts one and two are set in and around *The Temple of the*

[113] Michael Maclagan, 'Ellis, Thomas Evelyn Scott-, eighth Baron Howard de Walden (1880–1946)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/35995> [accessed 20 May 2016]. On Ellis' life and his connection to Wales, see Hazel Walford Davies, ' "The Country of my Heart": Lord Howard de Waldon and Wales', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, New Series, 20 (2014), 18-36.
[114] Maclagan, revised by Matthew, 'Ellis, Thomas Evelyn Scott-, eight Baron Howard de Waldon (1880-1946)'.
[115] On the relationship between Scott-Ellis and Holbrooke, see, Anne-Marie Forbes, '"Out of Old Mythologies" 1: Joseph Holbrooke and Thomas Evelyn Ellis', in *Joseph Holbrooke: Composer, Critic, and Musical Patriot*, ed. by Paul Watt and Forbes (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), pp. 63-77.
[116] Scott-Ellis, *The Cauldron of Annwn*, p. xviiii.

Cauldron. Like Annwn in Walton's *Prince of Annwn*, Ellis' settings evoke a primeval time, in which contemporary society plays no part. It is, again, an origin story, playing into the idea of Wales and the Welsh as the 'original' Britons, a people who still hold ancient traditions, a theme which repeats itself throughout the corpus of re-imaginings as we will see. Ellis himself writes in his 'Preface', describing Wales as 'an older and more sensitive community' than found elsewhere in Britain.[117]

Morris' *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*, Walton's *Prince of Annwn*, and Ellis' 'Bronwen' set the scene at the start of the twentieth century for a murky pre-Christian mythical narrative in which Wales is a place of mystical origins. Taking a closer look at a fantasy version published in the 1960s, Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles* [YA3], we can see how some of these elements, which established the *Mabinogi* as myth in the earlier versions, can be found here too, even though the setting has now been transformed into a quasi-medieval fantasy world.

Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles* (1964-8) [YA3] utilizes elements, almost randomly selected from the *Mabinogi*, for the creation of a medievalesque fantasy world, called Prydain, which is the Welsh word for 'Britain'. On the map, Prydain bears a close resemblance to Wales 'Figure [8]'. The limited use of maps in the corpus will be discussed in more depth later on in this chapter, yet it is clear, that in the world of Prydain it functions mainly as an authenticating link to Wales.[118] The protagonist, Taran, is a pig-keeper living the Georgic dream, the Transcendentalist-influenced idea of a harmonious relationship between man and nature, popularized in the nineteenth century by the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson.[119] Taran goes on a quest to discover his ancestry, hopeful that he is of royal descent. The otherworld in this

[117] Ellis, 'Preface', in *The Cauldron of Annwn*, p. vii.
[118] On maps in the corpus, see Chapter Two, 'Mapping Wales'.
[119] Brian Donahue, Sara M. Gregg and Edwin C. Hagenstein, *American Georgics: Writings on Farming, Culture, and the Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), see esp. chapter three: 'The Machine in the Garden: The Rise of American Romanticism', pp. 105-48.

version is not a secondary world, but a neighbouring land, which can be travelled to in a conventional manner. Alexander uses the name *Annuvin* for his otherworld, which is composed of the same sound-structures as the medieval *Annwuyn*, but is spelled in a more accessible way for non-Welsh speakers. However, the portrayal of Annuvin and its inhabitants does not correspond to that of the medieval *Mabinogi*, in that Alexander's otherworld is a separate *other*world whose inhabitants display varying degrees of *other*ness. Alexander alludes to this in his Author's Note to *The Book of Three* (1964), Book I of the *Chronicles*: 'Arawn, the dread Lord of Annuvin, comes from the Mabinogion, the classic collection of Welsh legends, though in Prydain he is considerably more villainous.'[120] We find no space for courtly pleasantries and intrigues that the medieval version abounds in. Instead, this text world is black and white, with villains and heroes neatly divided into two camps: the former in the otherworld, the latter in the human world. In a conversation between Taran, the main protagonist, and Dallben, a father-figure to Taran, Dallben calls it 'the Land of the Dead'. [...] 'Taran shuddered at the word. Even Dallben had spoken it in a whisper.'[121] It is a realm which produces acute fear in the inhabitants of Prydain. As the protagonists travel towards the otherworld in *The Black Cauldron* (1965), the second book of *The Chronicles of Prydain*, the landscape itself changes:

> the pace of the column slowed as the pleasant meadows wrinkled into hills. Shortly after midday the horsemen entered the Forest of Idris. Here, the brown, withered grasses were sharp as thorns. Once familiar oaks and alders appeared strange to Taran: their dead leaves clung to the tangled branches and the black trunks jutted like charred bones.[122]

[120] Lloyd Alexander, *The Book of Three* (1964), repr. in *The Chronicles of Prydain*, 5 vols (New York: Square Fish, 2011), I, p. iii.
[121] Alexander, *The Book of Three*, p. 7.
[122] Alexander, *The Black Cauldron* (1965), repr. in *The Chronicles of Prydain*, II, p. 29.

This is a country divided between two worlds in the most primal fashion: like in Walton's *Prince of Annwn*, the landscape changes from the thisworld into the otherworld. '[P]leasant meadows' – an almost biblical land of plenty, echoing Guest's fruitful landscape – transform into 'withered grasses' – from a meadow in summer to a close-up of individual grasses in a winterized setting, demonstrating the death of each blade. The imagery cannot be more oppositional. Nature itself has become dangerous, 'sharp as thornes', and so the essence of this otherworld must be so too.

Yet, while Walton strives to create an origin narrative with the otherworld serving as the basis for her creation story, Alexander leans on recognizable fantasy tropes, strongly influenced by J.R.R. Tolkien, by the binary fight between good and evil, and, above all, the foul landscape of Mordor, which is mirrored in the vileness of the orcs:

> Hard and cruel and bitter was the land that met his gaze. Before his feet the highest ridge of the Ephel Dúath fell steeply in great cliffs down into a dark trough, on the further side of which these rose another ridge, much lower, its edge notched and jagged with crags like fangs that stood out black against the red light behind them […][123]

In the work of Tolkien, for whom language and myth are so closely interconnected, the nature of the linguistic creation of the landscape must mirror its inhabitants.[124] This means, however, that the landscape must be an imaginary one too, for Tolkien, Alexander and Walton alike, and the more linked character and landscape are, the more remote the setting seems to be. Thus, creating an Annuvin in the image of Mordor, allows Alexander to create a specific narrative within this popular and broad

[123] J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 879. For an environmental reading of Tolkien's Middle Earth, and of Mordor, see Matthew Dickerson and Jonathan D. Evans, *Ents, Elves, and Eriador: The Environmental Vision of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pp.185-213.

[124] On Tolkien, see pp. 123 and 160-61 of this thesis. See also Tolkien, 'On Fairy-Stories', in Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics* (London: HarperCollins, 2006), pp. 109-61.

fantasy tradition. It also allows him to divorce his narrative from the country of Wales and the socio-historic environment of the *Mabinogi*.

In Morris, Walton, Ellis and Alexander, the otherworld, and in extension the otherization of the *Mabinogi*, creates a separation from the country of Wales, allowing for the unproblematic appropriation of the *Mabinogi* recast into myth. Sioned Davies writes that mythical stories 'have an authority about them, because they are told and retold […].'[125] However, they are also useful to the author in that they do not need to be defined clearly, they are vague and indeterminate, and so give the re-imaginings the authority to be so too.

Two Local Otherworlds?

Moving on to a re-imagining published at the same time as Alexander's *Prydain*, the diversity of versions can be examined: while a sensibility for the socio-political circumstances of 1960s Wales is present in Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2], the myth of the *Mabinogi* presents a strong counter-current. This Young Adult novel is a coming-of-age story set deep in the Welsh mountains, a few hours from Aberystwyth. In this re-imagining of the Fourth Branch [B4], Blodeuwedd, a ghostly character that haunts the human protagonists, is the spiritual embodiment of a cyclical myth. We encounter Blodeuwedd hovering in the consciousness of the inhabitants of the valley where the story is set and shimmering into view through her possession of the female protagonist Alison. She is bodiless, a spirit in owl shape; her will, her mind-set, her identity, are fathomless. The story of Blodeuwedd, Lleu and Gronw is played out between Alison, the daughter of English holidaymakers in Wales, her stepbrother Roger and local boy Gwyn. Previous generations living in the same valley

[125] Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*', p. 166.

were equally forced to act out the medieval tale, including Gwyn's mother Nancy. This is a version which is inherently bound to the place where it is set, yet at the same time the person who is most affected and drawn to the mythical Blodeuwedd is Alison, an English holidaymaker, to whose family the country house they are staying in belongs. Garner does not employ a recognizable otherworld; instead his otherworldly creature Blodeuwedd is unknowable, untraceable, and hovers just outside the protagonists' and the text's field of vision. In one scene, Alison sees what she thinks is her reflection in a fish tank, only to find out later that it was Blodeuwedd's face looking at her:

> Some distance away the long stone fish tank by the lawn sparked where the inlet broke from the ferns, and she saw herself mirrored among haloes that the sun made on the water. The brightness destroyed the image of the house, so that all she saw was her face.[126]

Appearing like her own reflection from the mirror-like surface of the water, Blodeuwedd has become Alison, and Alison Blodeuwedd. This creates the effect that the setting of the valley, in which the otherworldly and the human merge, is also called into question. Garner originally expanded Blodeuwedd's presence in the narrative, as can be seen in his manuscript notes. The following scene is deleted from the published version, and that scene shows Alison imagining the figure of Blodeuwedd:

> Alison bit on the scream. By the road hedge above her she saw a tall, still figure, a long skirt glistening, arms, and a head: a round head with the round disks of eyes filling the face.
> 'No – not – no –.' But the glistening skirt was an oilskin coat, and the eyes were goggles. Her fear changed to anger. 'Trippers!' She stood up. 'Can I help you?' said Alison in her coldest voice.
> The man stepped back

[126] Alan Garner, *The Owl Service*, first publ. 1967 (London: Harper Collins, 2007), p. 116.

'You're trespassing. This is private property,' Alison called after him.[127]

This scene shows the intensity of Alison's obsession for and possible possession by Blodeuwedd. She mistakes a person wearing goggles for the owl face of Blodeuwedd. She cannot distinguish between her imagination and reality. This scene, if it had been kept in the novel, would have thrown doubt on Alison's behaviour, showing it to result more from her own imbalance than an actual haunting of Blodeuwedd. Yet, the deliberate omission of the passage supports the reality of the mythical Blodeuwedd.

The lack of an otherworld underlines the text's attempt to situate the *Mabinogi* story into the contemporary political environment of 1960s Wales, in which the buying of second homes by (often) English holidaymakers destroyed local Welsh communities.[128] Yet it is the English girl Alison who is most affected by Blodeuwedd, as was Nancy, Gwn's mother, a generation before her, suggesting that it is sex rather than nationality which determines the interaction with the 'myth'. The 'myth' is not connected to nationality in this version, in contrast to the political situation which renders the Welsh inhabitants outcasts from their own place. Without an otherworld, the character of Blodeuwedd roams freely through the valley, ignoring politics and any sense of nationality. Poignantly, the valley is not a place found in the *Mabinogi*. Is this a claim for the 'internationality' of the *Mabinogi* that Garner is making here? According to Filmer-Davies, 'Garner shows that myth knows no geographical boundaries, and that, as perhaps the Irish might say, you do not have to belong to belong.'[129] Yet, at the same time, a geographical specificity is claimed through the idea that the story is re-played in the same valley in each generation. Garner himself

[127] Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS AGA 1, fol. 11/4, II (p. 137).
[128] Charlotte Aull Davies, *Welsh Nationalism in the Twentieth-Century: The Ethic Option and the Modern State* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), p. 48.
[129] Filmer-Davies, *Fantasy Fiction and Welsh Myth*, p. 26.

has said that for him, mythology 'is an attempt to come to terms with reality […].'[130] It seems then that for Garner, even though his story is tailored to a specific locality, the story of Blodeuwedd could have been applied to any narrative. The locality and universality, the geography which is at once so specific but at the same time bears no relation to the geography of the medieval *Mabinogi*, indicates that locality does not in fact have any bearing on the narrative: it is an imagined, constructed place, in itself an otherworld, in which the narrative takes place.

This is supported in the scene in which Roger takes pictures of Gwyn and Huw with the Stone of Gronw. In one of the photographs an image of Gronw holding a spear is visible, which is a scene from the Fourth Branch.[131] Sullivan writes: 'The photographs […] suggest that time works in a different way in this valley […]'.[132] In fact, the valley is constructed like the otherworld in the Irish folklore tradition, outlined at the start of this chapter, in which an otherworldly presence lies like a parallel plane over that of the thisworld, in direct contrast with the neighbouring otherworld in Alexander's *Prydain*. Even though *The Owl Service* is seemingly so locally placed and imbedded into contemporary politics, the specificity of the otherworldly valley, creates, at least in part, a dislocation from Wales itself.

Moving on to Katy Cawkwell's *The Story of Rhiannon* (2007) [C19], the otherworld is an enhanced version of the parallel concept found in *The Owl Service*: it is not confined to one valley but is fused with the country of Wales, distinct from Garner's universality of 'myth,' while also making use of otherworldly folktale markers.

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[130] Alan Garner, 'Coming to Terms', *Children's Literature in Education*, 2 (July 1970), 15-29 (p. 17).
[131] Garner, *The Owl Service*, pp. 111-14.
[132] Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth*, p. 31.

In *The Story of Rhiannon* Wales is infused with the otherworld, thus allowing the country's identity to be synonymous with that of the re-imagined *Mabinogi*'s otherworld. Indeed, Cawkwell's version originated as an oral performance for which she walked through Wales, visiting the sites found in the *Mabinogi*, as part of the storytelling process.[133] In her work, Cawkwell presents an otherworld which is clearly positioned but impossible to outline, a concept corresponding to the Irish folklore tradition. A short but Walton-esque version in its elative style, Cawkwell draws on both the First and Third Branch to re-imagine the story of Rhiannon, who gives up her otherworldly immortality to be with Pwyll in the human world [B1, B3]. In this version, the otherworld possesses no specific location; it is fused completely with the geography of the known world:

> Imagine now, that our whole land is like this – the woods and the rivers, the hills and the valleys – all of it, two worlds, one layered upon the other. Imagine that there are some places where it is easier to peel back this world and to look through into another world, the Otherworld. One of these places is a hill in the south-west corner of Wales. The sides are rounded, sloping smoothly away on every side, the grass nibbled short by the ponies, but the hill is topped with a jagged crown of rock, silhouetted against the sky.[134]

The 'whole land' is rural, composed of woods, rivers, hills and valleys. Like an over-ripe fruit, the skin between worlds is thin and easy to peel in a bucolic, pastoral setting: a world of abundance and fruitfulness, evoking Guest's creation of an edenic landscape.[135] The ponies keep the grass, in the same way that they are, more often than not, kept animals, either pre-industrial work animals or modern pets used for recreation purposes, connected to children in their size and their usefulness for children's riding. Towering above this rustic scene are rocks in the shape of a crown. The marker for the otherworld is a royal one: like Bendigeidfran's severed head, it

[133] Conversation with the author, reproduced with the author's permission (January 12-13, 2018).
[134] Katy Cawkwell, *The Story of Rhiannon* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2007), pp. 1-2.
[135] Eden or edenic here refers to the agrarian Eden rather than the City of God.

stands as a symbol for the superiority of one world over the other. In just this one paragraph the leitmotifs connecting myth to children to nature, found in so many re-imaginings, combine. Cawkwell has stated that she chose places that 'seemed right to me,' as the *Mabinogi* settings were not always straightforward to find.[136] The actual place is not as important as the symbolisms attached to certain features, a theme found in many versions in connection to place-names discussed in the next chapter.

The narrator takes on the traditional role of the Welsh storyteller, the *cyfarwydd*, addressing an imaginary audience: 'Imagine now'.[137] The *cyfarwydd* is an important figure for Welsh literature; s/he is a direct link between the oral roots of the *Mabinogi*, the medieval world in which they were written down, and the continuation of storytelling in Wales today. The *cyfarwydd* is discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, where the relationship of place-names to oral storytelling is especially pertinent.[138] Suffice it to say here that by highlighting the oral background of the *Mabinogi* Cawkwell situates her version within the Welsh literary tradition, creating a direct link between the place she describes and the oral culture of the literature, which is exactly what the place-names do in the medieval *Mabinogi*.

As in Irish and Welsh folklore and in the Irish literary tradition, the otherworld in *The Story of Rhiannon* is a parallel space, which can be entered through specific doorways, most notably the fairy hills.[139] In the same way that Guest wished to align her version with contemporary Romantic re-imaginings of the Celtic Revival, Cawkwell situates her text within the broader Welsh 'Celtic' narrative tradition. This parallel otherworld exists in a different timeframe to the mortal world, where

[136] Conversation with the author, reproduced with the author's permission (January 12-13, 2018).
[137] Cawkwell, *The Story of Rhiannon*, p. 1.
[138] See Chapter Two, 'Welsh for the Welsh'.
[139] See Carey, 'Time, Space and the Otherworld', p. 6.

Rhiannon is said to never age, a hallmark of the Irish folktale.[140] The inclusion of this motif gives the *Mabinogi* a broader, more mystical heritage than that of the medieval court narrative. A further Irish influence on this version is the gate-keeper of the otherworld, who advises Pwyll to catch a certain silver fish from the stream to which Pwyll's horse had led him, and which, once eaten by Rhiannon, results in her pregnancy.[141] This clearly alludes to the concept of a magical fish, usually a salmon, often found in medieval Irish tales, the most famous perhaps being the tale of Finn and the salmon from the Finn Cycle.[142] The consuming of a salmon which brings wisdom is also found in the Scottish oral tradition.[143] By making use of known otherworld characteristics, such as those from the Irish tradition, Cawkwell is lending credibility to her otherworld. Furthermore, employing material from the Irish tradition links the text to the idea of the 'Celtic' set out in the nineteenth-century revival, as outlined earlier. Cawkwell's version is undoubtedly a national myth, continuing Guest's re-imagining of the *Mabinogi* as a body of tales which carry intrinsic value for their country, yet it is also 'international' – the 'Celtic' hallmarks situating it into the non-specific umbrella of 'Celtic' folklore. As Guest and Cawkwell show, it is not always a Welsh writer who creates a local re-imagining, but for those writers who do come from Wales, discussed below, the re-crafting of the *Mabinogi* takes on a different significance altogether.

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[140] See this chapter, 'Celtic Otherworlds', and also Carey, 'Otherworld,' pp. 1403-06.
[141] Cawkwell, *The Story of Rhiannon*, p. 15.
[142] See Joseph Falaky Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 137, 163, 179, and 279-80.
[143] Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, p. 163.

For Welsh writers, labouring under the expectation of supporting their national literary heritage, the otherworld is part and parcel of the Welshness of the *Mabinogi*. Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan writes on the boundary between otherworld and mortal world in the medieval Four Branches: 'The boundary between the two is crossed unconsciously, imperceptibly, and what we today should call supernatural or magical phenomena occur within a geographical context so accurate, so recognisable to us as almost to make events unastounding, prosaic even.'[144] The familiarity of the geography of the *Mabinogi* allows Welsh writers to take full possession of the narratives. Gillian Clarke writes of the deep connection between the tales and the geography, and indicates that the primary status of the Four Branches as the 'first' tales of Wales give them a special status. 'His [Bendigeidfran's] story, his rhythmic syllables, the imprint of his huge foot on the shore, and the rocking stone on the headland that was once an apple out of the giant's pocket – these were the first stories located in a geography that was mine.'[145]

Like the Welsh writers who deliberately discard the place-names which the fantasists have asserted for themselves in order to re-claim the locality of the *Mabinogi*, discussed in the next chapter, the otherworld trope has replaced the Welsh with the mystical and the 'Celtic', and so none of the Seren versions – a collection of novellas commissioned by the Welsh publisher Seren between 2009 and 2013 – make use of it in its traditional form. This dissonance between the local medieval *Mabinogi*, and the mythologization of the tales which have created archetypal, universal myths is

[144] Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, 'Gender and Violence in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', in *150 Jahre "Mabinogion": Deutsch-Walisische Kulturbeziehungen*, ed. by Maier and Zimmer with Batke, pp. 67-77 (p. 68).
[145] Clarke, *At the Source*, p. 8.

evident in a statement made by Welsh author Lloyd Jones in response to an unfavourable comparison of his version of the Third Branch and Walton's:

> Bloody hell! Here's me, born and bred in the Welsh hills, couldn't speak English until I was seven, studies the Mabinogi in Middle Welsh […] being snubbed in favour of a romantic American author writing about a land she never even visited…[146]

In fact, the two texts could not be more different. Lloyd Jones' *See How They Run* (2012) [Na5], a re-fashioning of the Third Branch [B3], is set in modern day Wales and Ireland in the sober environment of academia. Like all the versions commissioned by the Welsh publisher Seren as part of their *New Stories from the Mabinogion* series, Jones' work is extremely self-conscious about the fact that he is re-working a national treasure. One paragraph in the novella reads like a history lesson: 'Whereas Ireland and Wales, and to a lesser extent Scotland, had a rich mythological base, England had no native tradition. Beowulf [sic] and the other texts had come from the continent. As a result, England had colonised and pillaged other cultures for their myths.'[147]

See How They Run tells the story of the Third Branch [B3] from the perspective of Llwyd, the villain from the medieval tale, who conjures up the mist over Dyfed.[148] Llwyd, nicknamed Lou, a struggling academic, embarks on a journey to uncover the mysterious rugby player Big M. This version does not feature an otherworld as found in the fantasy versions; yet the *Mabinogi* narrative itself is largely contained within a separate virtual space.

Llwyd is given a memory stick, left to him by the deceased Dr Dermot Feeney, a rival academic. The memory stick holds the story of the First Branch [B1]. On it he discovers the pastoral narrative of Big M (Manawydan), Rhiannon and

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[146] Lindsay, 'Interview with Lloyd Jones', p. 2.
[147] Jones, *See How They Run*, p. 34.
[148] See the scene by Guest discussed in this chapter, 'Charlotte Guest and Nineteenth-Century Romanticism'.

Pryderi. Like Garner, Jones juggles the story of the *Mabinogi* with contemporary politics – here it is the cultural revolution of the internet. Even Wales itself has been submerged by this virtual otherworld: 'And look at Wales now. An old country overwhelmed by a digital tide of cultural effluence, living in a virtual world imported and manipulated by rich and powerful men.'[149] Jones' virtual world of the *Mabinogi* is a preservation of the narrative itself – updating it into the modern world – while at the same time positing the stories as valuable subject matter for academic inquiry. It is also a means to disconnect from the story of the *Mabinogi* as it has been created by previous re-imaginings: as a mythical fantasy world.

While the otherworld of the Internet serves to update this version and situate it in a modern day Wales, the return at the end of the novella is nevertheless one to an idealized pastoral past: Big M and Rhiannon have retired to the country with Rhiannon's son Pryderi and '[t]hey were the last generation, said Rhiannon, who listened to nature. The last to describe the world without man's constant presence; to describe it as watchers, not as controllers.'[150] Manawydan must learn to save a mouse, an 'innocent' creature from death, so that he himself is saved from corruption. This connection to a bucolic landscape is reminiscent of the grazing ponies in Cawkwell's *The Story of Rhiannon* [C19]. Thus, while the virtual *Mabinogi* in *See How They Run* seemingly disconnects this version from previous, fantastical ([N1, D1, N3, and YA3]) and folklore ([C19, YA2]) versions, the resolution of the novella is nevertheless a return to a pre-industrial, rural existence.

The otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi* in the corpus then, is overwhelmingly a rural, a pastoral otherworldliness. The strangeness of the *Mabinogi* and the strangeness of the nonhuman go hand in hand. This strangeness is part of the

[149] Jones, *See How They Run*, p. 145.
[150] Ibid., p. 64.

fascination of the medieval stories; in no version is it more evident, and at the same time, handled with more constraint, than in one of the most recent re-imaginings to date, Matthew Francis' *The Mabinogi* (2017) [P10].

The Otherworldiness of the Mabinogi

For each of these versions discussed in this chapter, and indeed, for all versions in the combined corpus, the *Mabinogi* is approached cautiously, lest the strangeness and otherworldliness overwhelm you. Indeed, the genre of each re-imagining reflects the world view found in each text. (This will be elaborated on throughout the chapters.) Suffice it to say here, that for some versions in the corpus, the fantasy elements create a barrier behind which the strangeness can be both contained and made acceptable ([N1, D1]); for others it is the child reader/audience [C19, YA2]; for others still, it is virtual reality or science fiction [Na5]. For one of the most recent versions, published in 2017, Matthew Francis' *The Mabinogi* [P10], it is verse. For in poetry one may cloak things in metaphors and leave gaps which do not need to be defended. It is, perhaps, for this reason, that no single version is re-fashioned in the form of the novel without fantasy elements. The novel, the form in which the reader can truly enter a character's mind, is too revealing a form to be used in the *Mabinogi* re-imaginings.

In Francis' *The Mabinogi*, which is comprised of four poems, each re-imagining one branch of the *Mabinogi*, the otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi* itself is grappled with clearly. At each turn, Francis attempts to explain the strangeness of the Four Branches. Each stanza is accompanied by a note, explaining the action, the plot or the character. This note ranges from the very brief – the first stanza of the First Branch is accompanied by 'Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed' – to explanations of the plot; for

stanza seven of the Third Branch we find the following note: 'The country has been enchanted'.[151] The *Mabinogi* cannot stand alone, its strangeness must be rationalized and explained. Of course, its relatively unknown status outside of Wales and academia also contributes to the need to over-explain.

Annwfn in this version is an interesting amalgam: while it is called the 'Unland' and is described as a land of the unknown, of uncertainty, of not quite there – Arawn is

> chief of unrock, unwood, of sheepclouds
> and their pasture of vagueness,
> suzerain of shades.[152]

The indistinct landscape features echo Morris' vagueness in the *Fates* [N1], yet 'unrock' and 'unwood' are plays on 'Unland', a place that is unkown and still linked to recognizable nonhuman landscape features.[153] The pastoral landscape found in the earlier versions is turned on its head, creating a mirage of the known. Yet, like in Cawkwell's, Morris' and Walton's versions, nonhuman elements reign supreme. However, it is a very real, sensory place:

> This clattering place must be home, these men hurrying
> From the stables, his horse's joyful headshake,
> Their welcoming words, dungsmell, strawsmell,
> cold air seasoned with woodsmoke
> and roasting hogget […].[154]

It is a very earthy, matter-of-fact place, in which the workings of the everyday are clearly on display, and no magic or supernatural elements are visible. In this sense, it is very close to the character of the medieval *Annwfn*.

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[151] Matthew Francis, *The Mabinogi* (London: Faber and Faber, 2017), pp. 3 and 50.
[152] Francis, *The Mabinogi*, I. 4. 10-12.
[153] See the term 'otherworld' discussed in this chapter, 'Celtic Otherworlds'.
[154] Francis, *The Mabinogi*, I. 6. 1-5.

When Arawn and Pwyll return to their respective lands in Francis' version of the First Branch [B1] called 'The Tale of the Hunter and the Claw', the difference between the thisworld and the 'Unworld' is subtly made clear:

> One chieftain [Pwyll] returns to his townships, hundreds, feoffments,
> to find the barns stifling with oily fleeces
> or warmed from within by heaps of corn,
> mills turning lawsuits settled,
> by his other self,
>
> and one [Arawn] returns to dungsmell, strawsmell, woodsmoke,
> the hall with its hubbub and harpstrings,
> and a cave hewn from curtain
> in the buttered light[.][155]

Pwyll's land is made up of social features, towns, hundreds – which refer to the medieval cantrefs – feudal structures, and cultivated crops. In contrast, the description for Arawn's land highlights a more olfactory, chaotic hall where the main elements are dung, wood and straw. This comes into sharp relief through the image of the corn stacked in Pwyll's barns, while Arawn's halls are filled with the smell of straw; two aspects of the same plant, one cultivated as food, the other the dried end product used for warmth or in the upkeep of animals. Finally, the image of the harp and the cave throw back to a pre-medieval, romanticized, *Fingal*-like portrayal: this is an otherworld of an earlier time, similar to those found in the re-imaginings by Ellis [D1] and Walton [N3] discussed at the start of this chapter. Indeed, in his introduction Francis refers to his Annwfn as 'the Otherworld of Celtic myth.'[156]

When in the Third Branch, here called 'The Tale of the Fog and the Fieldmouse', a mist descends upon Dyfed:

> There is nothing to see but whiteness.

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[155] Francis, *The Mabinogi*, I. 4. 1-9.
[156] Ibid., p. ix.

[…]
They are limbless and bodiless. There is no beyond.
They press against the clammy wall of the self
that pulses in time to their breathing,
the otherness of the world
at last swept away:

there is only you, as you have always known,
and when a thinness insinuates,
when space and colour leak back
The brightness is sham.[157]

This mist is a turning inward, the world is other, the self is the true form of being. The thinness between worlds, which was like a ripened fruit in *The Story of Rhiannon* [C19], here suggests a barrier between the self and the world. Francis' verse marks a departure in *Mabinogi* re-imaginings in that the gaze of the poet is turned inward, away from a mythical landscape which dominated the previous versions, towards an otherworld of introspection. This, however, like the versions before him, makes of Wales a metaphorical land.

Otherworldly Wales – Innocent Wales

Beginning with the fantasy versions throughout the twentieth century, from Walton and Morris to Alexander and Garner, a connection is set up between a mythical *Mabinogi* and the remote, unpeopled or sparsely populated imaginary landscape of Wales. The concept of these re-imaginings adheres to the inherently Virgilian pastoral mode of a withdrawal from the world, while also following the idealized Romantic-pastoral of a retirement to a new virgin landscape.[158] What is noticeable about these texts is that the nonhuman is romanticized, and the texts therefore adhere more

[157] Francis, III. 5. 10 and III. 6. 1-9.
[158] See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 3.

closely to the pastoral than other texts of the same decade. Indeed, it is here that the second debt to Romanticism reveals itself in the re-imaginings, the 'central romantic claim that myth is the vehicle of insight into a timeless realm of transcendental values.'[159] Garner writes that 'the absorption of myth' is the most difficult way of preserving such tales, 'not the shape but the spirit […].'[160] With this belief in the core values of myth comes a disregard for historicizing the medieval tales. John Cooley criticizes the pastoral as reductionist: 'At the heart of classical pastoralism, as a literary mode, is an idealization of an earlier time and paradisiacal condition that are no longer achievable except in the imagination.'[161] While numerous re-imaginings cloak their versions with historical and socio-political critical material, such as Garner's housing politics of the 1960s, the core ever looks back to the fabricated *Mabinogi* 'myth'. Tolkien, speaking about the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, remarks that '[a]ntiquity like a many-figured back-cloth hangs ever behind the scene.'[162]

As discussed in the introduction, for many authors in the *Mabinogi* corpus the idea of earlier, unknown versions serves as an incentive to approach the narratives with less caution than an authored version might inspire.[163] The structure of the Four Branches could also be a factor in giving licence to see the narratives as remnants or at least, as opposed to structured forms of literature, such as the novel. As Sioned Davies points out, the medieval *Mabinogi* is structured through markers in the next – through phrases such as 'once' or 'one day', through the journeys of the protagonists

[159] Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth*, p. xii.
[160] Alan Garner, 'Book Review: The Death of Myth', *Children's Literature in Education*, 1.3 (Nov 1970), 69-71 (p. 69).
[161] John Cooley, 'Introduction: American Nature Writing and the Pastoral Tradition', in *Earthly Words: Essays on Contemporary American Nature and Environmental Writers*, ed. by John Cooley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 1-15 (p. 3).
[162] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' (1953), in Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics*, pp. 72-108 (p. 73).
[163] See the Introduction, 'The Creation of a Myth'.

or through repetition such as Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformation occurring three times – but these might not be recognizable to modern readers, and certainly are not transferred to all re-imaginings, so that they are lost in the corpus.[164]

The perception of the *Mabinogi* as unauthored is transferred to the notion of Wales as an unpeopled place. Wales seems to exist in a kind of vacuum in many of the non-Welsh re-imaginings, mythical and unchanging. This romanticized idea of a rural setting is also a plausible reason why the North of the country dominates in the re-imaginings. In the same mode as nineteenth-century Britain, in which, parallel to the London Welsh, the image of 'a pastoral people' was propagated and industrial Wales ignored, twentieth-century Wales is, for these fantasists, a pastoral place.[165] Alexander maintains that Wales is a 'land far more ancient than England, wilder and rougher hewn', which 'appeared still a realm of bards and heroes'.[166] Nimmo states: 'Wales has influenced me a lot for, coming to it as a stranger, I was really struck by everything in the landscape. I somehow wanted to get it all down, to catch it before it was lost, but of course it's going to be there forever.'[167] Ironically, it was the coalmines which, up to the turn of the twentieth century, produced the wealth necessary to keep the Welsh language and culture alive.[168] The now disused mines dominate the Southern landscape, a feature which is completely absent from any of the rural settings in the fantasy re-imaginings. This absence, however, is not only present in texts by non-Welsh authors. The Welsh writer Saunders Lewis [D3, D4,

[164] Sioned Davies, 'Written Text as Performance: The Implications for Middle Welsh Prose Narratives', in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, ed. by Huw Pryce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 133-48 (pp. 139-40 and 142).
[165] Davies, *Welsh Nationalism in the Twentieth-Century*, p. 16.
[166] Jill P. May, *Lloyd Alexander* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p. 6.
[167] Wendy Cooling, *An Interview with Jenny Nimmo* (Mammoth: London, 1999), p. 22.
[168] See Janet Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, 2nd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 55-67.

and D5], for example, saw 'salvation for art in a combination of peasantry and aristocracy.'[169]

It seems as if the traditional role of the virgin land, or the New World Eden as Merchant calls it, which America had held since the Elizabethan period, has shifted to Wales in many twentieth-century re-imaginings.[170] Wales, as the virgin landscape, presents a physical fantasyland which exists in our own world. Yet these writers cannot escape the fact that Wales exists outside of the imaginary in a very real political landscape. This jarring of situated knowledges is uncomfortably present in the re-imaginings. The creation of dominant otherworlds and otherworldly creatures creates a distance to the political climate of Wales.

There is surely something of the agrarian Eden myth in this thirst for an untouched, paradisiacal place, which can be shaped and tamed through story. As Merchant writes, '[t]he Recovery of Eden story is the mainstream narrative of Western culture. It is perhaps the most important mythology humans have developed to make sense of their relationship to the earth.'[171] It is worth noting that many of the writers and poets who have re-imagined the *Mabinogi* tales in the twentieth century grew up as children in the Second World War. More than that, those that did have supported and extended this mythological Wales as a place in which good triumphs over evil. Cooper speaks of the 'haunting' and the hauntedness of her writing caused by her growing up during the war.[172] Gillian Clarke recalls Bendigeidfran playing a part in the war for her:

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[169] Tony Conran, 'Introduction', in *Welsh Verse*, ed. by Conran, 2nd edn (Bridgend: Poetry of Wales Press, 1986), pp. 23-110 (p. 93).
[170] Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*, pp. 102 and 121-23.
[171] Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*, p. 2.
[172] Cooper, 'Seeing Around Corners' (1976), in *Dreams and Wishes*, p. 10. For a discussion on Cooper and WWII, see e.g. Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, chapter one. Carole Scott, 'High and Wild Magic, the Moral Universe, and the Electronic Superhighway: Reflections of Change in Susan Cooper's Fantasy Literature', in *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945*, ed. by Sandra L. Beckett (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 91-98.

> To a child it was a legendary war, a giant's war of stormy seas, shipwreck, armies that crossed rivers on the body of their commander, bombs that fell from the sky. There was a monstrous enemy leader, and could we but kill him we would all be saved. Bendigeidfran was on our side, but I was not at all convinced that he was a sensible friend. I was not keen on his policy of revenge under those black skies of the early 1940s.[173]

In contrast, the Seren novellas, published around the first decade of the twenty-first century, display a marked departure from the themes of good and evil, and create characters in which the protagonists, who were god-like in the fantasy versions, are now inherently flawed. Indeed, within those versions which are heavily enlarged in the corpus, we find a division between rural, often Northern settings and those set in heavily populated areas, often in the South of the country. Fantasy texts such as *The Owl Service* [YA2] and *The Dark Is Rising* [YA4] relocate their versions to remote landscapes, while the postmodern novellas by Welsh publisher Seren [N2-5] choose populated cities for their settings. This divide is also strongly visible in the use of place-names discussed in the next chapter. The otherworldliness progresses through the corpus as follows: from the unknown author of the *Mabinog*i, from its unknown date of origin and exact place of origin, to an unpeopled, nonhuman, remote, wild setting, to otherworldly creatures (in fantasy versions), to mystical 'Celtic' features (in children's books), to peopled cities (in adult versions).

The location of Wales on the political map as a geographically and historically marginal place, has no doubt contributed to its position as a place of magic and myths, comparably to the pervading notions of Ireland and Scotland.[174] In all three cases the romantic notion of the 'Celtic' fringe has strengthened their marginal positions and

[173] Clarke, *At the Source*, p. 11.
[174] On Ireland as a marginal place in children's literature, see Dunbar, 'Ireland and its Children's Literature', p. 80.

contributed to the cultural as well as political separation from England and mainland Europe. '[T]he particular geographical locality of writers – whether outside Wales, within Wales, or on the border between England and Wales – is as important in shaping a plurality of individual visions of Wales, as is the actual landscape these writers describe.'[175] Yet, in the re-imaginings discussed in this chapter, the landscape of Wales has been almost universally transformed into an otherworldly geography, in which the nonhuman element looms large. The misnomer of the word 'Celtic', which has been appropriated by Ireland, Wales and Scotland to describe their own unique cultural identities, has transitioned, in a second wave of the appropriation of this 'Celtic culture', to texts from England and the United States, which in their turn, make use of its mystical – because unidentifiable – properties.[176]

Tied up with the idea of an otherworldly Wales is an innocent Wales, which leads us to the connection between children and myth. Among the fourteen versions published in Welsh, nine are children's editions; among the seven dual-language versions, five are children's illustrated versions; while among the thirty-seven English-language texts, fifteen are published for children or young adults, evidencing that, like the association made in Celtic Studies at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century (discussed in the introduction), the connection between the *Mabinogi* and children prevails.[177]

Judging by the volumes of secondary material on the *Mabinogi* corpus so far, one could easily assume that all of the re-imaginings are marketed at children or the Young Adult range. Yet, as mentioned at the start of this chapter, of all the fifty-eight

[175] Mottram and Prescott 'Introduction', p. 4.
[176] On the appropriation of the 'Celtic' see this chapter, pp. 61-2; see also Butler, *Four British Fantasists*, p. 152.
[177] See the Introduction, 'The Myth of the Mabinogi'.

re-imaginings existing to date, excluding scholarly versions, twenty-five are addressed or marketed at young children and five at the Young Adult market. That means almost exactly half of the re-imaginings are adult versions. It can also not be a coincidence that the four most popular and well-known re-imaginings are written for or marketed at a child/young adult audience: Alexander, *The Chronicles of Prydain*, (1964-8) [YA3], Garner, *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2], Cooper, *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (1965-77) [YA4], and Nimmo, *The Snow Spider Trilogy* (1986-9) [YA5]. This signifies that the *Mabinogi* sits easily within the children's section, both for publishers and critics, since all of the studies hitherto have concentrated on these texts above all others.

However, if we take a look at the response from authors whose texts have been shelved within the children/Young Adult categories to the question whether they write for children, most retort by denying that they write for a specific audience while simultaneously asserting that the child reader is especially well equipped to enter the mysterious world of their fiction. Garner states: 'I do not write for children, but entirely for myself. Yet I do write for some children […] This group of people [adolescents] is the most important of all, and it makes the best audience. Few adults read with a comparable involvement.'[178] Tellingly, Cooper writes:

> […] even though more adults are reading fantasy these days – in a flight, perhaps, from the realities of the machine back to the older realities of myth – even so, children are the natural audience for fantasy. They aren't a different species. They're us, a little while ago. It's just that they are still able to accept mystery.[179]

This debate on the suitability of the corpus for children's literature is highly illuminating on the question of what kind of version authors are trying to tell. Is it

[178] Garner, 'A Bit More Practice' (1968), in *The Voice That Thunders* (London: Random House, 1997), pp. 59-60.
[179] Cooper, 'Seeing Around Corners' (1976), in *Dreams and Wishes*, p. 6.

simply the association with 'myth', which lends itself to a publication in the children's literature market? Ironically, it seems to be the belief in the untarnished, Romantic state of unblemished childhood which maps itself so neatly onto the virgin, mythical New World (in this case Wales). As Jacqueline Rose writes:

> Childhood is seen as the place where an older form of culture is preserved (nature or oral tradition), but the effect of this in turn is that this sure form of culture is *infantilised*. At this level, children's fiction has a set of long-established links with the colonialism which identified the new world with the infantile state of man. Along the lines of what is almost a semantic slippage, the child is assumed to have some special relation to a world which – in our eyes at least – was only born when we found it.[180]

Sidling along these connotations is the uncomfortable presence of the nonhuman. The child is seen as not yet quite human; the country (Wales) is seen as a predominantly nonhuman environment; and, as we will see in the next chapter, the Welsh language belongs also to this nonhuman world. Rose writes on Garner that for him the child is in the service of the desire to 'get back to the beginnings of our own mythical and cultural history'.[181] This link is also evident in critical thinking about children's literature, as Stephen Thomson argues.[182] Indeed, Andrea Immel et al. state in their chapter on fantasy geographies, that '[f]antasy needs the child as mediator' because 'the landscapes in which fantasy operates are most fully realised by the perceptive eye of innocence.'[183]

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[180] Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 50.
[181] Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, p. 45.
[182] Stephen Thomson, 'Substitute Communities, Authenic Voices: The Organic Writing of the Child', in *Children in Culture: Approaches to Childhood*, ed. by Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 248-73 (p. 261). See Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 273-77 on the folktale, fairytale, myth and legend in children's literature (p. 274 on Thomson).
[183] Andrea Immel, U.C. Knoepflmacher and Julia Briggs, 'Fantasy's Alternative Geography for Children', in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. by M.O. Grenby and Immel (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 226-49 (p. 239).

This problematic desire is also evident in the preoccupation with the nonhuman. Discussing the child's eye view across different media from the nineteenth century to today, Marina Warner writes: 'The nagging, yearning desire to work back to a pristine state of goodness, an Eden of lost innocence, has focused on children.'[184] She writes further: 'Children are perceived as innocent because they're ouside society, pre-historical, pre-social, instinctual, creatures of unreason, primitive, kin to unspoiled nature.'[185] Re-imaginings in which the otherworld is especially prominent and strongly constructed, are usually also written or marketed for a children's literature audience, such as those by Alexander [YA3], Cooper [YA4] and Nimmo [YA5]. The strange nonhuman creatures which dwell there cannot be regarded too closely, it seems. The child protagonist must come between them and render them harmless. It is here that the centrality of the nonhuman becomes evident: it is at once enlarged, seen through the creation of the different otherworlds and their creatures – Alexander's Mordor-like territory, Walton's abyss – and at the same time feared, which explains the strangeness and indefinability of the inhabitants of the otherworld, discussed in the next section of this chapter.

In contrast, in many of the versions written for an adult readership, especially those published in the Seren series, the centrality of the nonhuman is replaced by that of the human: the adult protagonist is not able to deal with monsters and ghosts. The adult versions are devoid of anything that is perceived as being inexplicable, signifying that the only way to 'modernize' the *Mabinogi* is to rationalize it. A similar attitude, as will be explored in the following chapter, can also be found in connection to the use of place-names, where many texts by Welsh writers do not employ names taken from the *Mabinogi*, as they have become intrinsically associated with the

[184] Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time: The 1994 Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 41.
[185] Warner, *Managing Monsters*, p. 44.

fantasy and young adult re-imaginings of the second half of the twentieth century, as well as with the illustrated versions marketed for children [C1-14]. So close are notions of childhood and the remote, nonhuman landscape, that adult versions are all set in peopled places, in towns or in cities.

The Otherworldly Nonhuman

The otherworlds in many re-imaginings are populated with the most strange and wondrous creatures. From monstrous hunters in Walton and Alexander, to ghostly apparitions in Garner, they present a stark contrast to the mundanely human protagonists. While the *Mabinogi* has often been hailed as delivering weighty human morals, studying the otherworldly inhabitants gives one a very different idea of the interest of many of the writers.[186] The following section will investigate the otherworldly nonhuman – that is those creatures which inhabit the separate otherworlds in many of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century re-imaginings. Observing the form that the otherworldly creatures take – their bodies, their appearances – we can conjure the modes of thought which are connected to the creation of these imaginary beings, thus understanding further what specific stories the re-imaginings are telling. Additionally, analysing the divergence of the otherworldly from the human characters gives us a deeper understanding of the concept of the nonhuman, which, this thesis argues, stands at the centre of the corpus of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings.

[186] On the *Mabinogi* as moral tales, see Bollard, 'Landscapes of the *Mabinogi*', p. 58; Humphries, *The Taliesin Tradition*, p. 25; Sioned Davies, '"He was the best teller of tales in the world": Performing medieval Welsh narrative', in *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. by Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado and Marilyn Lawrence (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 15-26 (p. 26).

Of Giants and Noble Men

In the Second Branch [B2] of the medieval *Mabinogi* a tale of two giants is told. These two giants first visit Matholwch, the King of Ireland, who chases them out of his country. They then seek refuge in Wales where Bendigeidfran, the King of Wales, welcomes them and integrates them into society. Matholwch describes the giants as follows:

> *A mi a welwn gwr melyngoch, mawr, yn dyuot o'r llyn [...]. A gwr heuyt athrugar, mawr, a drygweith anorles arnaw oed; a gwreic yn y ol; ac ot oed uawr ef, mwy dwyweith oed y wreic noc ef.*
>
> (And I saw a large man with yellow-red hair coming out of the lake […]. He was a huge, monstrous man, too, with an evil, ugly look about him; and a woman followed him; and if he was large, the woman was twice his size.)[187]

While the male giant is frightening in his own right, the female giant is all the more so because of her body.[188] In this patriarchal text world of the *Mabinogi*, a giantess' body threatens not only the present time, but, through her childbearing abilities, the future of the country as well. The text indicates that the female giant is pregnant and will give birth to a child who *ar benn y pethewnos a'r mis, y byd gwy ymlad llawn aruawc* ('in a month and a fortnight will be a fully armed warrior.')[189] However, while these giants produce only anxiety for the King of Ireland, their integration into Welsh society by Bendigeidfran is most certainly seen as positive, as they are said to prosper in Wales. While the Irish King had them hunted and killed, in Wales they are welcomed with open (if tentative) arms. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes: '[t]he monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read […].'[190] The monster is always embodying something; here, in this tale

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[187] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 35; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 26.
[188] On a related but different argument on the gendered body of giants, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. xii; Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', p. 15.
[189] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 35; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 26.
[190] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', p. 4.

telling of generosity and open-mindedness, it is designed to showcase these characteristics in the King of Wales and contrast them with the King of Ireland who does not behave according to these values. Wales is seen as an international place where different peoples are welcomed. In addition to that, the otherworldliness of the giants indicates an older, more ancient society than the one in which the tale is being told.

Bendigeidfran, the King of Wales, is himself a giant in the medieval version (though he is never named as such outright), since his body is so large he cannot fit into a house – *[n]y angassei Uendigeituran eiryoet ymywn ty* – as well as being able to wade through the sea to Ireland.[191] This image of giants being able to walk through the sea can also be found in the eight- or ninth-century *Liber Monstrorum*, the book of 'monsters'.[192] In general, however, the giants and other monstrous creatures in this book are 'fundamentally hostile to the human race', and, for the most part, intensely more frightening in their appearance than Bendigeidfran, whose only inhuman characteristic is his large body.[193] Even so, he does not fit the profile of a giant, a monstrous other. His large body is not outcast, but symbolizes strength and leadership. He becomes, literally, a bridge for his men, the text stating that this is how the proverb came into being: *[...] a uo penn bit pont* ('[…] he who is a leader, let him be a bridge,') says Bendigeidfran.[194] Yet, for the Irish, watching him wade through the sea, his body becomes terrifying, a sign of the destruction to come. He is able to free his sister Branwen from Ireland using his immense size. In addition, he is shown to be wise and just in his acceptance of two giants whom the King of Ireland sees as

[191] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 31 and 39.
[192] Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*, rev. edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 105.
[193] Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, p. 111.
[194] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 40; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 30. On Bendigeidfran and the proverb, see Stefan Zimmer, 'A uo penn bit ponn – Aspects of Leadership in Celtic and Indo-European', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 53 (2003), 202-29.

enemies. It is quite possible that Matholwch tells this story as a threat or at least a jibe to Bendigeidfran, since his size marks him as possible kin to the giants in the tale.

While monstrous bodies are accepted, if cautiously, in the Wales of the medieval texts, Arawn, the King of *Annwuyn* (the 'otherworld'), is established as a neighbouring king. Following on from the discussion of this scene at the start of this chapter, Arawn's white dogs with red ears, which also appear in Welsh folklore as hounds of the otherworld or hell, underline his supernatural abilities but do not establish an otherworld.[195] One must assume that a medieval audience would have recognized these markers as indications for the otherworld or the supernatural, because they appear in contemporary texts.[196] Yet, in the medieval *Mabinogi*, they indicate that a supernatural event is about to happen, or that beings such as Arawn or his hounds possess supernatural qualities. The division between worlds found in so many later versions is not present in the medieval texts. A separate otherworld is not needed to contain these creatures; the supernatural bodies of Arawn's hounds mingle with those of Pwyll's. This becomes obvious when taking a closer look at Pwyll's encounter with Arawn's supernatural dogs.

Ac ual y byd yn ymwarandaw a llef yr erchwys, ef a glywei llef erchwys arall, ac nit oedynt unllef ('And as he was listening for the cry of his pack, he heard the cry of another pack, but these had a different cry').[197] *Llef* ('cry') changes to *unllef* ('one/same cry'), indicating that both Pwyll and Arawn's dogs have the same cry, they are producing the same sound.[198] Pwyll hears both packs simultaneously in this scene, underlining the presence of the supernatural dogs in the same world as Pwyll's dogs. *Ac yna edrych ohonaw ef ar liw yr erchwys, heb hanbwyllaw edrych ar y carw.*

[195] See e.g. *The Devil Dogs of Marchwiel* in Graham Watkins, *Walking with Welsh Legends: North-Eastern Wales*, pp. 95-103. See this chapter, 'The Medieval *Mabinogi*'s Hybrid World'.
[196] See this chapter, 'The Medieval *Mabinogi*'s Hybrid World'.
[197] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.
[198] Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyfed*, pp. 24, n. 12 and p. 69.

('Then Pwyll looked at the colour of the pack, without bothering to look at the stag.')[199] The hunter Pwyll is not able to take his eyes off the astonishing white dogs with their red ears, neglecting to look at the one goal of his hunt, the stag. The text makes it very clear that this is an unusual sight for Pwyll, emphasizing the supernatural nature of Arawn's hounds. Yet, the *unllef* ('same cry') of the strange hounds suggests a kinship between the animals and their human masters, especially since Pwyll and Arawn later exchange forms. A deliberate point is made of the sameness of these realms, directly opposing the idea of a thisworld/otherworld construct, and thisworldly and otherworldly beings.[200]

The following exchange between the two men rigidly follows commonplace courtly etiquette, indicating the same social structure in both Pwyll and Arawn's realms. Arawn is insulted by Pwyll's act of driving his pack away. Arawn calls this behaviour *dy anwybot dy hun a'th ansyberwyt* ('your own lack of manners and discourtesy').[201] Pwyll's behaviour is clearly a breach of courtly courtesy. In the Welsh Law texts, a law can be found, which states that the person whose hounds gave chase to an animal first has the prior claim on the kill; however, a second rule asserts that the claim of the king in his territory overrides the previous law.[202] Yet Arawn's status overrides even this second law because he is a crowned king, and has a higher status than Pwyll, who is merely a lord.[203]

Arawn is described as the prototype of the courtly hunter, carrying a hunting horn and dressed in fine clothing: *a chorn canu am y uynwygl, a gwisc o urethyn llwyt tei amdanaw yn wisc hela* ('with a hunting horn round his neck, and wearing hunting

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[199] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.
[200] See Siewer's *Strange Beauty*, p. 37 for the argument that the undivided landscape of the otherworld symbolically connects the magical to physical places.
[201] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 2; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 4
[202]Thomas Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status in Some Irish and Welsh Prose Tales', *Ériu*, 29 (1978), pp. 123-41 (p. 124).
[203] Charles-Edwards, 'Honour and Status', p. 25.

clothes of a light grey material').[204] Symbolizing 'aristocratic authority', the hunt also indicates the non-existence of an otherworld, demonstrating the ease with which Pwyll and Arawn acknowledge and work out an agreement for the former's breach of courtesy.[205] The ease of transition between the realms lends itself to a situation which mirrors the politics of the social environment of the narrative.

The supernatural creatures are immediately and bodily present in the one text world of the medieval *Mabinogi*, and are thus actively part of 'life', part of the 'living', in a way that is fundamentally distorted in many later re-imaginings. In the same way that Pwyll and Arawn's interactions showcase a courtly dispute, Arawn's shape and form are as human as Pwyll's so that this Branch is about the workings of very real and very human social customs. As will be shown below, the creations of distinct otherworlds and otherworldly creatures in many later versions not only effects a separation from the medieval texts; it produces individual text worlds which are able to slot into existing 'Celtic' narratives, or 'updated' versions which distance themselves from the corpus as a whole.

Of Monsters and Other Nonhumans

Turning to the otherworldly creatures in the later re-imaginings, the otherworldly nonhuman takes on a different guise. As Cohen writes: 'The monster always escapes because it refuses easy categorization.'[206] The writers in the corpus make use of this aspect of the monster, creating unidentifiable text worlds in its shadow. The duality of the monster – 'its threat is its propensity to shift' – serves to indicate a recognizable

[204] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 2; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.
[205] Susan Crane, 'Ritual Aspects of the Hunt à Force', in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* ed. by Hanawalt and Kiser, pp. 63-84 (p. 63).
[206] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', p. 6.

storyworld by giving the monster familiar characteristics.[207] (See, for example, Alexander's antlered rider.) But the monster cannot be categorized, and so it evades the direct gaze of both writer and reader, playing into the 'origin' stories (discussed earlier) created through the otherworld in versions such as by Walton, or 'Celtic' folklore narratives in texts such as by Cawkwell.

The strange and often unsettling otherworldly inhabitants in many later re-imaginings situate the *Mabinogi* in a very specific worldbuilding. The narrative leaves the human realm and enters one which is sometimes ghostly, other times monstrous, but always nonhuman. In giving their conspicuous otherworlds prominent residents, the authors are moving their versions away from any medieval court setting, as well as from any human setting. Wales, the country, is suddenly very far removed from the narrative. The text itself does not belong solely to the human realm of storytelling but also to those creatures which inhabit the otherworld, thus enabling the complete appropriation of the stories without any compromising background material. The otherworldly creatures, in an extension of the otherworld itself, create the possibility of possessing the *Mabinogi* narratives outside of any cultural, socio-political or indeed, geographical context. For non-Welsh writers especially, the *Mabinogi* thus becomes nonspecific, emerging from its unspecific origins into the realm of myth.

In Cawkwell's *The Story of Rhiannon* [C19], Pwyll and his men can enter the otherworld through a specific process that they have to undergo. Smearing an ointment over their eyes – a common theme in fairy stories – the otherworld is thus made visible: 'There was the hillside with the jagged crown of rock above them but layered across their world was another world: a silver arch, with a silver path leading

[207] Cohen, Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', p. 5.

through, lush grass on either side. Even the stars seemed to have shifted in their pattern in the sky.'[208] Reminiscent of the arch (the Elven Door) that appears at the entrance to Moria in Tolkien's *The Two Towers*, like Alexander's Annuvin, this recognizable fantasy trait situates the narrative into a knowable genre, creating a universal version of a local tale.[209] Carolyne Larrington writes that the theme of rubbing an ointment over the eyes is the same as the theme of eating forbidden fruit in many fairytales: 'both are a proxy for a loss of innocence, a fall into knowledge and desire which has irreversible consequences.'[210] Under the influence of the otherworld, the men's human bodies have to undergo a physical change in Cawkwell, so that they are able to perceive that which is not human. For a moment, they become super-human through the guidance of the otherworld, gaining abilities they could not have had as humans, the corporal divide between human and nonhuman ever present, keeping the nonhuman at a distance and therefore preserving its strangeness and mythical quality. Yet, this divide simultaneously reflects back onto the human, in that a link to the otherworldly is established through the change which Pwyll and his men go through, allowing for a reflection of the magical onto the human world: the country of Wales. The otherworld and otherworldly in Cawkwell are a medium for a fantastical yet national story.

While in Cawkwell human protagonists and nonhuman others cannot exist in the same physical space, some versions take this further and their otherworldly nonhumans are not given bodies at all. When Alison in Garner's *The Owl Service* is seemingly possessed by Blodeuwedd in the shape of owls at the closing of this version, this impossible divide is made visible. Scratches appear on Alison's body –

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[208] Cawkwell, *The Story of Rhiannon*, p. 7-8. On the theme of the fairy ointment, see Carolyne Larrington, *The Land of the Green Man: A Journey through the Supernatural Landscapes of the British Isles* (London: Tauris, 2015), chapter two.
[209] Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, pp. 296-97.
[210] Larrington, *The Land of the Green Man*, p. 74; see also pp. 72-3.

'three lines scored from brow to neck, and on her hands, and no break in the skin' – symbolizing her being devoured from inside, and the only solution is the expulsion of the otherworldly nonhuman from her body.[211] The otherworldly creatures in these versions are no more than symbols: they are bodiless, free-floating entities which represent the text's connection to the *Mabinogi* 'myth'. This symbolic use of the *Mabinogi* allows Garner to employ it as a way to deepen the psychological tensions between his characters. This has the effect of creating a *Mabinogi* myth which is not so much Welsh as it is universal.

Similarly, in a scene from the Third Branch in Gwyn Thomas and Kevin Crossley-Holland's *Y Mabinogi*/ *Tales from the Mabinogion*, illustrated by Margaret Jones [C10], in which the landscape of Dyfed is enchanted, the mist is shown to consist of small, wispy female figures with raised arms as if casting a spell 'Figure [5]'.[212] This is echoed in a later drawing for the same volume, in which Gwydion enchants toadstools to become horses and hounds in the Fourth Branch.[213] Gwydion is depicted waving a wand out of which an illuminated, swirling mist rises. Around him the night sky is alight with stars. In this version, physical, corporeal manifestations of magic and the supernatural create an embodied divide between the caster of the spells and the spells themselves. These otherworldly figures are defiantly nonhuman, or perhaps a hybrid species, their bodies so small, so definitely incorporeal, seemingly consisting of the mist they are enveloped in. The supernatural nonhuman is not given a body; the corporeal divide between human and nonhuman is manifested, resulting in a heightened strangeness of the narrative. In the foreword to this version, Gwyn Jones writes that '[i]t is in the magicians and in the strange ways of the human characters in

[211] Garner, *The Owl Service*, p. 216.
[212] Gwyn Thomas, *Y Mabinogi*, illustr. by Margaret Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), p. 49; Thomas and Kevin Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Jones, 2nd edn (London: Gollancz, 1985), p. 49.
[213] Thomas and Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, p. 67.

these stories that we see shadows of the old gods.'[214] The strangeness of these stories is more easily compartmentalized within a spiritualized text world, while the symbolic use of otherworldly figures allows the storyline to be placed within a wider mythical framework, which plays into the cultural narrative of ancient pagan divinities. 'Pagan' within the corpus is most often used in the same sense as it is employed by the scholars of the nativist tradition: to refer to a pre-Christian, pre-Roman, 'Celtic' culture. This will be explored further in Chapter Three, in which the characters of Branwen and Rhiannon are analysed in detail.

While in Jones' illustrations [C10] and Garner's [YA2] narratives the otherworldly nonhuman is not given a body in the first instance, in Walton's [N3], as in Alexander's texts [YA3], the citizens of the otherworld are terrifying in their physical appearance. In the following quote, Walton describes the king of the otherworld and his horse: 'They looked bigger than they should have and every part of them, hair and hide, hoof, clothing and skin, was of precisely the same colour. The same terrible, corpselike grey.'[215] This stark colourlessness of the otherworldly inhabitant is enhanced further by Walton's description of Pwyll's vulnerable, human body: 'cold seemed to stream through his blood and bones.'[216] The vivid red colour of human blood is contrasted with the empty greyness of the otherworldly king's flesh and clothes. Pwyll's living body is juxtaposed with Arawn and his horse's 'corpselike' forms; the otherworldly nonhuman is not 'alive', cannot share the same 'life' as the human protagonist. This alienation of the otherworldly creatures highlights Pwyll's heroic human efforts and plays neatly into Walton's origin story of the ultimate human struggle against inhuman adversaries. While in Walton the

[214] Thomas and Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, p. 5.
[215] Walton, *Prince of Annwn,* p. 20.
[216] Ibid.

otherworldly king is set opposite the human, in Alexander the otherworld is set within a framework of 'Celtic' folktale characteristics.

In Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles*, Taran's first contact with an otherworldly creature in Prydain occurs when he chases the oracular pig Hen Wen into the forest.

> Hoofbeats thudded in front of him. The forest shook as they grew louder. In another moment a black horse burst into view. [...] Astride the foam-spattered animal rode a monstrous figure. A crimson cloak flamed from his naked shoulders. Crimson stained his gigantic arms. Horror-stricken, Taran saw not the head of a man but the antlered head of a stag.[217]

The hybrid human-stag is suspended between species; the antlered head prevents the 'humanness' of the man.[218] In keeping with the age-old fear of the unknown or unknowable, the description of the 'foam-spattered' horse insinuates that his rider has cruelly driven it to exhaustion and the rider's monstrosity stems from his hybrid being. With a nod to the folklore figures of Gwyn the Hunter, Gwyn ap Nudd and Herne the Hunter, Arawn is mythologized, his unknowability encased within myth.[219] His appearance is reminiscent of the horned figures on the Gundestrup cauldron, placing him within the wider 'Celtic' framework. A further example of this can be found in the illustration of Arawn by Jones for Thomas/ Crossley-Holland's *Y Mabinogi*/ *Tales* in which the king is also depicted with antlers.[220] In these versions Arawn's form is fitted into a folktale template, so that his unknowable body is held at a distance through myth. That is, the mythical element which is the nonhuman characteristic of the antlers, allows for Arawn to be categorized as a recognizable

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[217] Alexander, *The Book of Three*, p. 15

[218] For a discussion of the reoccurring concept of otherness or difference in children's literature see Lynne Vallone, 'Ideas of difference in children's literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. by Grenby and Immel, pp. 174-92.

[219] Sullivan suggests that the Horned King is here synonymous with Gwyn the Hunter. Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth*, p. 62. The figures of Gwyn ap Nudd, Gwyn the Hunter and Herne the Hunter seem to have merged into one as the King of the Otherworld in popular culture. See this chapter, 'Celtic Otherworlds'.

[220] Thomas and Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, p. 9.

'other', known as a symbol through folklore, but unknown in his essence as a man/animal hybrid. A questioning of this hybridization is rendered unnecessary through the shield of the folklore symbol. This is an amalgamation of several folklore figures: Gwyn ap Nudd as the ruler of *Annwfn*, who is likened to the folklore figure of Herne the Hunter, who is said to lead the Wild Hunt with the hounds of hell.[221] As Ronald Hutton shows, Herne, who leads a nocturnal hunt and is connected to death, was brought into being by the brothers Grimm in their *Deutsche Mythologie* from 1835 and it is not a direct continuation from an earlier, pagan deity.[222] However, in his *The White Goddess* Robert Graves actively connects Gwyn ap Nudd with Herne the Hunter, which might be the inspiration both for Alexander's Arawn as well as for Cooper's portrayal of her pagan wild Hunt in *The Dark Is Rising* (1973), in which Herne is portrayed as a man with the head of a stag.[223]

The otherworld in these texts is a primordial place. Inhabitants are not quite human, yet not animal. The hybrid species carry a sense of an ancient world, a mythical yet unsettling place. The overtones of a Christian hell in the texts are overridden by the pagan analogies, again a harking back to pre-humanity as we know it. These misnomers of a fabricated 'Celtic' past emphasize the distinctness of the otherworld from the mortal world in these texts, as well as aiding the mythologization of the *Mabinogi*, by linking them with pre-historic legends and legendary tales. The patchwork of traditions on which these writers draw to create their otherworlds aids in the establishing of the *Mabinogi* as a myth which fits seamlessly into the folklore

[221] See Peter C. Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary* (Aberystwyth: The National Library of Wales, 1993), pp. 351-53; Rhys, *Celtic Folklore*, p. 203. Idris L. Foster, 'Gwyn ap Nudd', in *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, ed. by Eoin Mac Neill and Gerald Murphy, 3 vols (London: Irish Texts Society, 1908-53), III, pp. 198-204 (p. 204).
[222] Ronald Hutton, 'The Wild Hunt and the Witches' Sabbath', *Folklore* 125 (August 2015), 161-78.
[223] Susan Cooper, *The Dark Is Rising* (1973), repr. in *The Dark is Rising Sequence*, 5 vols (London: Puffin, 1984), II, p. 339. Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 85.

fabric of the British Isles and by extension the United States. Through use of the popular concept of the 'Celtic', portrayed in La Tène spirals and blends of folklore figures, the *Mabinogi* is divorced from its Welsh background, and can be appropriated without any socio-historical baggage. The *Mabinogi* narratives are not tangibly engaged with, they are cloaked in 'Celtic' markers or portrayed through bodiless ghosts.

These scenes from various re-imaginings show that while many otherworlds in later versions are close or even parallel to the thisworld, the impossibility of breaching the divide between worlds is manifested in the bodies of the otherworldly creatures in the same way that the creaturely divides 'man' and 'beast'. Supernatural bodies in these spiritual otherworlds display a bodilessness, which prevents their physical interaction with human bodies. They can never be fully grasped or understood, as they are never fully 'there' in the thisworld – the mythologization of the otherworld is thus made manifest. 'This simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster's composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity […].'[224] The nonhuman is both a fascination and a threat – as we will see in the final chapter, the nonhuman element in the character of Blodeuwedd marks her as an outsider and is, in many versions, the reason for her disastrous fate. Blodeuwedd exemplifies the attitude to the nonhuman in this corpus: while it is the main draw to the stories, it is also uncomfortable company.

These otherworldly creatures are not supposed to be grasped; too uncomfortable would then be the position of these tales in relation to the very real political climate of Wales. This then, is a constant anxiety which is present among the texts, an uneasiness concerning the imagined myth of the *Mabinogi* and the socio-

[224] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', p. 17.

political climate of Wales. The vehicle of myth creates a strange, imagined place which is divorced from contemporary Wales, while at the same time allowing the writer and reader to approach the stories without destabilizing the human.

For Welsh authors, the tales are woven into the fabric of their nonhuman environment and thus the mythical Wales exists also within the Wales of the Welsh, not only as an image projected from without.

Conclusion: An Otherworldly Myth

The *Mabinogi* is read as a specific kind of myth by the authors who re-fashion the tales: one that is not linked to the medieval version, and which allows for certain modes of thought to be infused into their versions as well as for some to be rejected. The mode of thought which has been rejected by the twentieth- and twenty-first century-re-imaginings – versions by Morris [N1], Walton [N3], Ellis [D1], Alexander [YA3], Cawkwell [C19] and Garner [YA2] – is the concept of the local narrative which is found in the medieval version of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings, and the accompanying historical and Welsh context. Instead, 'Celtic' folklore markers and fantasy genre characteristics fashion a universal myth dislocated from its locality. The forceful re-imagining creates of Wales itself a virgin 'otherworld', so that Welsh writers approaching the *Mabinogi* radically reject these narratives and create versions imbedded into peopled environments (*See How They Run* [Na5]). A constant anxiety is present throughout the corpus, concerning the juxtaposition of the socio-historic setting of the *Mabinogi* narrative and the perception of these stories as myths. This discord shapes the construction of the otherworld. Observing the form and appearance of the otherworld and its otherworldly inhabitants in the corpus, the modes of thought which are at play in the creation of the different *Mabinogi* versions have become

clear, and so the motivations which lie behind the creation of the different *Mabinogi* are versions laid bare.

The following chapter examines the connection to the nonhuman created through the use of place-names in the re-imaginings, which further enhance the specific myth of the *Mabinogi* that the corpus creates. Place-names are discussed against the backdrop of the complex socio-historical status of the Welsh language, as well as in the context of the issues of pronunciation which arise in English-language texts. Place-names, like the otherworld discussed in this chapter, create both an imaginary link to the topography of the *Mabinogi* while at the same times dislocating the re-imaginings from the geography of Wales.

2. 'A word we could not say, or spell, or remember:'

Language, the Nonhuman and Place-Names

When the earliest existing re-imagining of the *Mabinogi*, the late eleventh/ early twelfth-century version surviving in a fourteenth-century manuscript, was composed, Wales was threatened by Anglo-Norman invasions.[1] As Morgan Key points out, 'the age-old oral tradition seemed suddenly too tenuous, too easily lost', so that one day the unknown author of the medieval text we now know, decided to write their own version down.[2] It was then not until the nineteenth century, when English had become the forced language of advancement and the Celtic Revival movement had reached Wales, that Guest decided to translate the medieval stories from Middle Welsh into English.[3] When Saunders Lewis published his Welsh-language play 'Blodeuwedd' in 1923-5, the increase in newspaper circulation from London, the popularity of film in the 1920s, the establishment of the BBC broadcasting to the West region and South-West England from Cardiff and the growth of bus networks and car ownerships, all served to open up the country and establish the English language as the main mode of communication.[4] In 1972 *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* (The Welsh Language Society) published the Bowen Report which suggested that bilingual road signs be established all over Wales, just after the publication of many of the most famous *Mabinogi* fantasy versions by Garner (1967), Alexander (1964-8) and Cooper (1965-

[1] See the Introduction, 'The Myth of the Mabinogi' on the background of the manuscripts and on dating the texts. On the influence of the Norman invasion, see Kay, 'Gendered Postcolonial Discourse in the Mabinogi'. For an overview of the invasions, see R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: the Experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), in which the complex ideological nature of the conquest is discussed. For a history of Wales, see John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Penguin, 2007).
[2] Kay, 'Gendered Postcolonial Discourse in the Mabinogi', p. 216.
[3] See Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*; Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, pp. 55-67.
[4] Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, pp. 87-99.

77).[5] Thus, side-by-side with the re-imaginings of the *Mabinogi*, the Welsh language treads warily, playing a central role in the creation of the *Mabinogi* myth.

The Welsh language holds a twofold status among writers and poets: on the one hand it is seen as a fabled tongue, one that has withstood the test of time and now stands as an ancient relic. On the other hand, it is a highly political language whose repression and revival symbolizes the fate of the Welsh people.[6] Hand in hand with this duality of the mythical tongue and the political tongue, lies the dichotomy of place-names: language and the nonhuman are symbolically so intertwined in the corpus, that place-names, which describe the relationship between human naming and nonhuman place, play a fundamental role in the creation of the *Mabinogi* myth.[7] Indeed, it is no coincidence that the centrality of Welsh alongside that of the nonhuman is a recurring theme in this corpus: Welsh is perceived as a language which bridges worlds. As set out in the introduction, it is the nonhuman, not the human, which stands at the centre of these narratives.[8]

Because of the importance which is ascribed to the language in this corpus, place-names do not function in the first instance as markers of existing places but as surviving relics of an imagined past, of imagined places. As vestiges of a fictional past, place-names can become part of a make-believe, fabled language, which, though originating in Welsh, becomes something else entirely, fitting within the constructed myth of the *Mabinogi*. This means that the sound-images of place-names hold a vital position in the corpus of re-imaginings: they create an imagined 'otherworld' of sound, fragmentizing the medieval version. This is one of the effects of the

[5] See Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, p. 121.
[6] For an overview of the history of the Welsh language, see Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*.
[7] On the relationship between place names and places, see Bollard, 'Landscapes of the *Mabinogi*', p. 44.
[8] Introduction, 'The Multifarious Nonhuman'.

mythologizing of the *Mabinogi* narratives: the process of creating specific versions, re-imagining, re-fashioning the stories with specific themes and modes of thought in mind, which often results in the distancing of the newer versions from the medieval texts. In the same way that otherworldly creatures are at times used to make the *Mabinogi* stranger in an acceptable way as discussed in the previous chapter, place-names are frequently employed to deliberately divorce the narratives from their local environment, thus de-nationalizing and de-politicizing the *Mabinogi*. Similar to the otherworld being deliberately left out of certain versions in order to 'modernize' or 'update' them, place-names are purposefully not preserved in many texts of the twenty-first century in order to distance the stories from earlier versions. Thus, the myth of the *Mabinogi* is at times a national tale with place-names linking to specific localities; at times it is an international story, where places named are located outside of Wales or in a fictional universe. In some versions by Welsh writers, the nonhuman in a place is sometimes transformed into the human – so that rural pastures become bustling cities – in order to reclaim the national and political heritage of the narratives.

The nonhuman fits into the place-name debate in two ways. First, as the named, in the form of romanticized, sometimes Northern, often isolated places. Second, as the relic of the Welsh language, its archaic quality valued by many writers, which is perceived to possess a particular connection to the nonhuman in the landscape. Batt, author of *Blodeuwedd* [Na1], states of the Fourth Branch which his version re-fashions:

> The story was once a part of the rich oral tradition of storytelling in Wales that is at least a millennium and a half old, and it is located, quite specifically, by name, by its place-names, in north-west Wales, in Gwynedd. Gwynedd in many ways is still today an unchanged *mythic* landscape. It *is* as old as the hills. It is Welsh. It is Welsh-speaking. The places that The Mabinogion identifies by

> name are still recognisable to us to visit today. And it is this connection, between landscape and myth, between the story and its place-names, between then and now, which holds the audience's attention throughout the telling of the story, even today, suspending disbelief until, until the end (Y Diwedd).[9]

The specific use of place-names is one of the results of perceiving the *Mabinogi* as a myth – they are the outcome of the *Mabinogi* Effect.

The first part of this chapter will outline the dual status of Welsh as both a political and fabled language and the historical background against which place-names must be read. It will then consider the importance of the Welsh language for the Welsh and for the non-Welsh writers. The second part of this chapter will discuss the role of place-names in individual re-imaginings and ask how they contribute to the myth of the *Mabinogi*.

The Status of Welsh in the Corpus: A Fabled Language

The twofold status of the Welsh language as a fabled tongue on the one hand and a political one on the other means that it contains a significance above its use as a tool for communication. The marginal and politically complex status of the Welsh language problematizes the use of Welsh terminology in English-language books, especially those by non-Welsh writers. Wales and England's historical, political, and cultural relationship, with England as the colonizer and Wales as the oppressed nation, has naturally had an immense impact on the propagation of Welsh national culture, and especially also on the development of the Mabinogion in the popular imagination as well as in scholarly circles. Indeed, Welsh literature is therefore often classed as postcolonial, which has had an effect on the understanding of the term

[9] Batt, 'Introduction', p. x.

'Celtic' as discussed in Chapter One.[10] Certainly, the Four Branches have been considered in postcolonial terms.[11] The derision with which Welsh has been approached in the tumultuous history of its country forces uneasy questions about the appropriation of Welsh in non-Welsh texts. Especially, perhaps, in texts which create their own imagined otherworld of nonhuman creatures. '*Species* reeks of race and sex,' writes Donna Haraway.[12]

The marginalization of Welsh carries with it troubled connotations of the child-like and primitive, evoking the characteristics of Wales as a remote, 'virgin' place (discussed in the last chapter). In E.B.'s 'A Trip to North Wales', published in 1701, a comparison of the Welsh language to children's 'prattling' is undertaken.[13] In their difference to the sounds of the English language, the tonal characteristics of Welsh are reduced to their sounds, which, when not understood, can be divorced from their meaning. On a similar note, in the 1682 text *Wallography* the Welsh language is described as virginal, followed by a description of a traveller attempting to pronounce words in Welsh, the result of which is his almost fatal choking: '[…] was almost choak'd with *consonants*, had we not by clapping him on the back made him *disgorge* a Guttural or two […].[14] The language is indicated to be the near-death of a traveller; a more ominous symbolism can hardly be imagined. In the 1847 Blue Books Report Welsh is described as follows: '[…] his [the Welsh workman's] language keeps him

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[10] See pp. 61-62.
[11] See p. 61 n. 91.
[12] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 18.
[13] See W. J. Hughes, *Wales and the Welsh in English Literature* (Wrexham: Hughes and Son, 1924), p. 45. The account is attributed to Edward Ward or Edward Bysshe, see John Cramsie, *British Travellers and the Encounter with Britain*, 1450-1700 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015). See Cramsie also for a general overview of travel writing in this period, for Wales see esp. pp. 275-324. For the complete account by E.B., see *Five Travel Scripts: Commonly Attributed to Edward* Ward, ed. by Howard William Troyer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), pp. 1-12. See also *Writing Wales, from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Mottram and Prescott, esp. the introduction by Mottram and Prescott, pp. 1-20 on the connection between the remote landscape of Wales and perception of its inhabitants.
[14] *Wallography, or, The Britton describ'd*, by W.R. (London: Obadiah Blagrave, 1682), p. 121-22 [text's emphasis].

under the hatches, being one in which he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information. It is a language of old-fashioned agriculture, of theology, and of simple rustic life, while all the world about him is English.'[15] Roberts states: 'Welsh is not given the status of a language, but is "gibberish"; it is not spoken, but "prattled", as by children (with the usual connotations of immaturity and irresponsibility) […].'[16]

Leading up to the Blue Books Report, several uprisings among Welsh miners in the first half of the nineteenth century led to a perception being sown in the minds of government observers that the Welsh language is inherently linked to violence, and that it constitutes 'a major barrier to the creation of loyal, obedient British subjects.'[17] Comparing the Welsh language to the sounds of animals was not uncommon in the Blue Books as well as in other cultural discourses.[18] Indeed, in the eighth century *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, *omnes daemoniorum turmae* ('all the hosts of demons') appear in the saint's dream speaking Welsh.[19] These subtexts are especially pertinent when considering them alongside the question of language as a human characteristic. As Joanna Bourke shows in her *What it Means to be Human* (2011), indistinguishable 'jabbering' or chattering has long been taken as a measure of nonhumanness, often in derogatory terms such as women's speech, birds' song, etc.[20] Further, in the nineteenth century, the archaic nature of Welsh was valued, seemingly epitomizing primordial values, which, as will be shown, the language still signifies in the corpus

[15] *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p. 3.
[16] Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*, p. 13.
[17] Harri Garrod Roberts, *Embodying Identity: Representations of the Body in Welsh Literature* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 24.
[18] See for example *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, I, p. 165; Roberts, *Embodying Identity*, p. 30.
[19] Bertram Colgrave, *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), chapter 34, pp. 108-111. Colgrave notes that this attack by British hosts cannot be taken literally, but of course the symbolic nature of the picture is nevertheless poignant, see Colgrave, p. 185.
[20] See Joanna Bourke, *What it Means to be Human: Reflections from 1971 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2011), pp. 31-43.

of re-imaginings.[21] In an article on the medieval in the Welsh literary canon, Helen Fulton writes of 'long-standing institutional views of what Welsh literature was – ancient, arcane, historical and expressive of a national language and culture whose origins pre-existed those of England.'[22] It is not surprising that this emphasis on the archaic nature of Welsh, which created the illusion of a 'backward' tongue, was propagated by the likes of Matthew Arnold, who already had such an impact on the establishment of Welsh as superfluous. Arnold writes: 'For all serious purposes in modern literature […] the language of a Welshman is and must be English.'[23]

Welsh for the Welsh: Tradition and the Cyfarwydd

Thus it is that for Welsh authors the complexity of their languages is writ large among poets and novelists alike. The question whether language is linked to national and cultural identity is asked again and again. As Tony Curtis writes in *Wales: The Imagined Nation*: 'If national identity is not necessarily linked to language, if it is neither simply a matter of geographical residency, then is it a matter of rugby and singing?'[24] In the volume of tributes, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, most of the entries mention the Welsh language as a defining feature of his or their or indeed any writer's work in Wales.[25] For Saunders Lewis, arguably the most political of all the authors re-imagining the *Mabinogi*, Welsh is what makes Wales.[26] In his

[21] See *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, book 1, p. 3. On the negative perception of Welsh see Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books*, pp. 199-205.
[22] Fulton, 'Matthew Arnold and the Canon of Medieval Welsh Literature', p. 206.
[23] Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature,* p. 21.
[24] Tony Curtis, 'Introduction', in *Wales: The Imagined Nation, Essays in Cultural and National Identity*, ed. by Curtis (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1986), pp. 7-15.
[25] *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, ed. by Nigel Jenkins (Llanishen: Welsh Union of Writers, 1995).
[26] See Saunders Lewis' 1962 BBC radio speech *Tynged yr Iaith* ('The Fate of the Language'). Saunders Lewis, *Tynged yr Iaith* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1962). Reprinted in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, ed. by Alun R. Jones and Gwyn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), pp. 127-41.

famous radio speech from 1962 Lewis is particularly scathing about the status of Welsh at the University of Wales, stating: *Y mae Prifysgol Cymru yn fwy cyfrifol nag unrhyw sefydliad arall fod yn amhosibl heddiw i lenyddiaeth Gymraeg fod yn ddarlun cyflawn o fywyd gwareiddiad.* ('The University of Wales is more responsible than any other institution for the fact that it is impossible for Welsh literature today to portray civilized life in full.')[27] Lewis ends his speech by saying: *Nid dim llai na chwyldroad yw adfer yr iaith Gymraeg yng Nghymru.* ('It will be nothing less than a revolution to restore the Welsh language in Wales.').[28] That his own Welsh-language play, 'Blodeuwedd,' can be read as an attempt to re-establish a Welsh cultural canon will be discussed in Chapter Four.[29] For Lewis certainly, the Welsh language is indispensable to its literature.

Out of the fifty-eight non-academic re-imaginings, forty-two are by writers of Welsh nationality. I have already stated that there are fourteen Welsh-language re-imaginings, not counting the academic texts. That means that twenty-one versions are by Welsh writers in English, and seven other versions are dual English-Welsh publications. In a comparison to the similar status of the Irish language in that country's literature, this duality is also present there from the end of the nineteenth century.[30] In this corpus, the dialogue between Welsh and English, while fraught with historical discord, is not a sparring discourse but one of mutual understanding, necessarily accepted by all parties, even if, for some writers, Welsh must take precedence.

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[27] Lewis, *Tynged yr Iaith,* p. 16; Lewis, 'The Fate of the Language', transl. by G. Aled Williams in *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, pp. 127-41 (p. 133).
[28] Lewis, *Tynged yr Iaith,* p. 30; Lewis, 'The Fate of the Language', p. 141.
[29] See Chapter Four, 'A Welsh Cathleen Ni Houlihan'.
[30] See Cronin, *Translating Ireland*, p. 138.

The former Poet Laureate of Wales, Gillian Clarke, who has written two verse re-imaginings of the *Mabinogi*, 'The King of Britain's Daughter (1993) [P7] and 'Blodeuwedd' (1985) [P4], remarks:

> My loss of Welsh has been a very strong tension in my writing. But English is my mother tongue, and it is the tongue I was educated in. But being a woman and Welsh and therefore in two senses not wholly ready to count myself as one of the grown-ups, not easily able to feel I was permitted to be myself, to be a writer, an artist, I was a very late developer.[31]

The discord between the loss of language, the need to create stories and the connection to the land is palpable in the writings of Clarke. For her, Welsh echoes in the sounds of nature. In her poem 'The Water-Diviner', water is sucked up through the depth of a rock and it makes a sound like the Welsh word for 'water', *dŵr*:

> a thorough bass too deep
> for the naked ear, shouts through the hose
> a word we could not say, or spell, or remember,
> something like 'dŵr…dŵr.[32]

The sound is so remote that it cannot be heard with the naked ear, sitting (as it does) so deeply within the earth. Yet it is also familiar, it has been recognized as similar to *dŵr*. It is a tongue which is not present in the consciousness of the listeners; it can only be heard through the medium of the hose. Perhaps it represents the whole Welsh language and its precarious state, its connection to the nonhuman environment; or perhaps what is meant here is an older language, a Welsh of the past, whose similarity to the present is still visible. Either way, Welsh is understood as a language which transcends the human-nonhuman boundary. This, as will be shown, is one of the

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[31] Susan Butler, 'Interview with Gillian Clarke', in *Common Ground: Poets in a Welsh Landscape*, ed. by Butler (Bridgend: Poetry Wales, 1985), pp. 194-98. Quoted in Tony Curtis, 'Grafting the Sour to Sweetness', in *Wales: The Imagined Nation*, ed. by Curtis, pp. 97-126 (p. 111).
[32] Gillian Clarke, 'The Water-Diviner', in Clarke, *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997), ll. 11-14.

leitmotifs of the corpus: the ability of Welsh to transcend from human to nonhuman and vice versa. It directly links language and place through place-names, it is spoken by a bird in the re-imaginings of Branwen discussed in the third chapter, and it allows human to nonhuman transformations to take place as in the case of Blodeuwedd analysed in the fourth chapter.

The fact that just under half of the Welsh writers re-imagining the *Mabinogi* are English-speaking raises the question whether the appeal of the *Mabinogi* is heightened also through the emphasis placed on the archaic nature of Welsh. Gillian Clarke writes: '[…] occasionally the word that comes into a poem is a Welsh one […] because it was the right one to use on that occasion.'[33] Certainly, the language takes on a poetic significance, and the re-fashioning of the *Mabinogi* for Welsh authors stands in the tradition of the *cyfarwyddiaid*, the storytellers, irrevocably bound up with the Welsh language as its tongue of origin, and possibly the main reason why writers grapple so extensively with the loss of Welsh.

The *cyfarwydd*, the storyteller, is a complex and elusive figure in Welsh literary history. The storyteller in the Middle Ages seems to have been related to the function of the poet as a performer, but presenting prose works.[34] While the purpose of the poet is laid out in the medieval Welsh laws, the role of the *cyfarwydd* is not.[35] Sioned Davies suggests that s/he could work both in a professional role and in an amateur one, and that the denomination is more of an 'occasional title' rather than a profession.[36] The medieval *Mabinogi* itself stands in the tradition of the *cyfarwydd*, having its roots in oral storytelling; yet in how far one can connect the Four Branches

[33] Butler, 'An Interview with Gillian Clarke', in *Common Ground*, ed. by Butler, p. 196.
[34] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xiv. See Davies, *Crefft y Cyfarwydd* and Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. For an argument on the connection between the poet and the *cyfarwydd*, see Patrick Ford, 'The Poet as *Cyfarwydd* in Early Welsh Tradition', *Studia Celtica*, 10/11 (1975-1976), 152-62.
[35] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xiv.
[36] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. xiv; Davies, 'Cyfarwydd', in *Celtic Culture*, II, pp. 525-26.

with the practice of the *cyfarwydd* is unclear, since we only know them today as written texts composed by a redactor as author.[37] The tradition of the storyteller continues from the Middle Ages to the present day, sometimes more, sometimes less present in Welsh culture.[38] Yet among writers and poets of the corpus, the practise of the *cyfarwydd*, in whose shadow the medieval *Mabinogi* was composed, extends its reach also to the most modern of versions, in the importance of language and orality which pervades the corpus.

In T. Harri Jones' poem 'Rhiannon,' the girl Rhiannon 'of the Mabinogion name,' 'says she wants to be a poet –' and is inspired by Ayer's Rock, while the speaker (Rhiannon's parent) dreams of:

> the small hill, Allt-y-clych […]
> The hill of bells, bedraggled with wet fern
> And stained with sheep, and holding like a threat
> The wild religion and the ancient tongue,
> All the defeated centuries of Wales.[39]

Allt-y-clych, literally 'the hill of bells', is located in Powys in Mid Wales. While it is not a location taken from the *Mabinogi*, it is, like so many others in the corpus, a rural and pastoral place. The human element, introduced through the church bells, is one of bucolic quietude. Just as the human element in pastoral landscape paintings is often a shepherd or a church steeple, here too the human component is spiritual, a 'wild religion', which could be a reference to the non-conformist tradition of Wales, but also to a different kind of religion – that of a spiritualist nature. Indeed, the speaker

[37] On oral storytelling and the *cyfarwydd*, see Davies, *Crefft y Cyfarwydd*. On the difficulty of linking the *Mabinogi* with the *cyfarwydd*, see Brynley F. Roberts, 'Oral Tradition and Welsh Literature: A Description and Survey', *Oral Tradition*, 3/1-2 (1988), 61-87 (esp. pp. 70-73). On the character of Gwydion and the *cyfarwydd*, see Catherine McKenna, '*Cyfarwydd* as Poet in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*', *North American Journal of Celtic Studies*, 1.2 (Nov 2017), 107-20.

[38] For an overview of the continuity of oral storytelling in Wales, see Robin Gwyndaf, 'Folk Legends in Welsh Oral Tradition: Principles of Research, Continuity and Function', *Béaloideas*, 60/61 (1992/1993), 215-40.

[39] T. Harri Jones, 'Rhiannon', in *A Book of Wales: An Anthology*, selected by Meic Stephens (London: Dent, 1987), ll.1, 6, 10-14 (p. 170).

names the very characteristics of place, which, as will be shown, are connected in many versions to the *Mabinogi* and the Welsh language. The nonhuman in the place of Allt-y-clych is emphasized: it is covered 'with wet fern', 'stained with sheep', and it encompasses within it the 'wild religion and the ancient tongue.'[40] It holds within it the relics of the past. The Welsh language is part of the nonhuman landscape; it endures, like the places themselves, the defeats that Wales has suffered.

Another example for the prominence of the deep-rooted nature of Welsh can be found in the following passage written by Welsh poet Steve Griffiths in a book of tributes to Conran:

> Reading the translations [in Conran's *Penguin Book of Welsh Verse*] also meant a ritual naming of places I knew intimately: the killing of Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd above Pentraeth, Cemais in the Cantref of Talybolion […]. Here was a poetry out of the villages my schoolfriends came from, which checked me in my trajectory outward. It was shockingly not Cambridge or Paris. It began to suggest, at great distance, the possibility of a poetry of place. In Anglesey, among the gentle greens and intimate tricklings, there is a darkness and a sense of loss, and thus something deceptive in its enticement that the translations begin to explain. It is all the more tantalising because there are so few physical remains and artefacts. In Wales, the continuity has to be all in the head and in the clues of the landscape, which is why the language is so important.[41]

The fact remains, however, that the majority of all re-imaginings in the corpus are written in English.[42] Out of the ninety-four versions included in this corpus, counting scholarly editions, thirty-three are written in Welsh. Out of those thirty-three, twelve are scholarly editions, and four [S22, C2, C3, and C5] written for Welsh learners. That means that only eighteen out of fifty-eight versions are creative re-

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[40] Jones, 'Rhiannon', ll. 11-13.
[41] Steve Griffiths, 'One Harbour Light', in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, ed. by Jenkins, pp. 63-70 (pp. 64-5).
[42] It is important to note that Welsh is a minority language in Wales today, statistics from 2012 show that around ninteen percent of the population are self-declaring Welsh-speakers. See Nikolas Coupland, 'Wales and the Welsh: Boundedness and Peripherality', in *Language, Borders and Identity*, ed. by Dominic Watt and Carmen Llamas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 118-53 (p. 142).

imaginings in Welsh, almost all of which are children's literature.[43] The only exceptions are Saunders Lewis' plays 'Blodeuwedd' (1923-5) [D3], 'Eisteddfod Bodran/ Gan Byll' (1952) [D4] and 'Branwen' (1975) [D5], Mike Collins' graphic novel *Y Mabinogi* (2002) [G1], and R. Williams Parry, 'Drudwy Branwen' (1952) [P1]. These creative Welsh-language re-imaginings span the entire corpus. This is also the case for the Welsh-language children's literature texts, from J.M. Edwards' 1896 *Mabinogion* [C1] to Siân Lewis' *Pedair Ceinc Y Mabinogi* with illustrations by Valériane Leblond (2015) [C24]. There is no trend which happens over time or a rise in these versions in a specific period. In contrast to the re-imaginings by Welsh writers and poets in English which re-fashion the story of Branwen and Rhiannon discussed in the next chapter, and which show a definite trend in the timeline of the corpus, Welsh-language versions appear almost at random from the end of the nineteenth century to today.[44] In the same way that the Welsh language treads alongside the use of place-names in the re-imaginings, so too do the Welsh language re-imaginings tread alongside the English-language versions, consistently present in the corpus. Considering the fact that just under half of the corpus is written by English and American authors – thirty-six of fifty-eight non-academic writers and poets are Welsh (five have composed two re-imaginings, Saunders Lewis three) – the Welsh-language number is nevertheless a small one.[45] Indeed, it is perhaps telling that the seminal Middle Welsh edition of the *Mabinogi* remains Ifor Williams' version published in 1930 [S10]. In the majority of the re-imaginings then, Welsh is not the

[43] G1, D3-6, P1, C1, C6, C8, C10, C12, C15-C17, C20-C22, and C24.
[44] See Appendix II, pp. 334-38.
[45] It is also worth pointing out that from the time the *Mabinogi* was translated by Guest, the Welsh language was on the decline. David T. Lloyd writes, that 'Welsh literature in English is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon.' Lloyd, 'Writing on the Edge: An Introduction', in *Writing on the Edge: Interviews with Writers and Editors of Wales*, ed. by Lloyd (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 7-13 (p. 7).

language of the speaker, but a fabled secondary tongue, occasionally added to create a certain mythical effect as will be shown in the next section of this chapter.

Welsh from the Outside: Pronunciation and Made-up Names

Among non-Welsh writers one finds a strange confidence in the application of Welsh, as if it is a made-up language, while there is a simultaneous strong awareness for their outsider status.[46] While J.R.R. Tolkien uses Welsh to create his fictional *Sindarin*, many writers in the *Mabinogi* corpus use Welsh as if the Welsh language itself is invented.[47] Yet Tolkien's handling of Welsh for the pleasure of certain sounds is similar to that of many non-Welsh writers of the *Mabinogi* versions: 'For this pleasure is felt most immediately and acutely in the moment of association: that is in the reception (or imagination) of a word-form which is felt to have a certain style, and the attribution to it of a meaning which is not received through it.'[48] As Carl Phelpstead notes on Tolkien's untranslated Elvish passages: 'The importance of the purely aesthetic "extra dimension" that the invented languages bring [in LOTR] is signalled by the fact that some passages in the novel are not translated.'[49] This 'aesthetic extra dimension' is also pivotal for the *Mabinogi* narratives – the difference is, of course, that Welsh is a living language. Thus scenes in which the pronunciation of words is stressed are common, as well as authors' comments on pronunciation in forewords or

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[46] Both Cooper and Garner claim knowledge of Welsh. See Cooper, 'Moving On' (1990), in *Dreams and Wishes*, pp. 87-100; Garner, 'A Bit More Practice' (1968), in *The Voice That Thunders*, pp. 59-64. It is not clear whether Walton knew Welsh or had visited Wales, but we do know that she entertained a long correspondence with John Cowper Powys, Welsh poet, novelist and essayist. See the *Evangeline Ensley Walton papers*: Tuscon, University of Arizona Libraries. MS 384. <http://www.azarchivesonline.org/xtf/view?docId=ead/uoa/UAMS384.xml> [accessed January 03 2015].

[47] On the use of Welsh in Tolkien's Middle Earth, see Jim Allan and Nina Carson, *An Introduction to Elvish* (Hayes: Bran's Head, 1978), esp. p. 49; Carl Phelpstead, *Tolkien and Wales: Language, Literature and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011); Verlyn Flieger, *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien's World* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2002).

[48] Tolkien, 'Welsh and English', p. 193.

[49] Phelpstead, *Tolkien and Wales*, p. 41.

introductions. The Welsh of the *Mabinogi* is, naturally, Middle Welsh, and while it is close to Modern Welsh in its lexical meanings, its pronunciation will have been different.[50] Simon Evans writes on reading Middle Welsh texts: 'We must remember that the language we study is the literary language, in all cases removed from the spoken medium […].'[51] We cannot say how Middle Welsh would have been pronounced, but we can assume that the writers and poets of the re-imaginings will have been thinking of Modern Welsh pronunciations, or an imagined version thereof, as they craft their works. In contrast to academic inquiries of the Four Branches, many of the re-imaginings treat the Welsh language as one continuing tongue which has survived, without alterations, from a pre-medieval past.[52] It is this perceived continuity in the language that mirrors the perceived continuity in the landscape which was explored in the last chapter.[53] Part of the *Mabinogi* myth, this belief in an unchanging environment, creates an immediacy, a relevance, which explains the long-standing popularity of the stories.

A short survey of a sample of re-imaginings will show how the awareness of Welsh as a living language conflicts with the confidence in the application of said language. In the foreword to *The Prydain Companion* [YA3], Alexander writes on the pronunciation of Welsh names: '[o]n that subject, I have to smile a little to myself. Having grown so familiar with them during my research, the names – exotic to anyone else – became, to me, quite ordinary and not at all difficult. […] My attitude was, and is, simply to have fun with them. I have always urged readers to pronounce

[50] On the phonology of Middle Welsh, see Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh*, pp. 1-23; Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, pp. xxvii-xxix.
[51] Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh*, p. xviii.
[52] For analyses of Middle Welsh etymology, see the notes to the academic versions, S1-36.
[53] See Chapter One, 'Otherwordly Wales – Innocent Wales'.

those peculiar names as seemed best to their own ears and tongue.'[54] Alexander's comments show the perspective from outside Wales: these names are 'peculiar' and so it is acceptable to 'have fun with them.' Michael O. Tunnel, the author of *The Prydain Companion*, provides a pronunciation guide for each entry. These pronunciation guides are, however, greatly simplified, and the elusive /ll/ sound is not even attempted.[55] Indeed, Tunnel states that these guides were provided by Alexander himself, 'who advises us that they are not necessarily true to the Welsh tongue,' that '[m]any sounds in the Welsh language are simply not available in English, and that Alexander 'does not want the Welsh words to be a stumbling block for readers […].'[56] From these comments it is clear that for Alexander, Welsh words are used primarily to enhance the strangeness of the world he is creating. As we will see when we take a closer look at the names in Prydain, the re-positioning of the place-names into exotic markers, results in the re-creating of the locations named, and the de-politicizing of the *Mabinogi*.

In a very similar fashion to Alexander, Morris – who, though Welsh was living in California at the time of writing and publishing his version in 1930 – provides a pronunciation guide to *The Book of the Three Dragons* [N2], and urges his readers to pronounce the names as they wish.

> [A]n excellent plan is just to decide for oneself what one will call each of the people in the book, and stick to that. Thus if you elected to call Pwyll simply *Pwil*, and called him that every time his name cropped up; m [sic] why, you would get along charmingly, and he wouldn't mind in the least, It [sic] doesn't sound so nice as P*ooeelh* perhaps, but then – !'[57]

[54] Lloyd Alexander, 'Foreword', in Michael O. Tunnel, *The Prydain Companion: A Reference Guide to Lloyd Alexander's Prydain Chronicles*, 2nd edn (New York: Henry Hold, 2003), pp. xi-xiii (p. xii).
[55] Tunnel, *The Prydain Companion*. For example the entry for 'House of Llyr' gives the following pronunciation guide: '(LEER)', p. 150.
[56] Tunnel, 'How to Use the Companion', in *The Prydain Companion*, pp. xv –xviii (p. xviii).
[57] Morris, *Book of the Three Dragons*, p. 9.

The Welsh names become a symbol for something odd, something strange and exotic, rather than carrying an inherent meaning. It is an act of unconscious dislocation: re-creating the names through different pronunciation, and thereby re-creating the place where the language is spoken.

Lanier also includes a pronunciation guide for the Welsh names and words in his *The Boy's Mabinogion* [YA1] because he worries that they 'are apt to make such an uncouth impression upon those unacquainted with their true sounds.'[58] For Lanier, it it is not the meaning but the sound which is vital to extract from the correct pronunciation. As Charles R. Anderson writes in his introduction to Lanier's *Poems and Letters*, he has 'the old habit of choosing words for their musical sounds rather than their meaning.'[59] Lanier introduces a few rules of pronunciation, preceded by this statement: 'The following rules, in which of course all attempt at minute accuracy is sacrificed to brevity and only approximate sounds are aimed at, will at least result in showing such names to be often musical and pleasing, even to the English ear.'[60] Lanier's comments show that he feels the need to justify the use of Welsh, that it can be a beautiful language if one only knows how to approach it.

Batt [Na1] invites the reader to 'learn to speak *The Mabinogion*.' He follows this with a short and very approximate guide to the personal names, and includes the Ordnance Survey coordinates to the places-names and invites the reader to attempt to find the locations.[61] In Daniel Morden's *Tree of Leaf and Flame* from 2012 [C23], a short pronunciation guide is provided with a heavy emphasis on personal rather than place-names, and the following instruction: 'To tell them in the Welsh way here's a

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[58] Sidney Lanier, 'Introduction', in Lanier, *The Boy's Mabinogion: Being the Earliest Welsh Tales of King Arthur in the Famous Red Book of Hergest* (London: Sampson Low, Marstin, Searle, and Rivington, 1881), pp. iii-xx (p. xvii).
[59] Charles R. Anderson, 'Introduction', in *Sidney Lanier: Poems and Letters, Centennial Edition, Vol 1*, ed. by Charles R. Anderson (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1945), pp. xxi-xc (p.xxvii).
[60] Lanier, *The Boy's Mabinogion*, p. xvii.
[61] Batt, 'Introduction, pp. xii-xiii.

rough guide to pronouncing some of the names.'[62] On the other end of the spectrum, Stanley Knill's *The Mabinogion Brought to Life* (2013) [S33], a detailed version of all eleven tales, told in the tradition of the *cyfarwydd* which attempts to 'provide an accurate version of the *Mabinogion*,' includes a longer introduction to 'The Welsh Alphabet and Pronunciation'.[63]

Apart from the scholarly editions which often include lengthy introductions with notes on the language, those versions outlined here which contain guides to pronunciation, an author's note on the matter or a scene in which the issue is explored (as in Garner and Cooper below), cannot be classified as fitting into a certain category of text. This issue occurs both in versions by Welsh writers and in those by non-Welsh authors, in vastly extended versions such as Morris works, as well as short and precise re-imaginings such as Morden's text. The only classifying characteristic here is that all of these are, naturally, English-language versions.

A strong need, then, is felt to explain and pre-empt any issues regarding pronunciation, yet at the same time, no serious effort is asked of the reader. The pronunciation guides are on the one hand a kind of insurance policy against charges of insensitive appropriation, yet they also aid in creating an 'otherworld of sound' and furthering the mythologization of the *Mabinogi* discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Two English-language re-imaginings make more of the possible ramifications of mispronunciation: Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2] and Cooper's *The Grey King* (1975) [YA4]. The following scene addresses the problems which can arise from false pronunciation in *The Owl Service*. Alison is talking to Gwyn about a book

[62] Daniel Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2012), pp. 92-93.
[63] Stanley Knill, *The Mabinogion Brought to Life*, (Capel-y-ffin: Capel-y-ffin Publishing: 2013), pp. viii and xiv-xvi.

version of the Four Branches that they have both read. She mispronounces Lleu's name unknowingly at first and then is unable to pronounce it correctly:

> 'There was a wizard, or something, I forgot his name, and he made a woman out of flowers, and she married this Clue Claw Somebody.' 'Lleu Llaw Gyffes,' said Gwyn. 'Yes: well then she fell in love with a man called Gronw: Gronw Pebyr. And he decided to kill Clue.' 'Lleu.' 'Clue.' 'Never mind,' said Gwyn.[64]

According to this passage the gap between English pronunciation of the names and their correct Welsh sound is large indeed. Alison seems to know something about Welsh phonetics, since she pronounces the /ll/ as a /k/ sound, which is close to the correct Welsh pronunciation of /ll/, whereas a reader without any knowledge of Welsh would most likely read the /ll/ sound as an English /l/. Yet when Gwyn corrects her, she is not able to create the /ll/ phone. This inability to pronounce certain words in a foreign language underlines the possible inaccessibility of the sound symbolism of the word. This signifies that certain meanings are only revealed to the Welsh speaker in *The Owl Service*, but it also widens the cultural gap between Alison and Gwyn, whose name, incidentally, is unmistakably Welsh in its spelling and its sound.

Similarly, a scene in Cooper's *The Grey King* (1975), in which Bran gives Will a pronunciation lesson, stresses the importance of sound. Over two pages, Bran points to various place-names on a map of Wales and Will attempts to pronounce them.

> He [Will] saw: Tal y Llyn, Mynydd Ceiswyn, Cemmaes, Llanwrin, Machynlleth, Afon Dyfi, Llangelynin. He read aloud, laboriously, 'Tallylin, Minid Seeswin, Semeyes, Lan-rin Machine-leth, Affron Diffy, Lang-elly-nin.'
>
> Bran moaned softly. 'I was afraid of that.'[65]

[64] Garner, *The Owl Service*, p. 61.
[65] Cooper, *The Grey King*, p. 488.

On reaching the /ll/ sound, Bran says: 'All you have to learn now is the one sound most Englishmen can never manage', and, after a bit of practice, he tells Will: 'You'll do alright. And if you get fed up with trying, you can take the other English way out and sat *ll* like *thl*.'[66] In these two versions, the sound of the place-names is the route to belonging.

Independent of each other – Cooper has stated that she purposely did not read any other YA fantasy books while writing her own, including Garner – these two fantasy writers create an entire scene which deals with the pronunciation.[67] The Welsh language looms large indeed, and as we will see in the next part of this thesis, has the possibility to magically transform and transcend the text. The reader in *The Grey King* is expected to mispronounce the words along with Will and follow him on the road to the correct pronunciation. The learning process – almost a rite of initiation – is ironically lost in the audiobook of the novel in which the Welsh reader pronounces the words correctly from the beginning.[68] In contrast, in the audiobook of *The Owl Service* the scene from above is read out correctly, so that Alison's mispronunciation is not lost.[69]

From these examples it becomes clear that the sound-images of Welsh are vital for many writers of the corpus. Indeed, as we will see, place-names are often chosen for their sound-image and strange orthography, rather than their lexical meaning, and it will be argued here that writers thus build an 'otherworld' of sound around their versions, dislocating the stories from the Welsh language, even while it is employed. Thus, the fragmentation and mythologization of the *Mabinogi* is expanded.

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[66] Cooper, *The Grey King*, p. 489.
[67] 'An Interview' (1989), in Cooper, *Dreams and Wishes*, pp. 186-197 (pp.188-89).
[68] Susan Cooper, *The Grey King* (Unabridged), narrated by Richard Mitchley (Random House, Inc. Listening Library: 2007).
[69] Alan Garner, *The Owl Service* (Unabridged), narrated by Wayne Forester (Naxos Audio Books: 2008).

The expectation that the Four Branches are myths without a specific point of origin, gives a certain licence to any re-imaginings to use and re-use the material in any which way.

Welsh as a Link to the Past

One of the main draws to Welsh place-names is not, in fact, the connection to place but more importantly what this place symbolizes: the potency of myth and the past. In the same way that the concept of a Virgin Wales is a link to the past, in the same way that the otherworldly nonhuman represents an unknown bygone age, the Welsh language is valued as something archaic and perceived as part of the nonhuman world as much as it is part of the human. David Jones wrote in his unpublished essay 'On the Difficulties of One Writer of Welsh Affinity Whose Language is English':

> For the poet or the artist the 'past' is much what 'nature' is for him: it is the raw stuff which he uses. But where that 'past' is virtually forgotten, and available perhaps, as in the Welsh case, in another linguistic tradition, and moreover in a tradition separated from us by centuries of a contrary tradition, then the *poeta* is in a real jam.[70]

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the concepts of 'nature', especially a pastoral idea of nature, and the 'past', especially a remote, indefinable past, are closely interwoven in the re-imaginings, bringing with them the idea that Welshness and the Welsh language are preservers of these notions. Certainly for Cooper, the Welsh language can transmit meanings from the past:[71]

> Language is organic; it grows and changes and acquires mutations and elisions and shifts of meaning […]. But the old dialects of the English language, and the

[70] David Jones, *The Dying Gaul and Other Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 32.
[71] Cooper's grandmother is Welsh, and the family often holidayed in Aberdyfi, where her parents also moved for the last twenty years of their lives. Cooper, 'Moving On' (1990), in *Dreams and Wishes*, pp. 87-100 (p. 93).

> old languages of Britain, Welsh and the Gaelic, resist erosion more stubbornly.[72]

The historic draw of the Welsh language can also be appealing for Welsh writers, especially those whose first language is English. Gillian Clarke calls it both a 'familiar' language, spoken by her father and grandparents – her mother spoke only English in order for her children to access a better education – but she also calls Welsh 'the forbidden tongue', 'a secret tribal tongue'.[73] In the introduction to their edited volume *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity*, Gibson, Trower and Tregidga write – in the context of re-enactments of various historical events – of 'identity as mythic commodity, a source of affective and even erotic pleasure where "real" ethnic identity is not actually important and the notion of such reality is implicitly questioned.'[74] This notion of 'identity as mythic commodity' is prominent among both Welsh and non-Welsh versions of the *Mabinogi*. In fact, Tony Curtis writes that the Welsh 'do invent tradition. Morganwg did it in the eighteenth century, and we've still got to do it.'[75]

The influence of Morganwg and the Celtic Revival in general can be felt throughout the corpus of re-imaginings, in the idea that narratives such as the *Mabinogi* are malleable in their form and content and have an inherent connection to nature. Iolo Morganwg, whose given name was Edward Williams, was editor of the *Myvyrian Archaiology* (1801-7), which enabled the widespread availability of medieval Welsh prose and poetry for the first time, although some of it was forged and none appeared in translation.[76] One of his greatest influences on nineteenth-

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[72] Cooper, 'Long Ago and Far Away' (1989), in *Dreams and Wishes*, pp. 72- 86 (p. 75).
[73] Clarke, *At the Source*, p. 56.
[74] Gibson, Trower and Tregidga, 'Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity', p. 15.
[75] 'Interview with Tony Curtis', in *Writing on the Edge*, ed. by Lloyd, pp. 112-121 (p.113).
[76] Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, pp. 59-60. See also Prys Morgan, *Iolo Morganwg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975).

century Celticism is Williams' revival of the eisteddfod, which stimulated the production of scholarly literature.[77] For Morganwg the importance of nature, especially wilderness as opposed to industry, was clear in his writing as well as in the open-air meetings of the Gorsedd.[78] As discussed in the previous chapter, the connection, which Morganwg created between the 'Celt' and Nature was also visible in the early days of Celtic Studies, and has remained discernible in the texts of the *Mabinogi* corpus to this day, and indeed, has contributed to the significance of the nonhuman in all its aspects.[79]

Parallel to this desire to reconnect to the primordial through Welsh, is the yearning to be part of this ancient tradition. The writers are aware that using the Welsh language in their texts lets the reader see a glimpse of the 'inner sanctum that lies beyond the tourist's gaze.'[80] The past is the prevailing notion attached to Welsh; as Gillian Clarke writes, '[c]alling into the dark cave of language brings his [Bendigeidfran's] voice echoing back.'[81] While Welsh is described as follows in the Blue Books report: 'It is a language of old-fashioned agriculture, of theology, and of simple rustic life […],' for many authors this perceived pastoral quality of the language is an inherently positive trait.[82] The oral quality has attached itself to the nonhuman, as Penny Thomas, editor to the Seren series puts it: '[…] the words are still whispered abroad, a whistle in the reeds, a bird's song in your ear.'[83]

Welsh is a language seen as a means to reconnect not only with the past but also with Britain itself, with a shared national heritage In a statement on the

[77] Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, pp. 60-61.
[78] See R.J.W. Evans, 'Was there a Welsh Enlightenment?', in *Wales and the Wider World: Welsh History in an International Context*, ed. by Thomas Charles-Edwards and R.J.W. Evans (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010), pp. 139-56 (p. 146).
[79] See Chapter One, pp. 59 n. 79.
[80] Daniel G. Williams, *Wales Unchanged: Literature, Politics and Identity in the American Century. Writing Wales in English (Cardiff: University of Wales Press*, 2015), p. 142.
[81] Gillian Clarke, *At the Source*, p. 8.
[82] Quoted in Saunders Lewis, 'The Fate of the Language', p. 131. See this chapter, p. 115.
[83] Thomas, 'New Series from the Mabinogion: Introduction', p.7.

unchanging quality of Old English, Welsh and Gaelic, Cooper seems to conflate them into one shared past. The idea that the Welsh are the ancestors of the British seems to be prevalent among many of the non-Welsh as well as Welsh authors, stemming from the spread of Brythonic across *Yr Hen Ogledd*. 'The Saxon word *walh* or *wealh* meant a Briton (or Welshman – hence the name for Wales itself, country of the British), but it also meant slave or serf […].'[84] This belief dates back to the medieval period, as Helen Fulton writes: 'The mythic belief in a pre-existing autonomous British rule over the whole island of Britain, a political sovereignty that was cruelly and unrightfully usurped by the Saxons, formed the bedrock of much Welsh literature right through the Middle Ages.'[85] Conran writes:

> […] in Welsh poetry, there is very little sense of Wales as a geographical whole before the twelfth century. Wales, to use an etymological metaphor, is a back-formation from the Welsh. It is the people, the *Cymry*, who are important: their country is essentially the Island of Britain as a whole, and the fact that they now occupy only a fraction of it called Wales is no more than an unfortunate historical accident.[86]

Indeed, Gerald of Wales alludes to the idea of *Yr Hen Ogledd* in the twelfth-century *The Description of Wales*:

> *gloriantur ad invicem, praedicant, et confidentissime jactant, toto quod mirum est in hac spe populo manente, quoniam in brevi cives in insulam revertentur*
> ([…] they [the Welsh] boast, and most confidently predict, that they will soon reoccupy the whole island of Britain.)[87]

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[84] Penelope Lively, *The Presence of the Past: An Introduction to Landscape History* (London: Collins, 1976), p. 201.
[85] Helen Fulton, 'Arthur and Merlin in Early Welsh Literature', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Fulton (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 44-101 (p. 88). On this concept in Cooper's *Sequence*, see Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, pp. 222-24.
[86] Conran, 'Introduction', *Welsh Verse*, p. 44.
[87] *Giraldi Cambriensis*, ed. by James Dimock, II.7 (p. 216). Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through* Wales, II. 7 (p. 265).

The idea in some re-imaginings seems to be that the ancient kingdom of *Yr Hen Ogledd* retreated back to Wales and is still existent there today in the language and the landscape. Gillian Clarke defends her use of single Welsh words in her English-language poems thus: 'I regard it as sharing the old British tongue.'[88] This shared tongue, the sound of this 'secret language', with its perceived link to the primeval and its live link to the nonhuman, allows for both Welsh and non-Welsh writers to tap into its reservoir. The use of Welsh place-names in English-language texts cannot then be interpreted as a colonial endeavour; rather, it reveals a wish to belong to a culture where the links to the past are so visible in the language. This gaze into the past shapes the specific versions that are being told.

Connected to the idea of Welsh as a secret tongue is the invisibility of the language in Wales for much of the twentieth century. Thinking about Welsh place-name signs, the complex issue of the resurrection of the Welsh language and heritage is an added factor in the evaluation of place-names in Wales.[89] This is also an ongoing debate in Ireland, where the norm has been to have bilingual signs, whereas in Northern Ireland the signs have generally been monolingual (English).[90] An interesting point to raise here is the ambiguity of place-names in a society which has had to fight a continuous battle for the acceptance of its language in everyday usage. Until the 1970s bilingual road signs were not the norm in Wales, which means that a

[88] Clarke*, At the Source*, p. 59.
[89] On the current visibility of Welsh place-names, see Coupland, 'Wales and the Welsh: Boundedness and Peripherality', pp. 145-50.
[90] Jeffrey L. Kallen, 'The Political Border and Linguistic Identities in Ireland: What Can the Linguistic Landscape Tell Us?', in *Language, Borders and Identity*, ed. by Dominic Watt and Carmen Llamas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 154-68. This is a current issue, as evidenced by the article 'Council row over Irish language street signs,' published on September 14th 2017 in the Belfast Telegraph. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/council-row-over-irish-language-street-signs-36131784.html> [accessed Jan 11th 2018]. See also *Critical Toponymies: The Contested Politics of Place Naming*, ed. by Lawrence D. Berg and Jani Vuolteenaho (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), esp. chapter 7: Catherine Nash, 'Irish Place Names: Post-Colonial Locations,' pp. 137-52.

place, although often known by its Welsh name, officially carried a different name.[91] Discussing Welsh in public life in the mid-twentieth century, Davies writes that '[a]lthough most of the inhabitants of south Ceredigion referred to their local town as Aberteifi, that name was seen on virtually no signposts;' and further, that '[a]wkwardly anglicised versions of Welsh place-names abounded on road signs, post offices rigorously excluded the language and any suggestion that public servants should regularly use Welsh was greeted with hostility.'[92] At the time of writing for many of the re-imaginings then, place-names in Welsh were rare or non-existent, although most places would have been known locally by their Welsh name. Therefore, Welsh place-names carry inherent political weight, and re-using, re-imagining, re-shaping or discarding them, conveys a political message despite the imagined mythological nature of the *Mabinogi* texts.

This then is the complex status of the Welsh language among the writers of the *Mabinogi* re-imaginings corpus. From this multifaceted position of Welsh, the importance of place-names in the re-imaginings becomes a question of national and political significance, so that the use of these place-names and indeed perhaps more poignantly, the rejection of them, indicates the political inclination of each writer. The 'place' which each of these place-names labels cannot simply be described as a place in the landscape of Wales; instead, in the same way that the nonhuman is a concept, the 'place' in these place-names stands for an idea: that of the fragmented, archaic myth of the *Mabinogi*. The place-name analysis in this chapter is therefore not concerned with the physical landscape of Wales; rather, it looks to analyse the political and nationalistic tendencies that lurk behind the use or the rejection of place-names in the re-imaginings, which are closely connected to the concept of the

[91] Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, pp. 114-23 and 117.
[92] Ibid., p. 117.

nonhuman as a carrier of the myth of the *Mabinogi*. The next part of this chapter analyses how the use of place-names aids in creating a mythical *Mabinogi*.

The Role of Place-Names in the Mythologization of the Mabinogi

From the first complete translation of the medieval *Mabinogi* into English in the mid-nineteenth century, we can see the attempt made by authors, especially English and American authors, as well as Welsh authors in exile, to highlight the archaic and mythic components of the texts. Names are distorted, arranged and applied to mythscapes which are not the landscapes of the *Mabinogi*. Previous studies of the re-imaginings have been keen to suggest a relationship, albeit superficial, that the re-imaginings entertain with the geography of Wales. Charles Sullivan writes of 'some sense of the actual geographical landscape of Wales' in Walton and Cooper through the use of 'designations which appear on current maps of Wales.'[93] Filmer-Davies writes of the 'sense of place' that appeals to the writers of fantasy; and Dimitra Fimi uses this same phrase in an analysis of the work of Nimmo and Garner.[94] However, the use of place-names in many texts does not, in fact, create a connection to the topography of the country Wales; rather, it links back to an imagined past. The landscapes in the versions are mythscapes which the re-imaginings traverse through, unseeing, unknowing. Yet, in choosing certain names and discarding others, the re-imaginers are creating their own myth: as Mac Cana writes, '[c]reation by naming is a feature of many cosmogonic myths.'[95] Indeed, the use of place-names that the writers

[93] Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth*, pp. 101-105. Incidentally, Sullivan labels 'Arberth' with 'Annwn' as an imaginary place, while 'Arberth' is actually the Welsh equivalent of 'Narberth' (the English-language place-name).
[94] Filmer-Davies, *Fantasy Fiction*, p. 11; Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, p. 178.
[95] Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Placenames and Mythology in Irish Tradition: Places, Pilgrimages and Things', in *Proceedings of the First North American Congress of Celtic Studies* ed. by G.W. MacLennan (Ottawa: University of Otawa, 1988), pp. 319-41 (p. 321).

and poets engage in is an etymologizing in itself, so that they are re-creating the names and places within the corpus and so contributing to the establishment of the mythic places of the *Mabinogi*. Reading the place-names as concepts forming meanings in their own right and through their sound-images, one can see that place-names, although seemingly so locally grounded, add to the mythologization and thus the fragmentation of the medieval *Mabinog*i.

It is worth noting that the use of Welsh place- and personal names is one of the more straightforward ways for a re-imagining to capture the flavour of the *Mabinogi*. Names are one of the easier categories in the Welsh language: one does not have to be able to understand or read Welsh to appropriate a name. The grammatical rules of lenition, one of the most challenging aspects for learners, do not apply to a lone-standing name. Place-names and personal names are one of the features of language, any language, which can stand outside of sentences structures and grammatical rules.

David Jones laments the loss in Welsh culture of the many associations with names such as Rhiannon from the *Mabinogi*. It is perhaps ironic, that these characteristics are, in force, made use of in the re-imaginings. For the name 'Rhiannon', Jones lists 'the Celtic Mother Goddess, "Rigantona", the "Great Queen", the woman who did penance at the horse-block […].'[96] The strong use of these mythical connotations in the later texts of the corpus, in fact, cancels out the only characteristic truly present in the medieval version: that of a woman. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, reading Rhiannon as a woman in her own right is something that is lacking within the texts, demonstrating that the argument put to the nativists of Celtic Studies – that a mythological reading of medieval texts results in a

[96] Jones, *The Dying Gaul*, p. 32.

narrow focus and oversight of many other possibilities – is also applicable to the re-imaginings.[97]

The Sounds and Oral Origins of Place-Names

'The sound of language is crucially relevant to its poetic meaning […].'[98] Indeed, to speak a place-name – whether out loud or in writing – is to communicate the meaning of that name to oneself in the first instance, so that a place-name is a communicator between the human and the place.[99] By speaking (in this sense reading takes on the same function, as we process the same information) the place-name we accept that the place exists – that is, it exists in the sense that it is worthy of responsiveness rather than a scape through which we move without paying attention to its features. Place-names transfer language to places – acknowledging the nameability of places and thus their value as cultural constructs.[100] As Shelley Trower writes: 'The voice is responsive to place in that it reverberates against walls, or disappears into thin air.'[101] Like poetry, place-names demand to be spoken out loud: 'poetry is a form of verbal

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[97] See Chapter Three, 'Rhiannon: From Medieval Queen to Nature Personified'. On the nativist and counter argument, see the Introduction, 'The Creation of a Myth'. See also Erica J. Sessle, 'Exploring the Limitations of the Sovereignty Goddess through the Role of Rhiannon'.

[98] Owen Barfield*, Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, new edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 47.

[99] See Julia Kristeva, *Language, the Unkown: An Initiation into Linguistics*, transl. by Anne M. Menke, 2nd edn (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 8: 'each speaking subject is both the addresser and the addressee of his own message […] the message intended for the *other* is, in a sense, *first* intended for the one who is speaking: whence it follows that to *speak* is to *speak to oneself*.'

[100] Culture is not necessarily a human construct – Val Plumwood argues that it is invalid to apply the term 'culture' for 'human', since 'culture' as 'learned forms of adaption and forms of life' is found in many other species. Plumwood, 'The Concept of a Cultural Landscape: Nature, Culture and Agency in the Land', *Ethics and the Environment*, 11.2 (2006), 115-50 (p. 122). On nameability, sound and memory, see Andrea R. Halpern and James C. Bartlett, 'Memory for Melodies', in *Music Perception*, ed. by Mari Riess Jones, Richard R. Fay and Arthur N. Popper (New York: Springer, 2010), pp. 233-58 (esp. p. 238).

[101] Shelley Trower, 'Introduction', in *Place, Writing, and Voice in Oral History*, ed. by Trower (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1-19 (p. 4).

representation, and, even in its written form, it evokes aspects of orality in production and reception.'[102]

Language is not what defines us as human beings: we have long come to recognize that nonhuman species use language (though extralinguistic in terms of human phonetics, animal speech must still be defined as a valid means of communication in the same category as *language*) and that the rustling of leaves can be deemed the language of trees.[103] Indeed, 'there are, properly speaking, no organs of speech; there are only organs that are incidentally useful in the production of speech sounds.'[104] Braidotti writes, '[i]nsects – as well as other animals offer convincing examples of nonlinguistic communication and modes of thought, ranging from visual apprehension to sonar and other acoustic technologies […].'[105] As Joanna Bourke points out, with a nod to Darwin's warning, 'if to be human means to possess language and self-consciousness, then what does this mean for infants, the comatose or the severely intellectually impaired?'[106]

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[102] Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) p, 60.

[103] 'The use of vocalization to get the attention of another individual is a basic function of vocal communication throughout the animal kingdom.' Leanne Hinton, Johanna Nichols, John Ohala, 'Introduction: Sound-Symbolic Processes', in *Sound Symbolism*, ed. by Hinton, Nichols, Ohala (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-14 (p. 2). For the language of the nonhuman, see e.g. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (New York: Vintage, 1997). For the problem of language in connection with the environment, see e.g. Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease, *Reinventing Nature: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1995). In contrast, Lawrence Buell argues for the practice of 'disciplined extrospection': inventing a language suitable for describing the environment in non-fiction. Buell, *Environmental Imagination*, p. 107.

[104] Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1921), pp. 8-9.

[105] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 106. Indeed, an article to the same affect appeared in the Guardian newspaper, debating the latest finds on the acoustic abilities of dolphins and whether we should call this a language. Shariatmadari, David, 'These Dolphins Talk to Each Other', *The Guardian* (20 April 2016) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/20/dolphins-talk-language-animal-communication-cooperation> [accessed April 20 2016].

[106] Bourke, *What it Means to be Human*, p. 36. Bourke quotes Charles Darwin, 'The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex' (1871), in Duncan M. Porter and Peter W. Graham, *The Portable Darwin* (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 330.

Sound in the form of human language (but equally of course through the production of other sounds, such as drumming, humming or clapping) allows us to participate in the construction of the artistic creation of our environment, even though the meaning is applicable only to humans.[107] 'At the end of sound symbolism […] we see the human mind at work *creating* links between sound and meaning even where such links might not be intrinsic or universal.'[108] Often the sound of a name can inform one more accurately of the effect the author wishes to create. Ursula Le Guin talks of 'echo-allusions' in names which 'may also elicit subjective responses and engender affective forms of appreciation that resist explicit and precise paraphrase.'[109] Even if words are in a language we do not speak, we attach certain meanings to the phrase. '[…] since we have prior speech experience of these sounds as discernible phones, if not as discernible words, we "hear" them phonetically.'[110] Of course, we cannot disassociate ourselves from meanings we construct around sounds. 'Sounds in poems are never heard outside an expectation of meaning, and sounds in nature will be framed for human listeners by human expectations.'[111] Gillian Clarke describes what she calls 'the potency of place names': 'There is something I can't quite put my fingers on about the potency of place, placenames, their shades of meaning and the way we speak. It is as if they are entirely connected with the creative process, as if this place and its name, its meaning – "source" – became the source of poetry of me.'[112]

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[107] In contrast, Kristeva argues that the 'sound-image' of the word is not compatible with the 'noise' of animals. Kristeva, *Language, the Unkown*, p. 19.
[108] Hinton, Nichols, Ohala, 'Introduction: Sound-Symbolic Processes', p. 6.
[109] Ursula Le Guin, *Steering the Craft* (Portland, OR: The Eight Mountain Press, 1998), p. 25; Christopher L. Robinson, 'Childhood Readings and the Genesis of Names in the Earthsea Novels', in *Children's Literature*, 38 (2010), 92-114 (p. 93).
[110] Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, p. 73.
[111] Ibid., p. 79.
[112] Clarke*, At the Source*, p. 81.

Personal names, which have their own creative tradition in medieval Celtic literatures, will only be marginally taken into account in this study.[113] Their importance can be seen in the medieval *Mabinogi* when examining Lleu's naming process in the Fourth Branch [B4]: it is seen as a great evil when Lleu's mother Aranrhod swears a destiny on her son preventing him from receiving a name from her. Indeed, such importance is attached to a personal name that Gwydion does not give his protégé a name until he has presented him to his mother – at that point Lleu is four years old. Adding to this, Gwydion goes to many lengths in order to secure a name for Lleu after he has been cursed. When Gwydion has managed to lure Aranrhod to them through magic, Aranrhod unknowingly names her son, after watching him shoot a wren with a sling, by saying: *ys llaw gyffes y medrwys y Lleu ef.* ('it is with a skilful hand that the fair-haired one has hit it.')[114] Lleu Law Gyffes is the boy's name from then on, which translates as 'the fair-haired one with the skilful hand.'[115] As Gruffydd points out: 'It has preserved a very widely spread belief that the Name is a vital part of the personality, in fact a kind of soul, and that to be without a name is to be deprived of one of the essentials of life.'[116]

Thus, while personal names form sound-images and extra-dimensional meanings in their own right – one example of this is the use of the name Branwen in Owen Sheers' version [Na2] discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Three – the

[113] On genealogies in Celtic Studies, see the entry for 'genealogies' in *Celtic Culture*, III, pp. 797-802. See also David E. Thornton, 'Orality, Literacy and Genealogy in Early Medieval Ireland and Wales', in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, ed. by Huw Pryce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 83-98; for a more historicist reading, see Thornton, *Kings, Chronologies, and Geneaologies: Studies in the Political History of Early Medieval Ireland and Wales, Vol. 10* (Linacre College, Oxford: Prosopographica et Genealogica, 2003).
[114] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 80; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 56.
[115] See Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 243, n. 56.
[116] Gruffydd, *Math*, p. 103.

focus on the nonhuman of this thesis means that place-names necessarily take the centre stage in this analysis.[117]

It is no coincidence that the overwhelming number of re-imaginings by Welsh authors (in Welsh or English) are works of poetry, plays or children's books. Out of the forty-two versions by Welsh writers and poets, three are novels, one a graphic novel, five novellas, nineteen children's texts, six plays and eight poems. Overall, out of the forty-two re-imaginings by Welsh writers and poets, thirty-three are either in verse, dramatic renderings or children's versions. This trend is also visible in the corpus overall: as has been discussed in Chapter One, disregarding the academic editions, which is the largest group at thirty-five texts, the largest number of re-imaginings are children's versions (twenty-four), followed by verse (eleven) and plays (eight). It is because the importance of the Welsh language, the importance of the names, carries more weight in these forms. As Garner writes: 'In order to understand *The Mabinogion*, especially "The Four Branches", and "Culhwch ac Olwen", it was necessary to have the ear of a poet as well as the intellect of a scholar, and to realize that this tongue called Welsh held sound to be as important as sense.'[118] It is the sound of the word as it rings true to the writer that makes it an important aspect of any analysis. Like the paradox of the draw of a specific nonhuman and a weariness of the nonhuman itself, the dichotomy between the spoken word and the written word threads its way through the corpus, culminating in Branwen's starling which is able to communicate in Welsh but simultaneously carries a letter to fortify its meaning (discussed in Chapter Three).

[117] See Chapter Three, 'Branwen and the Embodiment of Nature'.
[118] Garner, 'The Beauty Things'(1996), in *The Voice That Thunders*, pp. 193-207 (p. 198).

Indeed, the oral origins of the medieval *Mabinogi* are connected to the use of place-names in the texts.[119] There are two traditional ways of interpreting place-names in medieval Celtic literature. On the one hand naming can be seen as endowing locations with history and giving them a meaning above that of a 'place', a sort of cultural memory.[120] In the medieval texts, one example of the historicizing of the names is a passage in the Second Branch in which a *commot* (a medieval Welsh community) is named or re-named (we are not told the original name) *Talebolion*. *Tâl* could be translated as 'payment' and *ebolion* as 'foals', giving the name the meaning of the payment of the horses to Matholwch as retribution for Efnysien's maiming of the king's animals.[121] Although Sioned Davies writes in the notes to her translation, that this is 'an attempt – albeit incorrect – to explain the place-name', the question whether it is an accurate explanation or not does not alter the creative process.[122]

On the other hand the tales can be seen to have originated around the place-names: the storyteller explains place-names by including them in the narrative.[123] So, for example, the site of Branwen's grave, a Bronze Age burial mound at the river Alaw called *Bedd Branwen*, is explained at the end of the Second Branch through her death.[124] Whichever theory one chooses, what is significant here is that a connection exists between the creative process of the author, a 'creative etymologizing', and the physical landscape.[125] 'Whether the tales were created as explanations of the names or the names were planted in the landscape to preserve the tales, the medieval audience

[119] Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*'.
[120] Mac Cana, 'Placenames and Mythology in Irish Tradition: Places, Pilgrimages and Things', p. 338.
[121] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 234.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Clas Beuno and the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', in *150 Jahre "Mabinogion": Deutsch-Walische Kulturbeziehungen* ed. by Maier and Zimmer with Bakte, pp.11-127 (p. 111).
[124] Bedwyr Lewis Jones, 'Bedd Bronwen – The Literary Evidence', *Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club Transactions* (1966), 32-37; Sims-Williams, 'Clas Beuno and the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 111.
[125] Rolf Baumgarten, 'Placenames, Etymology, and the Structure of Fianaighecht', *Béaloideas*, 54/55 (1986/87), 1-24 (p. 7).

could read the landscape in relation to the tales.'[126] Naming is a process in itself, not solely a commodity but a ritual, which endows characters and places with meaning.[127] The fundamental motif then for place-names in this literature is the substance they add to the landscape: 'the personal name is to the pedigree as the place name is to the topography.'[128] This can be especially seen in Old Irish literature, such as the Cattle Raid of Cooley (*Táin Bo Cuailgne*), in which *dindsenchas*, 'the lore of high places', play a pivotal role in the creation of the text world and the characters within it.[129] Like the concept of the otherworld, place-names, while retaining spurious links to the medieval *Mabinogi*, are reinvented in the later re-imaginings, so that they function in completely different ways. Yet, one characteristic remains the same: place-names take on meanings outside of the text; they can create links between different narratives and local tales. In the corpus of re-imaginings they can create a certain mood, a flavour which is made use of by certain texts and discarded by others, as will be discussed below.

There are numerous guides to the mysterious landscapes of Wales published in the twentieth century, many of which are handbooks following lay paths or spirit paths, such as Chris Barber's *Mysterious Wales* (1982) and Laurence Main's *Walks in Mysterious Wales* (1995). Surprisingly perhaps, places featuring events from the medieval *Mabinogi* are hardly ever mentioned; when they are, then only in connection with a different story for which the place is listed. However, in 2006 John K. Bollard

[126] Bollard, 'Landscapes of the *Mabinogi*', p. 47.
[127] For the naming process in mythopoeic society, see Mircea Eliade, *Birth and Rebirth*, (New York: 1958), p. 28.
[128] Seán Ó Coileáin, 'Place and Placename in *Fianaighecht*', *Studia Hibernica,* 27 (1993), 45-60 (p. 52). On heroic names, see Carolyn Higbie, *Heroes' Names, Homeric Identities* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995).
[129] Carson, 'Introduction', in *The Táin*, pp. xi-xxi (p. xvi). On *dindsenchas*, see Mac Cana, 'Place-names and mythology in Irish tradition'; P.S. Hellmuth, 'The Dindshenchas and Irish literary tradition', in *Cìn Chille Chúile, Texts, Saints and Places: Essays in Honour of Pádraig Ó Riain*, ed. by J. Carey et al. (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2004), pp. 116-26.

published his *The Mabinogi: Legend and Landscapes of Wales* [S30], followed by *Companion Tales to the Mabinogi* (2007), *Tales of Arthur* (2010) and *Englynion y Beddau: The Stanzas of the Graves* (2015). These editions tell the tales of the *Mabinogi*, the seven tales of the Mabinogion and the englynion of the heroes respectively, accompanied by photos of the sites taken by Anthony Griffiths. These versions highlight the close relationship of the places named in the medieval *Mabinogi* and the places found in the landscape today. While the texts of Bollard's narratives adhere very closely to the medieval version, the images that accompany them return the stories to their previous, very specific locations, from which they have been divorced in so many re-imaginings.

Many of these sites are notoriously difficult to find, being neither tourist sites nor obvious local attractions. In contrast to many other 'Celtic' sites in Ireland – Fingal's Cave is one such case – the sites of the *Mabinogi* have never drawn much attention from the general public.[130] Anthony Griffiths writes in his notes to the *Parc Maen Llywd* standing stone, which features in the *The Stanzas of the Graves*:

> We wandered across a marsh, behind a row of houses in Puncheston. No sign of stone! Child in back garden had never heard of it. The local school was closing so I asked a teacher, who also had never heard of the stone but said the couple getting out of their car opposite had lived in the village a long time and might know about it. Yes, the man said it's in the garden of the house right over there! At the house, the lady was most helpful and took us into the back garden. Very impressive standing stone, surrounded by sheds, glasshouses, washing lines, bird feeders, flower pots, and a fish pond![131]

This is not an unusual experience when seeking sites from the medieval literature in Wales. Those found in the medieval *Mabinogi* in particular have not been turned into

[130] On an exploration of Fingal's Cave and the nineteenth-century landscape, see Ralph Crane and Lisa Fletcher, 'Inspiration and Spectacle: The Case of Fingal's Cave in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment*, 22.4 (Autumn 2015), 778-800.
[131] J.K. Bollard and Anthony Griffiths, *Englynion y Beddau: The Stanzas of the Graves* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2015), p. 10.

tourist sites and are mostly not signposted or even marked in any way. The supposed grave of Branwen, *Bedd Branwen*, is one such example 'Figure [6]'. *Bedd Branwen* or *Ynys Bronwen* is the site of a cromlech near the river Alaw on Anglesey. Associated with the death of Branwen in the nineteenth century, it was excavated and found to contain what was then believed to have been the remains of a young woman, although later research reveals the grave to have contained the remains of a group of people from the Early Bronze Age.[132] The grave is located on farming land, in the middle of nowhere, vaguely near the River Alaw, the only indication of its whereabouts from the medieval text. It is not marked in any way, nor is there a fence surrounding it. It is not possible to reach it without trespassing on the farmer's land. Carson writes that in the Old Irish *Táin* as well as in modern Irish culture, 'the landscape is a sourcebook' of narratives and happenings.[133] While this is very much a feature of the medieval *Mabinogi*, it has been lost in the modern re-imaginings, as will be shown below.

Re-imagining Places

From this twofold position that place-names occupy in Celtic Studies, a romanticized version of the meaning of these names has developed within the *Mabinogi* corpus, which lies in direct correlation with the imagined 'Celtic'. The contentious nature of the term Celtic/ 'Celtic' was discussed in Chapter One of this thesis.[134] In the strictest sense, Celtic can refer to different areas of scholarship, such as language, archaeology

[132] See Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, 4th edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), p. 293 and Sioned Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*'. The later excavations were undertaken in the 1960s by Frances Lynch and B.L. Jones. See Lynch, 'Report on the Re-Excavation of Two Bronze Age Cairns in Angelsey: Bedd Branwen and Treiorwerth', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 120 (1971), 11-83 and Lynch, *Prehistoric Angelsey*, 2nd edn (Llangefni: Anglesey Antiquarian Society, 1991), quoted in Davies.
[133] Carson, 'Introduction', in *The Táin*, pp. xi-xxi (p. xvii)
[134] See Chapter One, pp. 61-62.

and history, signifying different concepts for each.[135] At its widest, 'Celtic' in popular culture has come to incorporate the Iron Age La Tène culture found mainly on mainland Europe, the medieval literatures of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the people and their cultures living in those countries (and sometimes Cornwall) today.[136] While hardly anyone questions the difficulty of the term within Celtic Studies, outside of academia it has enjoyed a long and fruitful revival.[137] For the *Mabinogi* corpus, it allows, for better or for worse, authors of all nationalities to add a cultural depth to their narratives without compromising the kind of story they wish to tell. Garner for example writes: 'A made-up name feels wrong, but in Celtic literature there are frequent catalogues of people who may have been the subject of lost stories, and here it is possible to find names that are authentic, yet free from other associations.'[138] Meanwhile, according to Welsh author Batt: '[t]here is an indestructible and a defiant permanence about place-names in Wales which is a reflection of this peculiarly *Celtic* artefact of onomastic story-telling and with this naming craft goes, too, the parallel persistence and longevity of the language itself, the Welsh language, *Y Gymraeg*.'[139] This illusory 'permanence' of the place-names is taken up by many writers who create their own fabled use of Welsh to construct their imaginary *Mabinogi* world.

Paradoxically, the appeal of this onomastic storytelling is certainly connected to a lived-in geography, yet, as mentioned above, the use to which these names are put in the refigured corpus distances them from the topography of Wales. For non-Welsh writers in particular, but not exclusively, these names carry hidden meanings, and a vibrant connection to the past, and therefore enrich their texts with historicity

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[135] Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtosceptism', esp. pp. 16-33.
[136] See Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtosceptism,' for an overview of the debate in academia.
[137] See Introduction, p. 1; p. 1 n. 2.
[138] Alan Garner, 'Note', in *The Moon of Gomrath* (first publ 1963), 16th impr (Glasgow: William Collins, 1990), pp. 154-56 (p. 154).
[139] Batt, 'Introduction', p. x. [author's italics]. Batt used Jones and Jones' *Mabinogion* (1949) as his source. Batt, 'Introduction', p. xii.

and validate them. Leaning on the same idea, some Welsh writers, especially those writing in the twenty-first century, deliberately do not name the places in which they set their stories in an attempt to 'update' the corpus. Even though the onomastic story-telling is seemingly the draw which these names hold over authors re-imagining the landscape, the link to the physical topography named is spurious. The fascination with place-names for many writers is that they dislocate the tales from their medieval scribes, creating the possibility of more ancient stories, as well as taking them out of their monastic environment.

Guest writes in her introduction to *The Mabinogion* [S1]: '[…] as these names [found in the original Mabinogion] could not have preceded the events to which they refer, the events themselves must not be infrequently as old as the early settlement in the country. And as some of these events and fictions are the subjects of, and are explained by, existing Welsh legends, it follows that the legends must be, in some shape or other, of very remote antiquity.'[140] It is this supposed link to a time long gone, which fascinates many of the authors who re-imagine the tales, while others attempt to break away from the archaic character attached to them. Again Guest remarks: 'It often happens, and is a cause of great confusion in comparing ancient story with modern topography, that the old names are retained while the boundaries of the territory which they indicated are changed.'[141] She did not seem to be greatly interested in the topographical features of the texts however. In her diary entry for March 8 1843, she writes that she is forced to wait for 'those who know the localities [to complete her topographical notes], but which take only a very short time for me afterwards to throw together.'[142] As shown in the first chapter, there is hardly any doubt that Guest's motives for her translation were at least partly political, to re-

[140] Guest, 'Introduction', in Guest, *Mabinogion* (1849), I, pp. xi-xxiiii (p. xix).
[141] Guest, *Mabinogion* (1849), 'Notes to Pwyll Prince of Dyved', III, pp. 72-78 (p. 73).
[142] Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion*, pp. 35-36.

infuse industrial Wales with its mythic past and allow it to take its place on the European playing field of myths and legends.[143] Guest emphasizes place-names and their importance for the antiquity of the texts, as shown in a quote by her above, and lays the groundwork for the re-creation of mythical stories, but she does not connect the texts to mythology per se.[144] With regard to her use of the names in her translation, Guest keeps the original spelling and usage. It is clear from this and from her extensive notes on each of the texts, including on the place-names and their locations, that she was very much interested in the Mabinogion as a scholar in the first instance. Despite her accurate translation, small changes betray her Romantic, Arthurian-based sentiment towards the texts and places. Pwyll's court for example becomes his 'palace,' his men become 'knights'.[145] In her notes, Branwen is described as '[n]o less celebrated for her woes than for her charms', and Guest includes a detailed description of Branwen's grave, in which 'her sorrowing companions deposited the remains of the unfortunate heroine.'[146] Guest also notes that she visited the site herself. It is clear, that it is not so much the place that excites her but the mysteriousness and romantic flavour which the grave adds to the story. She compares Branwen to 'the Brangwaine or Brangian of romance, though the character of the Welsh heroine, and the part she sustains, differ widely from those attributed to the confidante of Tristand and Yseult la belle.'[147] Following very much in the tradition of Arthurian Romance in which Guest situates the tales, in the English-language versions examined in the following section the use of Welsh place-names results in

[143] Davies asserts that Guest wanted to show the values inherent in Welsh literary tradition, which mirrored those of Arthurian knightly principles. Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*', p. 161.
[144] See also Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*', p. 163.
[145] Guest, *Mabinogion* (1849), III, e.g. pp. 46 and 51.
[146] Guest, 'Notes to Branwen', in Guest, *Mabinogion* (1849), III, pp. 130-61 (p. 134).
[147] Ibid., p. 136.

the fragmentation the medieval *Mabinogi* and the unconscious dislocating from the geography of Wales.

Creating a 'Celtic' Mabinogi

Lanier is the first author after Guest to attempt a non-academic re-imagining and his *The Boy's Mabinogion* (1881) [YA1] leans so heavily on her edition, that it is in fact, in all but a few instances, a reproduction of her version. While Lanier keeps the original proper and place-names, he often changes the spelling from Middle to Modern Welsh. However, he makes two crucial changes from Guest's edition, which creates the distance-creating myth-making, which place-names effect in many later versions and, as the result of which, give the Welsh language a fabled meaning. In the Second and Third Branches, Lanier changes 'Wales' to 'Cambria' and 'England' to 'Lloegyr'.[148] *Lloegr* as the Welsh name for 'England' is attested in several Middle Welsh manuscripts, such as the poetry of Taliesin and Anerin, but the origins of the word are obscure.[149] These two small changes create names which have become mysterious texts, holding hidden meanings which remain unattainable to the American reader. They seemingly stem from a distant primordial past and thus become dis-attached from their place of description and morph into fragments of the imagination. Lanier's version is thus de-politicized: his Wales is not the Wales of today or indeed of history, but a long-deceased fantasy place.

The implication in reproducing Guest's version, practically word-for-word, for a child readership, is that the *Mabinogi* story is essentially suited to a child audience, and does not need editing to work for this purpose. Following on from the connection

[148] See e.g. Lanier, *The Boys' Mabinogion*, pp. 232 and 246.
[149] For a discussion of *Lloegr*, see Richard Coates, 'Welsh Lloegr 'England', in *CMCS*, 74 (Winter 2017), 41-45.

between an otherworldly Wales and the themes of childhood and myth discussed in the previous chapter, the association of the *Mabinogi* with childhood is one which is found in the very essence of the *Mabinogi*: neither plot nor language is changed in Lanier to adapt it to a child readership. Granted, Guest made a few changes, discussed in the next chapter, in which certain uncomfortable scenes – such as Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformation and mating as animals – are excluded. Yet, these are the exceptions rather than the rule, and it is the language which Lanier takes from Guest as well as the plot, which in Guest's translation is certainly not addressed to a child readership.

In the same vein as Lanier, Walton, in her *Mabinogion Tetralogy* (1936, 1970-4) [N3], substitutes 'Llwndrys' for London, 'Gaul' for France and 'Logres' for England, the strangeness of these names for her American audience creating a mythic, Arthurian otherworld.[150] *Lwndrys* is used in the tale of *Lludd a Llefelys* of the Mabinogion, and it seems fairly certain Walton derived the term from there, adding an /l/ for effect; for the Modern Welsh for 'London' is *Llundain* or *Caerludd*.[151] 'Logres' is often used in the Matter of Britain, indicating that Walton, like Guest, situates her version within the Arthurian tradition. An example of this is to be found in the fourteenth-century text *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[152] Although Walton's *Tetralogy* was published in the 1970s, she shows many affinities with the earliest versions, because her first drafts were written in the first decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, *The Island of the Mighty* was first published in 1936 as *The Virgin*

[150] Evangeline Walton, *The Children of Llyr* (1971), repr. in *The Mabinogion Tetralogy*, 4 vols (New York: Overlook, 2004), II, pp. 152 and 292; Walton *The Song of Rhiannon* (1972), repr. in *The Mabinogion Tetralogy*, 4 vols (New York: Overlook, 2004) III, p. 364.
[151] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 111.
[152] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. 1*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2006), l. 691.

and the Swine.[153] Another fantasist in the corpus, Cooper, writing in the 1960s, also uses 'Logres' to refer to an older time in her *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965) [YA4], the first book in *The Dark Is Rising Sequence*.[154] Thus, the situating of the *Mabinogi* within Arthurian tradition continues with the place-names. With *Lloegyr*/ *Logres*, a place-name which does not appear in the medieval *Mabinogi*, the re-imaginings re-create the context for the Four Branches, and the local medieval tale becomes part of the legendary Arthurian canon.

Walton further adds descriptive elements to the naming of places, such as 'royal Arberth' or 'the deep woods of Glen Cuch', indicating the role these places play within her storyworld and showing that she is mindful that her audience will, most likely, not be familiar with the *Mabinogi* and its geography.[155] Indeed, as Arberth is a place-name still in use (and was at the time of Walton's writing), the addition of the adjective 'royal' implies that the Arberth in Walton is an older, regal place. Walton's mythscape further includes the famous mythological Tara, a hotbed of political symbolism for Irish nationalism throughout the ages.[156] Tara does not appear in the medieval *Mabinogi*, but Walton employs it as Matholwch's seat to which he takes Branwen in the Second Branch [B2].[157] Saunders Lewis does this also in his Welsh-language play 'Branwen' (1975) [D5].[158] Linking Matholwch with Irish royalty validates his lineage and widens her myth of the *Mabinogi* to include that of Ireland. This plays directly into the amalgam of 'Celtic' myth, in which the stories of Wales and Ireland are combined to form one de-nationalized 'national' mythology.

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[153] See Betty Balantine, 'Introduction', pp. 7-12.
[154] Cooper, *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), repr. *The Dark is Rising Sequence*, I, pp. 12, 57, and 59-62.
[155] Walton, *Prince of Annwn*, p. 15.
[156] On the archeology of Tara, see Conor Newman, *Tara: An Archaeological Survey*, Discovery Programme Monograph 2 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1997); on documentary evidence, see Edel Bhreathnach, *Tara: A Select Bibliography*, Discovery Programme Monograph 1 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy: 1995). A continuation of those two studies is *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, ed. by Edel Bhreathnach (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005).
[157] Walton, *The Children of Llyr*, p. 191.
[158] Saunders Lewis, 'Branwen', in Lewis, *Dramâu'r Parlwr* (Llandybie: Davies, 1975), V.

Indeed, in *The Song of Rhiannon*, book four of Walton's *Tetralogy*, Stonehenge features as a meeting place for druid rites, holy to the Old Tribes.[159] The pre-Christian 'Celtic' pagan text world is strengthened through the inclusion of this pre-historic site. Like the Gundestrup Cauldron and the use of horned figures – used for example in Margaret Jones' illustrations [C10] (discussed in Chapter One) – Stonehenge acts as a fortifying feature for the 'Celtic' flavour of the novel.[160] Walton differentiates between places whose meaning is widely available to readers on both continents, and those such as *Caer Loyu*, whose strangeness among such familiarity creates a sense of the unfamiliar and mystical lurking behind a recognizable 'Celtic' landscape.[161] These names become embodied entities, readers stumbling over strange vowels, the alien orthography creating an otherworld of sound, and in extension, the local world becomes indistinct.

In a like fashion, Ellis, eighth Baron Howard de Waldon and author of the 1922 play 'Bronwen' [D1], explicitly indicates that the action of the Second Branch takes place, not within the Edwardian castle built upon Harlech, but on The Rock of Harlech. Capital letters indicate its independence from the conqueror's edifice. The rock – Harlech itself means 'high rock' – in contrast to the castle, supports the fabled Harlech, and like Lanier's Cambria, de-politicizes the *Mabinogi*.[162] Ellis, whom the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography describes as a 'writer, sportsman, and patron of the arts', published a lavish play centred on the story of Branwen, steeped in the tradition of German Romantics, following in James Mapherson's footsteps in

[159] Walton, *The Song of Rhiannon*, p. 335.
[160] Chapter One, 'Of Giants and Nobel Men'.
[161] Walton, *The Song of Rhiannon*, p. 365.
[162] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 232, n. 22.

sublime style and character, complete with stormy seas and bubbling cauldrons.[163] The same year saw Ellis publish his version as a libretto set to music by Joseph Hoolbroke, simultaneously written in English and German [D2].

It is not clear why Ellis chose to title his play *Bronwen* and not Branwen. The former is used once in the Second Branch [B2], in the scene in which Matholwch, the Irish King, wonders why he was given 'Bronwen' before being insulted.[164] Matholwch had asked Bendigeidfran for his sister Branwen's hand, a political gesture to unite the two countries. But her other brother, Efnisien, is not consulted on the matter, and when he hears of the event after it has already taken place, he mutilates the Irish King's horses in anger. It is after this occurrence that Matholwch wonders why he was given 'Bronwen' to sleep with before he was insulted by Efnisien. Davies suggests that Bronwen might have been an older name meaning 'white breast' and was changed to Branwen on account of her brother's name, Brân.[165] There could be two other possibilities for the use of Bronwen in this specific place in the medieval narrative. One, that Matholwch is simply mispronouncing her name which would underline his status as a stranger among the Welsh, as well as indicating his carelessness. Two, that Matholwch is deliberately highlighting Branwen's status as the *morwyn gystal* ('fine maiden') that he calls her, her 'white breast' a sign of her desirability.[166] This would be especially fitting as he had just slept with her. For Ellis the name Bronwen may simply have had a more romantic ring to it, but it is likely that he too thought it an older version of Branwen, and therefore, given that his play is set in an indefinable, misty pre-medieval past, thought it would fit better for his

[163] Maclagan, 'Ellis, Thomas Evelyn Scott-, eighth Baron Howard de Walden (1880–1946)', rev. H. C. G. Matthew.
[164] Williams, Pedeir Keinc, p. 33; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 24.
[165] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 233, n. 23.
[166] Williams, Pedeir Keinc, p. 32; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 24.

purpose. The major role that the character of Branwen plays in the corpus and in the creation of the *Mabinogi* myth, is discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

In these texts a 'Celtic' *Mabinogi* is established. Through Lanier's use of names such as 'Lloegyr', he actively connects the *Mabinogi* to King Arthur's realm in the Matter of Britain, which he manifests through the subtitle of his work: *The Earliest Welsh Tales of King Arthur*.[167] Ellis contributes to this 'Celtic' land with his nod to the German Romantics who enthusiastically took up the Celtic Revival flag.

The Welshman Morris, writing at the start of the twentieth century and living in America, imbues strangeness and dissonance through the connection of known and imaginary places.[168] A complex expansion of the original Four Branches, Morris' characters intermingle with the old gods in his *Book of the Three Dragons* (1930) [N2]. Indeed, the beginning tells of Pwyll's quest for divine status. Pwyll fails in his trial to become a god when his son Pryderi is born, and so he becomes the Nameless One, forced to wander this pagan warrior-based world. At the start of the novel, Gwydion and the Nameless One wander 'through Europe and through Africa and the Islands of Corsica, and through Sach and Salach, and Lotor and Ffotor, and India the Greater and India the Less, and Powys and Meirion and Arfon.'[169] This roll call of names is found almost word for word in *Culhwch ac Olwen* ('How Culhwch won Olwen'), one of the romances of the medieval Mabinogion. Indeed, a similar role call is found in Taliesin's *Y gofeisswys byt* (Book of Taliesin 51.1-52.5), which thematizes the feats of Alexander the Great.[170] In all three renditions, this list of names serves to

[167] For the connection between Arthur and Middle Welsh literature, see *The Arthur of the Welsh: the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991).
[168] Indeed, Morris was aware of Lanier's writing, see Kenneth Morris, 'Theosophy and the Welsh Legends I-V', *Century Path*, (Oct/ Nov 1909), pp. 8-9. Quoted in White, *A Century of Welsh Myth*, p. 59.
[169] Morris, *Book of the Three Dragons*, p. 15.
[170] See Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, pp. 412-24.

create the illusion of an impressive arsenal of the hero's exploits. Marged Haycock writes on *Y gofeisswys byt*: 'Whether they [places named] actually existed was perhaps of less importance than conveying an impression of "foreign parts" […]'.[171] Haycock suggests alliteration and internal rhyme as possible means to produce further imaginary places in addition to the existing ones.[172] The use of place-names in *Y gofeiswys byt* mirrors their use in the re-imaginings: they are not employed simply because they exist in the narratives, they are employed to construct specific text worlds. Indeed, within the corpus of re-imaginings, no place-name is employed simply to designate a place.

Morris' version of the roll call of names is based on the one from *Culhwch ac Olwen*, a list given by Arthur's gatekeeper, Glewlwyd Gafaelfawr, to describe the great beauty of Culhwch of which he has not seen the like in all his travels:

> *Deuparth uy oet a dodyw, a deuparth y teu ditheu. Mi a uum gynt yGhaer Se ac Asse, yn Sach a Salach, yn Lotor a Fotor. Mi a uum gynt yn yr India Uawr a'r India Uechan. Mi a uum gynt yn ymlad deu Ynyr pan ducpwyt y deudec gwystyl o Lychlyn. A mi a uum gynt yn yr Egrop, a mi a uum yn yr Affric, ac yn ynyssoed Corsica, ac yGhaer Brythwch a Brythach a Nerthach. Mi a uum gynt pan ledeist ti teulu Gleis mab Merin, pan ledeist Mil Du [458] mab Ducum. Mi a uum gynt pan wereskynneist Groec vrth parth y dwyrein. Mi a uum gynt yGhaer Oeth ac Anoeth, ac yGhaer Neuenhyr Naw Nawt: teyrndynyon tec a welsam ni yno, ny weleis I eirmoet dyn kymryt a'r hwnn yssyd yn drws y porth yr awr honn.*
>
> (Two thirds of my life have gone
> and two thirds of your own.
> I was once in Caer Se and Asse,
> in Sach and Salach,
> in Lotor and Ffotor.
> I was once in India the Great
> and India the Lesser.
> I was once in the battle of the two Ynyrs
> When the twelve hostages were taken from Norway.
> And I was once in Europe,
> I was in Africa,

[171] Ibid., p. 413.
[172] Ibid.

> and the islands of Corsica,
> and in Caer Brythech and Brythach and Nerthach.
> I was once there when you killed the warband of Gleis son of Merin,
> When you killed Mil Du son of Dugum.
> I was once there when you conquered Greece in the east.
> I was once in Caer Nefenhyr Nawdant:
> fair kingly men did we see there –
> but I never in my life saw a man as handsome as the one who is at the entrance to the gate this very moment.)[173]

This is the gatekeeper asserting himself as a figure of great authority. Not only has he travelled to all corners of the world, but he is also telling Arthur to trust him, because he has fought battles with him, because he has stood by him. They are alike: both are of the same age, and they have come far together. This list stands in the tradition of genealogies of notable people so often found in medieval Welsh and Irish texts.[174] This passage also displays the oral origins of the tale: it is rhythmic and it serves as a mnemonic device.[175] Sioned Davies notes that '*Caer Oeth and Anoeth* is mentioned in the triads as a place where Arthur was imprisoned for three nights (TYP 52),' but many of the places could have been invented.[176]

Trioedd Ynys Prydein, The Triads of the Island of Britain, are among those texts, like *Culhwch ac Olwen*, which crop up several times in various *Mabinogi* re-imaginings, and will be discussed in relation to each text in this thesis. *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* are themed lists which acted as memory-aids and allowed storytellers to access a vast body of narratives.[177] Some of the triads are found in the White Book and in the Red Book, the same manuscripts which hold the fourteenth-century

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[173] *Culhwch ac Olwen*, ll. 116-128 (p. 5); Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 182. See Brynley F. Roberts, 'Yr India Faw a'r India Fechan', *Llên Cymru* 13 (1980), 281-83.
[174] See for example Peter C. Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966).
[175] See Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 261, n.182.
[176] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 261, n. 182; *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, ed. and transl. by Bromwich, pp. 146-48.
[177] Chris Brooms, 'Triads', in *Celtic Culture*, V, pp. 1686-88. See *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, ed. by Bromwich.

versions of the Four Branches.[178] Certain characters found in the *Mabinogi* appear in various triads: Lleu, Bendigeidfran, Branwen, and Matholwch. This gives an indication of the wider narrative tradition to which the Four Branches belonged.

To his own list in *Book of the Three Dragons*, Morris also adds Powys, Meirion and Arfon, the only Welsh place-names in this list. It is clear that Morris is establishing his world building here: the breadth of the known world in *Culhwch ac Olwen* must seem an authentic way of establishing his imagined text world. It does not matter that the narrative he takes these names from is not part of the *Mabinogi* proper. The medieval stories are not seen as works of literature in their own right, but as fragments of a mythical collective from which one can pick and choose elements to build a new whole. The rhythmic roll call of names in Morris supports the fragmented image of the place his version is set in.

Garner, in a note to his *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963), in which he makes use of names from both medieval Welsh and Irish texts – the only place-name taken from the *Mabinogi* proper is *Talebolion*, where, with a nod to Tolkien, the elves reside – speaks of the 'frequent catalogues of people who may have been the subject of lost stories, and here it is possible to find names that are authentic, yet free from other associations.'[179] What authenticity is needed for these writers? Sullivan, in his *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy*, quoted on the back cover of the 2004 edition of *Book of the Three Dragons*, calls Morris' work 'authentically Celtic'.[180] 'Celtic' becomes here the fantastic use of the medieval text, rather than the medieval version itself. This authenticity, which many writers in the corpus attempt to gain through the use of place-names, is an imagined authenticity, constructed around an imagined body of tales, showing that the *Mabinogi* myth encompasses its own constructed environment.

[178] Bromwich, 'Introduction', *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. xi-cxiii (p. xi).
[179] Alan Garner, 'Note', in *The Moon of Gomrath*, p. 154. Garner, *The Moon of Gomrath*, p. 22.
[180] Morris, *Book of the Three Dragons*.

These first English-language versions turn the linguistically Celtic Welsh into a 'Celtic' language – 'Celtic' in the popular sense: a mythical, mystical tongue, which stands in strong contrast with the political Welsh of the Welsh.[181] The nonhuman, unknowable places – Cambria, the Rock of Harlech, Tara, Stonehenge – stand for a de-nationalized, even de-politicized Wales, the nonhuman conveniently allowing the writers to bypass the human, knowable country. Continued in the fantasists' versions discussed below, place-names taken from the medieval *Mabinogi* play a vital role in the establishment of a 'Celtic' Wales in the twentieth century.

The Fantasists' Wales

Alexander's Prydain is an island which demonstrates a remarkable geographical similarity to Wales. Thematically, his *Chronicles of Prydain* (1964-1968) [YA3] find little common ground with the storylines of the medieval *Mabinogi*, so he relies almost exclusively on personal and place-names to draw links to the older narratives.[182] The isle of Anglesey has its counterpart in Alexander's isle of Mona off the coast of Prydain in its geography as well as its etymology – the Welsh name for Anglesey is *Ynys Môn*.[183] Indeed, in his preface to *The Castle of Llyr* (1966), Alexander acknowledges the link to Anglesey, emphasizing the 'ancient' quality of the Welsh name 'Mona'.[184] Like Lanier, Morris and Walton before him, Alexander shows a preference for older, ancient names, as they disassociate modern Wales from the mythic Wales to be found in their stories. Alexander creates this strange landscape

[181] On the importance of language in myth, with notions not dissimilar to those of the authors discussed, see Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, transl. by Susanne K. Langer (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946).
[182] On personal names in Alexander's *Prydain*, see Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, pp. 122-32.
[183] On the place-name *Ynys Môn*, see Hywel Wyn Owen, *The Place-Names of Wales*, rev. and exp. edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), pp. 112-13.
[184] Alexander, 'Author's Note', in *The Castle of Llyr* (1966), repr. in *The Chronicles of Prydain*, III, pp. viii-ix (p. ix).

mainly through Welsh sounds attached to invented words. Many of the words he uses do not have a meaning in Middle or Modern Welsh, but are furnished with Welsh sounds, such as the /ll/ at the beginning of a word, or the sequence /law/ at the end of a word. One example for this is the Lake of Llunet, in which the assimilation of the recognizable word for 'lake' with the unknown 'Llunet' results in a turn of the familiar to the strange – in itself a fragmentation of the expected – and a promise of an unknown, mystical land.[185] *Llunet* seems to originate from the Latin *luna* rather than the Welsh word for moon: *lleuad* or *lloer*, or even the Welsh *llyn*, meaning lake/pool. The Welsh name *Luned* does occur in the wider Mabinogion: Luned is the maidservant of the Lady of the Well in the story of *Owein* (*The Lady of the Well*).[186] In Alexander, the Lake of Llunet is the place to which Taran travels to find the Mirror of Llunet, a mirror which has magical powers of knowledge. In the Mabinogion's *The Lady of the Well*, Luned aids Arthur's knight Owein to win his future wife. There is no thematic or symbolic connection between the source and Alexander's use of the word. So while the story is probably Alexander's foundation for the word, the reason for changing the ending to a Latinate /t/ suggests his use of the word's meaning for 'moon', so that the onomastic connotation of the name 'Lake of Llunet' matches the description of its lexicon as a clear, shining lake.

In his creative system, Alexander stands between Tolkien's comprehensive methodology for language invention, and that of folklore etymology: Tolkien created a sound-system for his invented language Sindarin, the sound-system of which is similar to that of Welsh, which is why they seem alike.[187] Following Barfield's theories on language and myth, '[w]ith and through the Elves, Tolkien makes real the

[185] Alexander, *Taran Wanderer*, p. 119.
[186] Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 116-38. Michael O. Tunnel discusses the origin of many of Alexander's names in his *The Prydain Companion*. Tunnel, *The Prydain Companion*.
[187] Phelpstead, *Tolkien and Wales*, p. 45.

interdependence of consciousness, language, and myth.'[188] Flieger illustrates that the Elves' awakening 'by the lake Cuiviénen', which translates as 'The Waters of Awakening', means that '[w]ith their coming to consciousness, language begins. With their language, history begins.'[189] The opposite of Tolkien's methodology is folk-etymology: 'the assumption that two words that look or sound vaguely similar must be historically connected.'[190] Alexander sits somewhere between the two: while he did not invent a language, his place-names do operate on a (limited) sound-system which is directly borrowed from the Welsh. The lexical meanings of the names are not, however, taken from the Welsh.

The question whether an approach such as this can be deemed 'cultural strip-mining' hovers behind many of these appropriations, both by Alexander and other non-Welsh-speaking authors. Alexander himself seems to have been defensive on the issue. On describing his finding of the word *Morva* in Guest's notes and appropriating it for his Marshes of Morva, he states: 'I didn't hesitate if there were names that as names themselves had a sound that somehow appealed to me. I would swipe them! I didn't hesitate.'[191] Indeed, the personal name 'Gurgi', a hybrid animal-human creature who accompanies Taran on his quests and constantly gets into trouble, can be found in the Triads as one of the members of *Tri Anyweir Deulu Enys Prydein* ('Three Faithless/ Disloyal War-Bands of the Island of Britain').[192] In *Prydain*, one of Gurgi's defining character changes is that he transforms from someone who cannot necessarily be trusted in danger, to a faithful companion to Taran. Alexander himself states that he found the name and inspiration for the character of Gurgi in Rev.

[188] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, p. 68-72. See Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, pp. 77-92.
[189] Flieger, *Splintered Light*, p. 72. See also *A Secret Vice: Tolkien on Invented Languages*, ed. by Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins (London: Harper Collins, 2016) p. xxvii.
[190] Phelpstead, *Tolkien and Wales*, p. 45.
[191] Tunnel, *Prydain Companion*, p. 181.
[192] Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 66.

Edward Davies' 1809 *Mythology and Rites of the British Druids*, which indeed quotes the Triad in which *Gwrgi* is to be found.[193] This kind of appropriation – which can be found across the board in non-Welsh versions and especially in the fantasy versions from the second half of the twentieth century – derives from an appreciation of the melodic sound-structure of the Welsh language. Yet, there is no question that in these texts, the use of Welsh or Welsh-sounding words assists the fragmentation of the *Mabinogi* and thus creates usable building material for the authors to employ.[194] While the first English-language versions crafted a 'Celtic' geography, leaning on the Romantic Celtic Revival landscape, the fantasists of the second half of the twentieth century create a new virgin land seemingly based on the geography of Wales but reaching far back past the medieval redactor's grasp.

The scarcity of maps found in the corpus adds to the dislocation of the *Mabinogi* from the geography of Wales, which I will return to later on in this chapter. The emphasis on universal, nonhuman geographical features, shown in the discussion of the construction of the otherworlds, and expanded in the use of place-names which do not link to local places, but to generic nonhuman landscape features (mountains, lakes, marshes), contribute to the establishment of a non-local mythical narrative.

Alliteration is a common feature of place names in Alexander's Prydain – e.g. Marshes of Morva, Mount Meleddin. While it is not strictly alliteration, some names like Lair of Llyan, show that in Prydain, /ll/ does not indicate the sound it does in the Welsh language, but is a means to signify strangeness in this fantasy land, while being used in an English language pronunciation system (in which /ll/ is pronounced in the

[193] Tunnel, *Prydain Companion*, pp. 118-25. Edward Davies, *Mythology and Rites of the British Druids* (London: Booth, 1809), pp. 476-77.
[194] In the annual Tolkien lecture at Pembroke College, Oxford, Lev Grossman talked about the need authors feel to smash their original sources because fragments feel more magical. Grossman, *Pembroke Tolkien Lecture*, University of Oxford, 13 May 2015.

same way as /l/). Existing phonemes are used to create new sound structures – another indication that Welsh, like the *Mabinogi* itself, is approached as source for strangeness.

For an American readership, of course, the rhythmic alliterative structure of these names creates a connection with the sound even though they cannot (in most cases) know what it means, or even which language it originates from. Not only alliteration but also the sound structures of the words in general, inform the reader of the characteristics of the place. The double use of /r/ creates a deep, rolling effect in Marshes of Morva, which combined with the /v/ enhances the threatening importance of this place. Indeed, the inhabitants of the marshes, Orgoch, Orddu and Orwen, possess onomatopoeic names, reflecting the gurgling noises of the marsh.[195] While both Orddu and Orwen are names which appear briefly in *Culhwch ac Olwen* – '[…] *Nyt estwg uyth ony cheffir guaet y Widon Ordu merch y Widon Orwen o Pennant Gouut yg gwrthtir Uffern*.' (The witch Orwen is the mother of the witch Ordu) – Orgoch seems to be a name made up by Alexander.[196] Elizabeth Lane points out that the three names correspond to the colours of black (*ddu*), white (*wen*) and red (*goch*).[197] Donna White suggests that Alexander must have invented the third to correspond to the colours and that they are associated with Graves' white goddess.[198] Certainly, the colour red crops up frequently in *The White Goddess*. Graves writes of the theme of eating red food, the 'food of the gods', in the Irish tale of *Diarmuid and Grainne* and in ancient Greece.[199] If this is Alexander's influence for his choice of

[195] In his preface to *Taran Wanderer* Alexander refers to the well-known triple goddess aspect, a prominent theme in Graves, as his inspiration for the three (p. ix).
[196] *Culhwch and Olwen*, ll. 652-53 (p. 24).
[197] Elizabeth Lane, 'Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain and the Welsh Tradition', *Orcrist* 7 (1973), 25-29. Quoted in White, *Welsh Celtic Myth*, p. 106.
[198] White, *Welsh Celtic Myth*, p. 106. See Graves, *The White Goddess*, for example p. 65. On Graves and Alexander, see Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, pp. 138-47.
[199] Graves, *White Goddess*, p. 162. See *Tóruigeact Diarmuda agus Gráinne= The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne*, ed. by Richard O'Duffy (Dublin: Gill, 1881-84), eg. p. 27.

colours, it certainly fits with Orgoch's character who is constantly attempting to eat any guests who venture near their dwelling.

This alien orthography of place-names lifts language out of the knowable and political realm of human communication and places it within an unknowable, mystical and secret environment, creating a distance between place-name and place, distorting the relationship between the geography and the language, and enhancing the mythical aspect of the fragmented story.

Yet, there are a few place-names which reference the *Mabinogi* itself in *The Prydain Chronicles*. They are strategically placed in the storyworld and function as cohesive links between Prydain and the Wales of the *Mabinogi*. *Caer Dathyl* for example, the seat of *Math uab Mathonwy*, the High King in the Fourth Branch as well as a seat of King Arthur in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, is the seat also of the High King in Prydain, and the castle in which Taran will later reside in the last book.[200] By linking this royal seat with one of the medieval narratives, Alexander is showing that Taran's lineage is valid and that a place can be a seat of power from the Middle Ages to the present day. Although Alexander moves the position of Caer Dathyl to Snowdonia – in the *Mabinogi* it is situated in Caernarvonshire – it is not the actual location which holds importance but the place-name itself which creates the possibility of the connecting storylines. The place-name is so dislocated from the actual place that it can be moved to a different location, rendering the distortion of the medieval *Mabinogi* complete and the new place the setting for a virgin, mythic narrative.

[200] See for example Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 50; *Culhwch and Olwen*, ll. 204 (p. 8): '[…] *gwyr Kaer Tathal oedynt, kenetyl y Arthur o pleit y tat*'.

Mapping Wales

Returning to the scarcity of maps included in the corpus of re-imaginings, this attests to the dislocation that place-names effect in many versions. Out of the fifty-eight non-academic re-imaginings, only four – across different editions – include a map of the places named: Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles* [YA3], Meredid Hopwood's *Straeon o'r Mabinogi* (2011) [C22], Siân Lewis' *Pedair Ceinc Y Mabinogi*/ *The Four Branches* (2015) [C24] and Alun Ifans' *Pedair Cainc Y Mabinogi i Ddysgwyr* [1982] [S22].

Straeon o'r Mabinogi, a Welsh-language children's edition re-imagining the Four Branches, is illustrated by Brett Breckon in a Disneyfied style. There is one map in this version, at the beginning of *Pwyll a Rhiannon* (Pwyll and Rhiannon), showing a rudimentary map of Wales with the following place names marked: Tyddewi, Glyn Cuch, Dyfed, and Arbert 'Figure [7].' Superimposed upon the top of the map is an illustration of Pwyll and Rhiannon holding hands. The entire image in depicted as if it is drawn on a scroll, the edges of the paper rolling up gently from the bottom of the page. The purpose of this map is not so much to supply an exact location of the places named but to provide a legitimisation for the story. That is, the tale is authenticated through its connection to the real places found in modern-day Wales. The image of the scroll on which the map is drawn alludes to the ancient nature of the stories.

This validating of the stories is something that the maps in Lewis' *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* also undertake. In this children's version, published simultaneously as a Welsh-language and an English-language edition [C24], there are two maps; one showing the British Isles and the other showing Wales. Both are rudimentary, and, just like in *Straeon o'r Mabinogi* they depict a limited number of places connected with the *Mabinogi*. The map of Britain shows Bendigeidfran wading

through the sea to Ireland, and names all but two places (apart from the names of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland): the River Liffey and London. The map depicting Wales is a close-up of the first map with Bendigeidfran in the sea, and shows several locations from the texts in Gwyneth and Dyfed. A number on the map is accompanied by an entry in a list, structured according to the Four Branches. *The Story of Pwyll* is represented through Glyn Cuch, Arberth and the Throne of Arberth. *The Story of Branwen* is represented through the River Alaw and Aberffraw; *The Story of Manawydan* through Arberth and the Throne of Arberth; and *The Story of Blodeuwedd* through Caer Dathl, Caer Arianrhod, Dinas Dinlleu, Cwm Nantlleu, River Cynfael, Penllyn, and Mur Castell. While this is a more detailed map than the one found in *Straeon o'r Mabinogi*, it also combines the topography with features from the narratives, here the figure of Bendigeidfran wading through the sea. This image indicates that this is not a map of Wales as the reader recognizes it, but it is a Wales of the story, a Wales of another time. Yet, at the same time, it is a Wales which through the continuation of the place-names, is still present in the twenty-first century.

It is either in children's versions or in academic editions that the landscape of the *Mabinogi* and that of modern Wales is allowed to merge in the forms of maps. No other genre in the corpus makes this close, visual connection. Indeed, as will be discussed in the last section of this chapter, the twenty-first-century Seren novellas are at great pains to undertake exactly the opposite: a divorce from the landscape and the place-names so closely linked with the re-imaginings written for children and the fantasy versions of the twentieth century. The reason, perhaps, that the few maps existent in the corpus are found in children's editions – bar one discussed below – is that maps take on a political function if they are drawn in detail. The *Mabinogi* is, of

course, a highly political text in its medieval version, but, as has been discussed, many re-imaginings move away from such a reading. Only in children's versions, where the maps can be elementary and not resemble a peopled Wales, can they be used in a mythical context.

Alun Ifan's *Pedair Cainc Y Mabinogi i Ddysgwyr*, illustrated by Bernadette Watts (1982) [S22], is included in the scholarly section of appendix one, but it straddles two genres, because it is written for the general public and it does not strive to be an accurate version of the medieval texts. Yet it also has been produced for an educational purpose, that of learning Welsh. The map reflects this dual purpose: it is more sober and more accurate than the maps discussed for the children's versions above, containing some geographical features, and the place-names of several sites featured in the *Mabinogi* are also places which exist today, such as Arberth, Aber Alaw, Aberffraw, Harlech, Glyn Cuch. Acquiring the Welsh language is in itself a political choice, and one of national importance, so it is no surprise that in this version the map underlines this worldview.

All of the three maps discussed above accompany Welsh-language editions, and they show the whole of Wales, even though most of the action takes place in Gwynedd and Dyfed, emphasizing that the *Mabinogi* are a national canon.

The only other re-imagining with a map is Alexander's *Prydain*, and here the use is in direct contrast to the versions above. A map is inherent in the *Chronicles of Prydain*, and all of the different versions, whether they are box sets of all five narratives, or individual copies, contain a map, slightly divergent for each edition, of Prydain 'Figure [8]'.[201] In the Square Fish/ Macmillan box set published in 2011, the map even appears as a separate, foldout poster. These maps are most certainly

[201] On the map of Prydain, see Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, pp. 116-19.

modelled on J.R.R. Tolkien's maps of Middle Earth, in that they are elaborate and stylized, showing geographical features of the imaginary landscape as well as individual elements of the stories, such as the Forest of Idris, the Eagle Mountains, or the Marshes of Morva. The difference of these features to the ones shown on the maps in the versions discussed above, is that geography and place-name are fused to create a new landscape feature in *Prydain*, instead of emphasizing the link between narrative and the existing landscape of Wales. Though slightly different for each edition, the map is the same in its essential character: it depicts a land which shows a similarity to Wales in its geographical outline. Apart from this feature, any other link to modern Wales is removed. As discussed above, in this re-imagining the place-names are strategically used to create a fantasy world with Welsh sound structures and partial orthography to authenticate the imaginary landscape.

Beginning with Guest's translation in the mid-nineteenth century, place-names found in the *Mabinogi* were predominantly seen as relics from an older, more archaic time, and quickly became synonymous with mythic time. Conversely, this emphasis on place-names does not accurately translate into an importance of place. Alexander's relocation of many place-names into his own fantasy world points to the symbolic character of these names. Similarly, Garner relocates the Stone of Gronw in his *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2] from Blaenau Ffestiniog to the Mawddwy valley in Powys one and a half hours' drive South.[202] Garner writes that he set his story there 'because the power of the myth on which I drew could not be separated from its land.'[203] Donelle N. Dreeese labels this relocation of stories a '[m]ythic reterritorialization', which 'takes place when writers salvage the stories and places from the past and

[202] A probable reason for this setting is the proximity to his home in Cheshire. See Alan Garner, 'Lens and Land', *The Author*, 125.2 (Summer 2014), 47-48. See 'Figure [9]'.
[203] Garner, 'Lens and Land', p. 48.

rewrite them in order to claim an identity and to establish a sense of place concurrent with their present sense of self.'[204] Even though Garner acknowledges the relationship between Blodeuwedd's story and the country Wales, the specific topography attached to the medieval *Mabinogi* story is sidestepped. Tellingly, both Garner's and Cooper's locations in their re-imaginings are situated within Snowdonia: Garner in Llanymawddwy, Cooper in Afon Dysynni and around Cader Idris, with only about an hour's drive between them. The appeal of this area is also its sparse human population, so that the places can be seen as, in essence at least, nonhuman spaces.

The popularity of this region of Wales is not only evident in literature, with the Romantic sensibilities of this mountainous landscape appealing to tourists as well as writers. 'The Snowdonia region, traditionally considered a heartland of the Welsh language, proved so attractive to English mountain-lovers [in the 1970s] that those born in Wales became a bare majority in communities such as Capel Curig.'[205] The Stone of Gronw in Garner – the feature which supposedly links the valley to the *Mabinogi* – represents not a place but a state of nationhood. A relic of Welshness if you like, standing defiantly in the garden of an English holiday country home. Ironically, the location of the Stone mentioned in the medieval Blodeuwedd story is overlooked, rendering the stone a textual symbol, a collector's item, like the names and sound structures found in Alexander's Prydain. Stones and rocks, with their capacity to symbolize a primordial world, underline the nonhumanness of the Branches. This corresponds to the use of rocks in Alan Lee's illustrations accompanying an edition of Guest's text published in 2000 [C18]. In this version the various landscapes are populated with ragged rocks 'Figure [10]'. In order to intensify the supernatural mist surrounding the Gorsedd Arberth in the Third Branch, and like

[204] Donelle N. Dreese, *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures*, American Indian Studies, 15 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), p. 24.
[205] Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, p. 182.

Ellis' Rock of Harlech discussed above, these stone relics highlight the archaic nature of the texts, and more importantly, the perceived nonhuman ownership of the *Mabinogi*. This nonhuman possession of the Four Branches is especially visible in Cooper as discussed below, where the accidental uncovering of place-names leads to the learning of ancient meanings.

Old Names – Old Ways

In Cooper's *The Grey King* (1975), the fourth in her *The Dark Is Rising* series [YA4], the mythic nature of place-names, established by Lanier, Morris and Walton, is merged with the power of words which has been indistinguishable with magic since the Middle Ages and finds its home in fantasy literature. In *The Grey King* place-names are not taken from the Four Branches, yet the novel sits firmly within the tradition of 'Celtic' onomastic storytelling, which has been assimilated into the myth of the *Mabinogi*. The analysis of place-names gives us a clue why Cooper's work sits so firmly within the corpus, since it cannot justifiably be called a re-imagining of the Four Branches. Nevertheless, it is incorporated into all of the studies undertaken on various re-imaginings to date.[206] In fact, the inclusion of Cooper's work can tell us much about the deep-seated idea in academia, as in popular culture, of the *Mabinogi* proper. Modern, political Wales takes a back seat again, with older names holding values and revealing meanings modern names cannot. Mingling Arthurian matter – which has long been taken to signify Britishness as a whole and can therefore be safely appropriated – with Welsh matter, *The Grey King* quells any possible uneasiness with utilizing Welsh material, in the same way that Lanier calls his version

[206] Filmer-Davies, *Fantasy Fiction*; Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth*; White, *A Century of Welsh Myth;* Fimi, *Celtic Myth*. See Introduction, 'The Nature of the Corpus' (p. 125).

'the earliest Welsh tales of King Arthur'; and so Bran, inheritor of Bendigeidfran and Branwen's names, becomes King Arthur's son.[207] This idea can be directly traced back to Geoffrey of Monmouth's account in his twelfth-century *Historia* of the Welsh as belonging to the line of the 'great British kings'.[208]

In *The Grey King*, specific places that have existed for a long time retain a certain mystic power and energy. The names of these places allow for that energy to be revealed and discovered. A heavy emphasis is placed on the existence of old names which have been replaced by new, sometimes English-language ones. Thus the old name for *Tal y Llyn* is revealed to be *Llyn Mwyngil*, as the protagonist Will discovers. This knowledge of the earlier name allows him to understand its significance in the battle between the Light and the Dark. Will remembers a verse line his mentor Merriman taught him: 'By the pleasant lake the Sleepers lie.'[209] When Will finds out that the lake *Tal y Llyn* was formerly called *Llyn Mwyngil*, and the latter can be translated as 'the lake in the pleasant place or pleasant retreat,' – *mwyn* translates as gentle, mild, dear, and *cil* (lenited *g*) as recess, corner, retreat – he realizes he has stumbled across the place in the verse which will aid him in the battle against the Dark. The seemingly accidental nature of uncovering old place-names of nonhuman places occurs again and again in this version, suggesting the importance of a specific fateful place in time for the discovery. Tal-y-llyn was the place of discovery for a collection of La Tène metal plaques.[210] The discovery of La Tène artwork in Wales could be used as an argument for the validity of employing the term 'Celtic' for a cultural movement. *The Grey King*, with its mingling of Arthurian and *Mabinogi*

[207] See Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, pp. 219- 261 on Cooper's *Sequenc*e and Arthurian legend.
[208] Helen Fulton, 'History and Myth: Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittanniae'*, in *The Companion to Arthurian Literature*, pp. 44-57 (p. 45). See also Fulton's other chapter in this volume, 'Arthur and Merlin in Early Welsh Literature: Fantasy and Magic Naturalism,' pp. 84 -101.
[209] Susan Cooper, *The Grey King* (1975), repr. in *The Dark is Rising Sequence*, IV, p. 554.
[210] Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 20.

stories, and the use of the folklore figure of Herne the Hunter resembling the figures on the Gundestrup Cauldron, is sympathetic to this application of 'Celtic'.

One further example of this onomastic storytelling is Cadfan's Way, the modern English term for *Llwybr Cadfan*. Will comes across the name of a church in Tywyn by chance: the Church of St Cadfan. The name immediately releases a chain-reaction of thoughts and emotions. Will recalls a phrase which Merriman had taught him, and this represents the beginning of Will's remembrance of things he had been made to forget but were imperative that he recollects. 'As it is a magical road, a ley, it allows Will to understand the landscape, and himself, suddenly and completely.'[211] Translating the term *Cadfan* an interesting analogy appears: the word has to be split into two terms *cad*, which means 'battle' and *ban*, being 'peak'. (*Ban* has been lenited to *fan* because a noun in a proper compound precedes it.) The first meaning of Cadfan is then simply 'battle peak.' In fact, the name *Cadfan* is also associated with a battle which took place between the English and Welsh in the thirteenth century.[212] It is no surprise then that *Llwybr Cadfan* leads the protagonists in Cooper to their testing ground in the battle between the Dark and the Light.

Yet is there not a slight unease in the glossing over of historical events with mythical happenings? The significance of the place as a medieval battle ground cannot be accessible to the average reader. Was it known to the author? If we contemplate the significance of a repetition of a battle on the same ground, a comparison is necessarily drawn. Who then plays the Dark and who the Light in the medieval battle?

A second meaning of *ban* is 'branch' or 'verse'. Thus *Cadfan* becomes a 'battle verse' and corresponds to the lines Merriman taught Will to help him and Bran

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[211] Jane Suzanne Carroll, *Landscape in Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 129.
[212] David Moore, *The Welsh Wars of Independence c.410- c.1415* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005).

in their quest against the Dark: 'On Cadfan's Way where the kestrels call.'[213] Even this one line is enhanced once the meaning of Cadfan becomes accessible: the call of the kestrel echoes the verse of the battle and intensifies the urgency of the quest. Further, the kestrel is a bird of prey, which reinforces the image of the battle about to take place. 'Cadfan's Way' becomes a universal warpath, over which the haunting cry of the kestrel sounds. Even though *Llwybr Cadfan* references a human event, it is placed firmly into the nonhuman realm: the kestrels have taken possession of it, and so Cadfan, for whom the way is named, is replaced with birds, the human with the nonhuman.

The places in this version are not purposely connected with the *Mabinogi*; solely the mentioning of certain locations and their stories attached, creates a cohesive link back to various tales. One such example is the mountain Cader Idris in Snowdonia. Caradog Prichard, who goes mad on the mountain in *The Grey King*, echoes the story of the Gorsedd Arberth in the medieval *Mabinogi*. 'There is a saying that anyone who spends the night alone up on Cader will come down next morning either a poet, or mad' states Bran in *The Grey King*.[214] In the First Branch [B1], it is said that whosoever climbs the Gorsedd Arberth will either experience something wonderful or something awful:

> *kennedyf yr orssed yw, pa dylyedauc bynnac a eistedo arnei, nat a odyno heb un o'r deupeth, a'y kymriw neu archolleu, neu ynteu a welei rywedawt.*
>
> (the strange thing about the mound is that whatever nobleman sits on it will not leave there without one of two things happening: either he will be wounded or injured, or else he will see something wonderful.)[215]

Pwyll in the First Branch meets Rhiannon, his future wife, at the mound – while a group of protagonists in the Third Branch [B3] experience their country being

[213] Cooper, *The Grey King*, p. 486.
[214] Ibid., 491.
[215] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 9; Davies, *Mabinogi*on, p. 8.

transformed into a wasteland when they traverse the Gorsedd. There is also a well-known legend connected to Cader Idris, as recited in *The Grey King*, which echoes the Gorsedd legend exactly.[216] In addition, Guest mentions the Cader Idris in her introduction to her translations, and indeed, Morris mentions this story in connection with both Cader Idris and Snowdon.[217] It is very likely that Cooper was aware of both, but that the Cader Idris version carried more weight because of the imposing nature of the mountain and the numerous existing legends connected to it.[218] The Gorsedd Arberth on the other hand, is a highly inconspicuous, gently sloping mound on the outskirts of Arberth (Narberth); the only story connected to it is that of the medieval *Mabinogi*. The Cader's abstract nonhumanness takes possession of the stories, recalling the illustrations to the 2000 edition of Guest's translations by Alan Lee [C18].

The repeated use of verse in *The Grey King* suggests the importance of language and sound in the text, in the same way that Alexander's alliteration in his Prydain texts confirms his method of choosing names for his version. It is not only the etymological meaning of the word, which evokes a metaphysical layer of significance, but equally the sound-structure of that word that can imply certain intertextual links.[219] Returning to the reading of Llwybr Cadfan, the sound-structure of the word 'Cadfan' changes from Will's ignorant mispronunciation Cad**f**an with a voiceless labiodental fricative 'f', to his correction to Cad**v**an with a voiced

[216] See Paul Joyner, 'Cader Idris', in *Celtic Culture*, I, p. 312. Indeed, a short story by R.D. Blackmore from 1895 called *George Bowring: A Tale of Cader Idris* mentions certain superstitions connected to the mountain. Blackmore, 'George Bowring: A Tale of Cader Idris', in Blackmore, *Slain by the Doones* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1895).
[217] Guest, 'Introduction', in Guest, *Mabinogion* (1849), I, pp. xi-xxiii (p. xx); Morris, 'Certain Welsh Traditions in the Light of "The Secret Doctrine", in *The Theosophical Path*, 2.4 (April 1912), 227-38 (p. 230).
[218] An example of a re-imagining of this legend is Catherine Aran's *Idris y Cawr* (Caernarfon: Gwasg Gwynedd, 2004).
[219] For the theory that phonemes themselves do not possess any value on their own, see Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics: An Introduction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

labiodental fricative pronounced like an English 'v'. The change from voiceless to voiced consonant, which results in the necessary guttural resonance made when pronouncing the 'v' sound, creates a vibration, which would perhaps go unnoticed had Will not mispronounced the name initially. This throaty and deep reverberation adds to the feeling of momentous importance and mysterious depth, which must be associated with *Llwybr Cadfan* in *The Grey King*. The difficulty which Will experiences in pronouncing the Welsh names does not put him off learning them. In fact, he makes a conscious effort to pick up as much Welsh as he can (see the pronunciation lesson discussed earlier).[220] As an Old One, he understands the meanings that can lie in old words. Cooper is at pains to ensure the reader is acquainted with the correct pronunciation, to deepen the mystical quality of Welsh, to create an 'otherworld' of sounds, and this accidental uncovering of primordial truths latent in the 'myths' of the *Mabinogi* is manifest in place-names and their utterance. Welsh thus becomes a language which is meaningless, unless one is able to uncover these 'hidden meanings.' Through the amalgam of diverse onomastic narratives, Cooper creates a patchwork landscape in her *The Dark Is Rising Sequence*, incorporating her own English inventions, such as *Tramps Alley*, which has the older name *Oldway Lane*, which carries magical powers.[221]

Aside from place-names, references to other Mabinogion tales, such as *Culhwch ac Olwen* are made. In *The Grey King* (1975) several sequences from that medieval narrative are quoted as a test of riddles which Bran and Will must solve in their quest to defeat the Dark. The correct answers consist of lists of names, such as the following: 'The three Elders of the World,' he [Bran] said, 'are the Owl of Cwm

[220] See this chapter, 'Wales from the Outside'.
[221] Cooper, *The Dark Is Rising*, p. 231.

Cawlwyd, the Eagle of Gwernabwy, and the Blackbird of Celli Gadarn.'[222] These names are found in the Triads and listed under *Tri Hynaif Byd* ('The Three Elders of the World'):

> *Tylluan Gwm Kowlwyd,*
> *Eryr Gwern Abwy,*
> *A Mwyalchen Gelli Gadarn*
> (The Owl of Cwm Cowlwyd,
> the Eagle of Gwernabwy,
> and the Blackbird of Celli Gadarn).[223]

They also occur, in variation, in *Culhwch ac Olwen,* as part of Culhwch's quest to claim Olwen for himself.[224] The story of the oldest animals, writes Bromwich, further occurs in numerous folktales, demonstrating 'that there was in the Middle Ages a body of folklore concerning the Oldest Animals'.[225] Cooper is tapping into an existing body of narratives, lending authority and cultural depth to her version. A further name taken from *Culhwch ac Olwen* is Bran's dog's name Cafall, which appears in that text once as a horse, and once as Arthur's dog.[226] This blending of different onomastic, mythical and cultural references in *The Grey King*, reflects back onto the amalgam of traditions found in the medieval *Mabinogi* texts, in which Christian and pre-Christian, pre-Roman and medieval images combine, to the confusion of scholars today.

The Dark Is Rising Sequence [YA4], Morris' *Book of the Three Dragons* [N2] and Alexander's *Prydain* [YA3] all contain fragments taken from the wider Mabinogion's *Culhwch ac Olwen* to bolster the mythical quality of their versions. It is possibly the text's prominent employment of lists and series of formulaic dialogue which make it seem less coherent to the modern reader, and more appealing to utilize.

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[222] Cooper, *The Grey King*, p. 519.
[223] Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 92.
[224] *Culhwch ac Olwen*, ll. 847, 871, 882 (pp. 31 and 32). Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 203 and 204.
[225] Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 236.
[226] Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 188 and 208.

Culhwch ac Olwen creates a mystical world populated with heroes and warriors, in which most of the names listed are not connected to a specific story. The fragmentation which results from this use of place-names, divorces the Four Branches ever further from their medieval text, and presents them as mythic narratives without a manuscript source.

As we have seen, most of the versions written by non-Welsh writers situate their action within a mythical and nonhuman Wales of lakes, mountains and abandoned ways. The haphazard usage of place-names disassociates the story from the place. The emphasis on older names creates primordial places, whose hidden meanings can be uncovered through the narratives. The emphasis on nonhuman places, on wild, unknowable landscapes, allows the writers to stand back from a political Wales in which Welsh place-names signify the freedom of language from oppression. Moving on to the place-names used by Welsh writers, their thorough departure from the fantasists of the twentieth century becomes evident.

The Welsh Writers' Wales

For studies which focus to the greatest extent on non-Welsh texts or texts written by exiled Welsh writers, such as Donna White's *A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's Literature* or Charles Sullivan's *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy*, place-names can easily be grouped as a means to exoticize a text, and to draw recognizable links to the medieval material.[227] Unmistakable connections can be drawn, because the places themselves are known primarily through the *Mabinogi* narratives. What, however, of re-imaginings produced in Wales? The re-mediation of place-names by the fantasists

[227] See White, *A Century of Welsh Myth in Children's Literature*; Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth in Modern Fantasy*; Filmer-Davies, *Fantasy Fiction and Welsh Myth*; *Welsh Mythology and Folklore in Popular Culture*, ed. by Becker and Noone; Fimi, *Celtic Myth in Contemporary Children's Fantasy*.

is so complete that it results in the noticeable lack of place-name references in most modern and post-modern re-imaginings by Welsh authors (both in Welsh and English). This is especially noticeable in the Seren series of recent years. In order to modernize these tales, the place-names, the textual links to the past, must be eradicated.[228] It is revealing that the Welsh writer Russel Celyn Jones writes in 2009: 'The *Mabinogion* has never undergone a modernizing adaptation of any kind […].'[229]

One of the things that appealed to Jones from the First Branch was the setting of South Wales, which is where he grew up.[230] For him this is a local tale, a story whose geography is familiar and part of everyday life. Place-names in his version are seldom used to evoke the medieval tales or indeed a 'Celtic' landscape, but rather to link the re-imagining to the wider, and most poignantly 'human' world. The opening pages of *The Ninth Wave* (2009) [Na3] give no indication of the location or geography of the text. No place-names allude to specific local features; they only indicate a relationship with places outside of Wales.

This is the story of the First Branch of the *Mabinogi* [B1], concentrating specifically on the disappearance of Pryderi. In a dystopian post-oil Wales, Pwyll is a young, inexperienced lord, bored and unsure of his future, when he meets Rhiannon and kills Gwawl for her. Like all of the Seren versions, the author is painfully aware of the weight of the survival of this national treasure on his shoulders. It seems that the only way the *Mabinogi* will endure is by violently ripping it from its place, established by the previous twentieth-century versions, as a pre-Christian myth and instating it as a post-modern fairytale, with all its implications of gendered and social reworking.

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[228] On place-names in twentieth-century Welsh poetry see Belinda Humphrey, 'Prelude to the Twentieth Century', in *A Guide to Welsh Literature Vol. VII: Welsh Writing in English*, ed. by M. Wynn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 7-46 (p. 26).
[229] Jones, 'Afterword', *The Ninth Wave*, pp. 171-75 (p. 172).
[230] Ibid., p. 175.

The first place-names occur on the second page of the novella and reference the country's trade with Yokohama, Shanghai, Rio and Cape Town – all busy, heavily populated cities, in contrast to the wild, under-populated places in North Wales dominant in the fantasist's versions. Later on in the story various exotic flowers are described growing in Rhiannon's garden: '[a] Hottentot fig, […] Red Campion, pink Oxalis from South America, Mediterranean Bear's Breeches, Arum lilies and Whistling Jacks.'[231] A possible reference to the effects of global warming, these are all non-native plants to Wales, and Carpobrotus edulis (the Hottentot fig) is listed as an invasive species and is illegal to grow in the UK.[232] Furthermore, the *Dictionary of Plant Lore* lists Red Campion as a 'fairy plant' and it, as well as Arum lilies, are said to be unlucky.[233] This is a collection of highly colourful and rather untameable plants, symbolizing Rhiannon's and her mother's enclosed status – incidentally mirroring Blodeuwedd and her connection to flowers (discussed in the last chapter). 'Women need a place to run to', says Rhiannon.[234] For all their international references – from South Africa, South America, the Mediterranean and Manx and Cornish folklore – the prevailing image is that of a refuge for the women who are not at home in the feudal society of Jones' Wales. Like the bucolic landscape in *See How They Run* [Na5] (discussed in the previous chapter), the *Mabinogi*'s haven is a pre-industrial place.

Overall, the place-names do not have Welsh sound-structures at all: they are without exception all English language words. This is the opposite of Alexander's place-names which are invented words with Welsh sound-structures. Like Barfield's

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[231] Jones, *The Ninth Wave*, pp. 12 and 67.
[232] See the list of invasive species on the RHS website <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/pdfs/Invasive-plants-covered-by-legislation-in-UK-and-I.pdf> [accessed August 3rd 2018].
[233] Donald Watts, *Dictionary of Plant Lore* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2007), pp. 14 and 145. See Larch S. Garrad, 'Some Manx Plant Lore,' in *Plant-Lore Studies*, ed. by Roy Vickery (London: Folklore Society, 1984), pp. 75-83; A.W. Moore, Sophia Morrison and Edmund Goodwin, *A Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924); Watts, *Dictionary of Plant Lore*, p. 14; Tony Deane and Tony Shaw, *The Folklore of Cornwall* (London: Batsford, 1975); Roy Vickery, *Unlucky Plants* (London: Folklore Society, 1985).
[234] Jones, *The Ninth Wave*, pp. 67-68.

concept of words as 'mini-myths', the place-names have been so thoroughly re-created within the corpus of re-imaginings, that they cannot be divorced from the mythical meaning that they have acquired.[235]

The only prevalent Welsh sounds in *The Ninth Wave* are found in the personal names and in the word *cantref*, which will be discussed below. The use of the personal names which Jones takes from the First Branch seems ironic and serves to underline the hopeless wasteland post-oil Wales has become. Since the Welsh language cannot be used as the strange-factor and an aid to fragmentation, the medieval must be the substitute. This dissonance creates an atmosphere of unease, underlining the dystopian, hopeless geography of factories, waste and poverty. Shop brand names now occupy this new human landscape, which consists of Boots the Chemist, Starbucks, and WH Smith. This is not the rural, pastoral, primordial landscape of the fantasy texts discussed above, but the bleak, commercial environment of a dystopian Wales. The nonhuman-centred landscape of the fantasists has been transformed into a human-centred setting, signalling that to 'modernize' the *Mabinogi*, the nonhuman landscape has to be populated. This parallels the use of the otherworld discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, where the rural otherworld of Cawkwell's *Rhiannon* [C19], for example, has been transformed into a virtual, man-made world in Lloyd Jones' *See How They Run* [Na5]. The image, however, is the same: the *Mabinogi* endures, no matter how much the landscape has changed.

Of the very few place-names to crop up in *The Ninth Wave*, most refer to existent places in twentieth-century Wales. Examples include Rothers Sker and Langland Bay in Swansea and Castle Street in Cardiff. This is Wales with its people, the de-politicized place-names from the earlier re-imaginings replaced with the names

[235] On the idea of 'mini-myths', see Phelpstead, *Tolkien and Wales*, p. 84. See Barfield, *Poetic Diction*, esp. pp. 89-90; see also Flieger, *Splintered Light*, p. 68-72; Fimi and Higgins, *A Secret Vice*, p. lvii.

of a modern, recognizable Wales. It seems that the idealized pastoral must be replaced with the dystopian. While the medieval trappings of this post-modern version are not seen as a return to a *locus amoenus*, the restoration of a medieval feudal structure and its accompanying language in this post-oil wasteland, represented through the term *cantref*, indicates a human need to turn to the past when everything else has collapsed.

Translated *cantref* means 'a hundred' and signifies a unit of land over which a lord resides, or a district or province.[236] It is one of the first words we encounter in the First Branch of the *Mabinogi* and it automatically binds the story tightly to the place: *Pwyll, Pendeuic Dyuet, a oed yn arglwyd ar seith cantref Dyuet.* ('Pwyll, prince of Dyfed, was lord over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed.')[237] In Davies' translation, as in any translation, the word *cantref* stands out because it is untranslatable. It is noticeable in the same way in Jones' re-imagining. It is also used, in translation as 'a hundred', in Francis' verse version *The Mabinogi* (2017) [P10] discussed in the previous chapter.[238] It is a place-name and yet not one: it is undefinable as a specific place, yet it defines a specific location. Jones does not use it to denote a certain place; *cantref* on its own can be applied to any area. While one imagines Pwylls' *cantref* from the First Branch to be, for the most part, unpopulated areas of forest – as is *Glyn Cuch*, the region he goes hunting in at the beginning of the story – the cantref in *The Ninth Wave* has been ravaged by humans and left to rot as wastelands, or has been transformed into medievalized cities. Pwyll describes a lake he used to visit as a child: 'In more recent times old cookers, freezers and washing machines had been dumped there and broke the surface of the water.'[239] This medieval division of land in a dystopian post-oil setting is a radical deconstruction of the mythical world of the

[236] Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. 47. Literally *cantref* signifies '[a]n ancient land area of 100 homesteads'. Jones, *Welsh Place Names*, p. 16.
[237] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 1; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 3.
[238] See Chapter Two, 'The Otherworldliness of the *Mabinogi*'.
[239] Jones, *The Ninth Wave*, p. 17.

Mabinogi, built up by texts and popular culture from the nineteenth century onwards. It shows how deeply this primordial mythworld has attached itself to the *Mabinogi* that a 'modernizing' is forced to erase all links with the (now) mythical nonhuman landscape. The only nonhuman place, Rhiannon's garden – is a controlled setting, and an exotic, defiantly non-Welsh environment.

Unlike Jones, Owen Sheers sets his re-imagining of the Second Branch – also part of the Seren series – in the twentieth century. *White Ravens* (2009) [Na2] takes place in post-World War Two London, rural Wales and Ireland. In this version, the story of Branwen is referenced primarily through personal names: Branwen, Matthew for Matholwch and Ben for Bendigeidfran, and through the physical appearance of the Four Branches in book form. The only precise place-name is The Tower of London, through which Sheers connects the legendary story of the Tower ravens with the Second Branch.[240] Sheers himself quotes the following, taken from the Second Branch, in the afterword to *White Ravens*: 'Then Bendigeidfran ordered his head to be cut off. "And take my head," he said, "and carry it to the Gwynfryn in London, and bury it with its face towards France."'[241] This quote, incidentally, is taken from Davies' translation, demonstrating Sheer' use of an academic translation for his work.[242] Thus while London is a concrete link to the medieval text, the place-names found in Wales are weighed down with mythical connotations, and so cannot contribute to Sheers' bleak, postmodern tale.

The vagueness of place in Jones' and Sheers' versions illustrates the heavy, textual weight that the *Mabinogi* place-names carry, so that a modernizing of the stories cannot be connected to the same landscape. This landscape of Wales is

[240] On the story of the ravens, see Boria Sax, *City of Ravens: The Extraordinary History of London, the Tower and its Famous Ravens* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2011).
[241] Quoted in Owen Sheers, *White Ravens* (Bridgend: Seren, 2009), p. 193.
[242] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 32.

indelibly connected to the national mythic. The nonhuman landscape of rocks, rivers and hills, which the *Mabinogi* names, are so symbolic of a primordial Wales that it becomes a political act to rend the Matter of Wales from its original setting. The nonhuman in the landscape that remains behind is thus mythologized, and remains the preserve of the Romantics and the fantasists with a view from the neighbouring countries.

In a similar but slightly divergent way, the Welsh storyteller Morden's *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23] names only very few of the places by name throughout his version – which can be classified as a heavily edited and enlarged literal re-imagining – and he is often ambiguous about the exact location of specific events. At the start of the Second Branch [B2], he writes: 'Once, in a castle off the coast, there lived a remarkable family.'[243] Harlech itself is not named and the location becomes generic, enhanced through the fairytale style of the introduction. Continuing the broad approach to his setting, Morden begins his Fourth Branch [B4]: 'In north Wales lived two tremendous magicians, a husband and wife.'[244] Neither specific, nor unspecific, this place-name is nothing if not national. In contrast to the international feel of Jones' novella, this version highlights the Welshness of the *Mabinogi*. For the location of Branwen's grave, arguably the most political of all *Mabinogi* heroines, Morden makes use of the dramatic coastline of Anglesey: 'You will find her grave on the island of Anglesey, on a cliff that overlooks the sea.'[245] As the geographical Bedd Branwen is firmly situated inland, the cliffs serve to give her a more permanent, dramatic place in the Matter of Wales. This children's version continues the tradition of the Seren series by not using any place-names directly from the *Mabinogi*, yet simultaneously follows the early twentieth-century versions and those of the fantasists in re-wilding the

[243] Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, p. 35.
[244] Ibid., p. 75.
[245] Ibid., p. 53.

nonhuman setting.[246] The fact that it is marketed for children, allows for the creation of both a national tale and an unspecific myth.

The mythologization of the *Mabinogi* is supported through the cherry-picking of place-names, which create a new, virgin, mythical and mystical text world in many non-Welsh versions, while editions which attempt to modernize the texts must eradicate all links to a mythical nonhuman Wales. This myth, this Matter of Wales sits so deep, that the nonhuman landscape named, especially that of a Romantic sensibility (rocks, rivers and hills), is connected unchangingly to the mythic narratives.

Returning to the example of Bedd Branwen from the medieval Second Branch mentioned at the start of this chapter, the symbolic meaningfulness inherent in a name can be examined. Branwen is said to be buried in *bed petrual […] yglan Alaw* ('a four-sided grave [...] on the banks of the Alaw').[247] As she is dying, Branwen evokes the image of the mother of two countries, the uniting element that she was portrayed as when she was given to Matholwch. Her heart breaks in sorrow at the destruction of both: *guae ui o'm ganedigaeth. Da a dwy ynys a diffeithwyt o'm achaws i* ('woe that I was ever born. Two good islands have been laid waste because of me').[248] Just before Branwen dies of a broken heart on the banks of the river, she expresses her grief at the transformation of the two islands into wastelands. In her lament Branwen uses the word *ynys* which can be translated as 'island' or 'river meadow' to denote the countries which have been laid waste.[249] She could have used the term for country, *gwlad*, a term used elsewhere in the *Mabinogi* and denoting 'native land' from the

[246] The idea of returning to Nature reoccurs in English literature from Walden to Monbiot. George Monbiot, *Feral: Rewilding the Land, the Sea, and Human Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).
[247] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 45; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 33.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 216. On *ynys*, see Dewi Davies, *Welsh Place Names and their Meanings* (Ceredigion: Y Colfa, 2011), p. 55.

thirteenth century on.[250] The use of *ynys* eschews a differentiation between the two countries. It further does not seem to have a political and/or patriotic connotation as 'country' does. *Ynys* points to the land itself and its inhabitants, because it denotes the topographical feature of the place. The destruction of the land has occurred through the killing of the men and an inherent connection between humans and the land is constructed. Simultaneously, Branwen is excluding humans from the places, through the term *ynys*; as Mark Tredinnick points out in his discussion of the use of the word in Australia, 'country' includes human habitation.[251] In a modern re-imagining, found in a guidebook on *Y Mabinogi* by Iestyn Roberts (bought at a tourist information in Snowdonia), the term *ynys* ('island') is replaced by *gwlad* ('country'), replacing the political boundaries and perhaps a 'sense of human stewardship' of the peoples of Wales for their country.[252]

Conclusion: A Linguistic Myth?

Reconfigured as a bridge between human and nonhuman in the corpus, the Welsh language takes on a vital role in the mythologization process. The nonhuman has taken possession of the language, and so draws the human in, leading them into an imagined landscape which is shaped by the place-names given to it. This unusual approach to language has been formed out of the reaction of the re-imaginings to the *Mabinogi* narrative itself – they do not simply retell, they respond.

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[250] For example: *Gwledychu y wlat* (the noblemen of the country). Willams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p.18. See Shelley Trower on the word 'country' in Shelley Trower, 'Geological Folklore: Robert Hunt and the Industrial, Aesthetic and Racial Composition of 'Celtic' Cornwall,' in *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity*, ed. by Gibson, Trower and Tregidga, pp. 117-29 (p. 120).
[251] Mark Tredinnick, *The Land's Wild Music: Encounters with Barry Lopez, Peter Matthiessen, Terry Tempest Williams, and James Galvin* (San Antonia, TX: Trinity University Press, 2005), p. 8.
[252] Iestyn Roberts, *Y Mabinogi=The Mabinogi* (Llandysul: Gomer, 2003), p. 13; Tredinnick, *The Land's Wild Music*, p. 8. On the use of *gwlad* in the Welsh national anthem, see Coupland, 'Wales and the Welsh: Boundedness and Peripherality', p. 121.

Place-names, as the meeting place of human and nonhuman, created by this response, carry the imagined worlds within them. Instead of grounding the texts in the local environment, they transplant the *Mabinogi* into a mythical otherworld as seen in the versions by Walton and Lanier for example. In order to become local again, as in Jones' novella, the place-names must be discarded, and replaced with locations not present in the *Mabinogi* proper. It is ironic, that the place-names which are rejected in order to 'update' the narratives, are used in the first instance in the fantasy versions to dislocate the *Mabinogi* from specific places.

Alongside this reading of the Welsh language stands the socio-political background of the vilifying of the language, rubbing uncomfortably against the recasting of Welsh as a nonhuman, fabled tongue. An anxiety pervades the use of place-names, most frequently among writers whose first language is English, for the correct pronunciation of the place-names used, or at least, the foregrounding of concern is used as a defence against any possible criticism of cultural appropriation.

The writers of the *Mabinogi* corpus have reclaimed the Welsh language for themselves, as a means to connect to the past and to the nonhuman. While it was once derogatively aligned with the nonhuman, for these texts at least, this characteristic has become an enviable, magical trait.

The following chapter examines the human-nonhuman relations in the transformations, interactions and connotations of the human characters themselves, revealing the specific anxieties and fascinations these relationships convey in the re-imaginings. Analysing the characters of Branwen, Rhiannon, Lleu and the brothers Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, an uneasiness with human animality is revealed which is coupled with a coding of Nature as female. The Welsh language is, like in this

chapter, an important aspect of the discussion, creating the possibility to symbolize a link between the myth and the nonhuman.

3. 'Her name on the tongue of a bird:'

Human Birds and Beastly Men

The centrality of the nonhuman in the *Mabinogi* corpus is never so poignant as in the human-nonhuman relationships and associations, and in the transformations of the human characters themselves. Teasing apart these human-nonhuman liaisons in this chapter, the simultaneous desire and anxiety concerning this inter-species relationship in the corpus is fully revealed. In the Four Branches – the scenes which will be analysed here – we have four major human-nonhuman associations: Rhiannon's associations with horses and birds; Branwen's verbal bond with a starling; Lleu's metamorphosis into an eagle; and Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformation into a stag and a hind, a wild sow and a wild boar, a wolf and a she-wolf. The ultimate human-nonhuman figuration is of course found in the character of Blodeuwedd and as the last chapter is dedicated entirely to her, she will not be discussed here.[1] Each of these above-mentioned human-nonhuman relations has a very different purpose at the centre of their creation, and works with distinct impulses in the medieval texts. They have been, unsurprisingly, appropriated for even more differing reasons in the later versions. It is these that will be teased out in this chapter. As in the previous Chapters of this thesis, it is the nonhuman which reveals what kind of narrative the re-imaginings are attempting to tell.

In general, one can say that, apart from the story of Blodeuwedd, the companionship between Branwen and her starling has been the most popular – nine versions out of fifty-eight excluding scholarly editions, tell her story – while Gwydion

[1] Chapter Four: '"You took my spirit captive among the leaves": The Creation of Blodeuwedd'.

and Gilfaethwy's transformations has been the least prevalent: not one re-imagining concentrates solely on their fate.[2] To put this into context, the only other characters from the Four Branches who have been re-imagined on their own strength, that is, not in the context of the four narratives that are the *Mabinogi*, are Blodeuwedd with nine versions and Rhiannon with two [N5, C19]. Neither Pwyll, Lleu, Gwydion or Bendigeidfran have a single individual story concerning them in the corpus. There is one about Pwyll and Rhiannon, reconfigured as a romantic love story [C21] and Pryderi has two named after him but they are re-imaginings of the first branch in its totality [C2, C9]. The great difference between the treatment of these characters mirrors the differing human-nonhuman relations they entertain, as will be discussed in this chapter. As we will see, this imbalance of character re-imaginings demonstrates the simultaneous desire and anxiety of the human-nonhuman connections, a theme that threads its way through the corpus. This theme is apparent in the construction of the otherworld, in the use of the Welsh language to connect to a distant past, and, as will be shown in the last chapter of this thesis, in the culmination of the fear of the nonhuman in the human itself, through the figure of Blodeuwedd.

What is gained from labelling characters a god, man or animal?[3] Much, if we can discern the ideas and values in the texts by analysing how a character is portrayed. The characters in this chapter – Branwen, Rhiannon, Lleu, and Gwydion and Gilfaethwy – can all be identified as human, god or animal. In uncovering which the versions choose to portray them as, we gain great insight into ideas of the human and the nonhuman in the corpus. Therefore, in the same way that the analysis of the otherworld trope and the motif of place-names reveal certain worldviews, the human

[2] Versions focusing solely on Branwen: Na2, D2, D5, D6, D7, P1, P2, P7, and C16.
[3] Erik Larson writes on Cú Chulainn: 'Was Cú Chulainn a god, a man, or an animal? What is gained from reassigning his name from one column to another?' Larson, 'Cú Chulainn: God, Man, or Animal?', *PHCC*, 23 (2003), 172-83 (p. 172).

to nonhuman relation in the re-imaginings exposes a specific narrative: some versions utilize the nonhuman to create a semi-political version, others to de-politicize and de-nationalize the *Mabinogi*. In the same way that otherworlds are constructed, so are divinities created through the reading of the *Mabinogi* as myth, one of the several consequences that this thesis has termed the *Mabinogi* Effect.[4]

In this chapter, the nonhuman takes on a more definite, physical role in the form of those animals with which the human characters entertain certain relationships, or into which they are transformed. Recent criticism has moved away from the term 'animal studies' to the concept of 'human-animal studies' with the latter explicitly examining the human-animal relationship, with the emphasis, according to Michael Lundblad, on 'intertwined interactions, relationships, and becomings that involve human and nonhuman beings.'[5] Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh write on the subject that '[…] it is thinking about animals as inseparable from human lives that constitutes a decisive break from "animal studies" as originally defined by the natural sciences'.[6] In the medieval version of the *Mabinogi*, this inseparability is found throughout the narratives, and it is continued in the later re-imaginings, albeit with diverging motifs. While the corpus of re-imaginings thus aligns itself with the characteristics of recent human-animal studies, it is in no way a beacon for ecocritical thinking or even sentiments, for the linking of animals to humans which occurs so frequently in the re-imaginings, serves entirely different purposes as discussed in this chapter.

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[4] On the definition of the *Mabinogi* Effect, see Introduction, p. 3.
[5] Michael Lundblad, 'Introduction: The End of the Animal – Literary and Cultural Animalities', in *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human*, ed. by Lundblad (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp. 1-21 (p. 2).
[6] Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh, 'In It Together: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies', in *Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies*, ed. by Marvin and McHugh (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-15 (p. 4).

The nonhuman is, as it was in the previous chapters, foremost an idea, a concept, a specific kind of nonhuman which the re-imaginings conjure. Branwen's starling, for example, is not simply a bird, but stands symbolically for the oral transmission of the *Mabinogi* stories, while Rhiannon's connection to animals serves to create a divine 'Celtic' persona.[7] Because the *Mabinogi* is read as myth, and the characters as divine, or remnants of divinities, animals and other nonhumans are allowed to come closer to the human than they would be ordinarily permitted to do. Mark Williams writes on the re-purposing of deities in the Christian medieval learned culture of Ireland, that the divinities had to be 'cut off from their roots before they were suitable for inclusion in the products of the monastic scriptorium'.[8] In the same way, for some writers and poets re-imagining the *Mabinogi*, the characters have to be divorced from their medieval origins.

Returning to the complex notion of the 'Celtic', it is here too that it plays a pivotal role in the portrayal of the nonhuman and indeed the human. The idea of the 'Celtic animal', in fact, that something such as the 'Celtic animal' exists in the first place, comes from the amalgamation of medieval Celtic literatures with Iron Age La Tène art, examples of which have been discussed in Chapters One and Two.[9] It is not the animal *per se*, it is the human-animal relationship which is under scrutiny here. It is the idea of a specific nonhuman which contributes to the world which the re-imaginings create. The popularity of Branwen's story and the striking absence of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's exemplifies this nonhuman: it is a romantic, 'Celtic', non-physical, predominantly verbal and sometimes supernatural nonhuman.

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[7] On the 'Celtic', see Chapter One, pp. 61-2.
[8] Williams, *Ireland's Immortals*, p. 70.
[9] See e.g. pp. 69 and 172. Another example for this amalgamation can be found in Aldhouse-Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*.

Thinking purely of the number of animals which feature in the Four Branches, it is perhaps surprising, given its mythical status in popular culture, that the number is not a high one, and that of those animals who do appear, none are exotic or fantastical. Comparing the Four Branches merely to the other seven Mabinogion texts, a relative abundance of exotic and mythic animals can be found in the latter. *Peredur* features a lion, two serpents and a unicorn; in *Owein* (*The Lady of the Well*) we have bows of elephant ivory and vessels of buffalo horn, if not elephants and buffalos themselves, as well as a snake and a white lion.[10] Meanwhile, in the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gawain is described as battling with serpents, wolves, bulls and bears among others.[11] In summarizing how the consolidation of Judeo-Christian teaching influences the medieval attitude to animals, Christopher R. Clason asserts that, while holding symbolic meanings for a medieval audience, animals were also used to emphasize human superiority.[12] In the later period, by the twelfth century, writes Clason, 'humans started to see themselves in the context of the animal kingdom, perhaps even to acknowledge "the animal within".'[13] The difficulty of classifying humans, animals or human animals is evident in the medieval bestiaries which diversely included or excluded

[10] Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 82, 84-5, 91, 100, 117, 119, and 133.
[11] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ll. 720-22. For an analysis of Gawain's relationship to the creatures he fights, see Michael W. George, 'Gawain's Struggle with Ecology: Attitudes towards the Natural World in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Journal Of Ecocriticsm*, 2.2 (July 2010), 30-44. On Gawain and thinking the landscape, see Gillian Rudd, 'The Wilderness of the Wirral' in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', Arthuriana, 23.1 (Spring 2013), 52-65.
[12] Christopher R. Clason, 'Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture: Fundamental Aspects and Conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrech Classen, 3 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), I, pp. 18-54 (pp. 19-20 and 23-4). On the medieval custom of punishing animals for crimes, see John Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages: The Crucible of Nature* (Abington: Routledge, 2013), pp. 217-21.
[13] Clason, 'Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages', p. 20. See also Francis Donald Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought: to the End of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Evelyn Antal and John P. Harthan (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 339.

'man' from their subject matters.[14] Keith Thomas writes of creatures providing 'a set of categories ['[i]n heraldry, pageantry and artistic symbolism'] with which human qualities could be described and classified.'[15] Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter write on the medieval landscape that where it 'has no symbolic purpose to fulfil, it hardly exists'.[16] Certainly, in the medieval *Mabinogi* animal characters are employed in the first instance as symbolic entities, as will be discussed in this chapter.[17]

Animals have long been associated with children and childhood, and the perceived audience of the *Mabinogi* – children – could in part be explained by the draw of the nonhuman in the corpus.[18] As set out in chapter one, a bias exists in the corpus that the *Mabinogi* narratives are inherently suited to children.[19] The connections between Wales as an 'innocent', virgin country, and the Welsh language as intricately linked with the nonhuman, which in turn is associated with children, as explored in the first two chapters, is continued in the fascination with animals. As David Rudd writes: '[…] there is no innate connection [between children and animals], but the persistence of the link seems to arise from the fact that those at the top of the human ladder wish to see themselves as most distant from animals, as civilised, with "lesser" beings automatically coded as closer to nature.'[20] The connection between children and myth, and myth and the nonhuman, means that the adult versions published by Seren reject the nonhuman

[14] See Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 2.
[15] Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 64.
[16] Pearsall and Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World*, p. 52.
[17] For a comprehensive study of the medieval animal, see Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
[18] See Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales-Innocent Wales'.
[19] See Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales-Innocent Wales'; see also Introduction, 'The Myth of the Mabinogi'.
[20] David Rudd, 'Animal and Object Stories', in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. by Grenby and Immel, pp. 242-57 (p. 242).

alongside the child, alongside rural Wales. The Romantic concept of untarnished childhood which sits uncomfortably alongside nineteenth-century categorizations of Wales as a primitive place, is expanded in the notion of an innocent human-nonhuman relationship as developed in many re-imaginings (discussed in this chapter). The negative link between the Welsh language and animals, prevalent in nineteenth-century discourse (and discussed here in Chapter Two), is transformed into a positive link between the Welsh language and the nonhuman in the corpus of re-imaginings. This positivity is, however, a trait which disregards the socio-political environment of Wales. This romanticization of the nonhuman which we have seen in the chapters, leads to its mythologization, its inclusion in the *Mabinogi* myth, and so it is a very specific construct of the nonhuman which is placed at the centre of the corpus. This becomes even more evident in the human-animal relationships discussed in this chapter.

Mirroring a development seen in recent literary trends the association of humans with animals – as long as they belong to a socially 'acceptable' species – is now a positive trait, symbolizing wholeness and groundedness, as we will see throughout this chapter.[21] One of the socially acceptable species in this corpus is the bird, an animal which carries multiple associations in the medieval period and which, in the re-imaginings, symbolizes the oral transmission of the stories. Since the corpus as a whole contains almost equal numbers of children and adult versions (as mentioned, out of the fifty-eight non-scholarly versions, twenty-four are classified as children's and five as young adult), the prominence of Branwen's starling and the absence of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformations cannot be

[21] Warner mentions this reversal in her *Managing Monsters*, pp. 49-63.

due to the fact that the *Mabinogi* stories are told primarily to a child audience.[22] Indeed, it is surprising that the most well-known and prominent versions marketed at a child and YA readership – by Cooper [YA4], Alexander [YA3] and Garner [YA2] – do not break out of the mould and thematize the brothers' transformations, given that the questioning of sexuality and identity are prominent topics for teenagers.[23] This means that the uneasiness that surrounds certain episodes is not cautiousness on account of the child audience or readership. The neglect of the brothers' story derives from its unsuitability for the specific version of human and nonhuman relationship that is so often portrayed in the re-imaginings corpus, a version which the figure of Branwen embodies, but Gwydion and Gilfaethwy do not.

The Women of the Mabinogi – Between Voices and Bodies

Discussions of sex and gender in Celtic Studies have undergone a progression in the last century, which mirrors the development of Celtic Studies in general, from a nativist reading of the medieval material to a non-nativist approach.[24] This means that men and women were initially read as 'remains' of gods and goddesses of an ancient pagan tradition.[25] John Koch's A *Welsh Window on the Iron Age* (1987), which followed Jackson's famous *The Oldest Irish Tradition: A Window on the Iron Age* (1964), looked to a pre-medieval, pre-Christian past to interpret the texts.[26] A second

[22] Children's and Young Adult versions: YA1-5 and C1-14.
[23] For a discussion of metamorphosis and identity in children's literature see for example Clare Bradford, 'Possessed by the Beast: Subjectivity and Agency in *Pictures in the Dark* and *Foxspell*', in *Mystery in Children's Literature: From the Rational to the Supernatural*, ed. by Adrienne E. Gavin and Christopher Routledge (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 149-64.
[24] See Introduction, 'The Creation of a Myth'.
[25] See e.g. Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi*, p. 55.
[26] John T. Koch, 'A Welsh Window on the Iron Age: Manawydan, Mandubracios', *CMCS*, 14 (Winter 1987), 17-52; Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition*.

way of reading the characters of the Four Branches was to interpret their actions through the lens of folklore motifs. Texts such as Gruffydd's *Rhiannon* (1953) and Jackson's *The International Popular Tale and the Early Welsh Tradition* (1961) disassembled the Four Branches and analysed each narrative pattern they had identified, matching them with recognizable folklore motifs.[27] One such motif is the 'Calumniated Wife' which has been applied to both Rhiannon and Branwen.[28] Juliette Wood writes: 'On a literary level, the Calumniated Wife motif contributes to the complex characterization of two very different heroines; but it also reflects cultural factors which created a situation in which foreign wives would be open to persecution.'[29]

A third approach followed, directly opposing the earlier readings, positing that interpreting female characters as remains of deities or according to strict folklore patterns necessarily limits the reading that can be made with such angles, and argued for a purely literary approach to (mainly) the women of the Four Branches.[30] Like the three differing approaches to reading Blodeuwedd outlined in the next and last chapter of this thesis, the most recent mode of interpretation is the most unpopular in the corpus.[31] By contrast, the first two, the nativist approach as well as the folklore motif approach, are both used interchangeably to re-create the characters of the *Mabinogi*. Like the fragmented use of place-names, these approaches to the characters show the underlying attitude to the *Mabinogi* in the corpus: the view that they constitute an unknowable mythical story.

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[27] Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*; Jackson, *The International Popular Tale.*
[28] Jackson, *The International Popular Tale*, p. 87-90.
[29] Juliette Wood, 'The Calumniated Wife in Medieval Welsh Literature', *CMCS*, *10* (Winter 1985), 25-38 (p. 26).
[30] Examples for this approach are e.g. Roberta L. Valente, 'Merched Y Mabinogi: Women and the Thematic Structure of the Four Branches' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cornell University, 1986); Winward, 'Some Aspects of the Women in *The Four Branches*'; Kirstie Chandler, 'Patriarchy and Power in Medieval Welsh Literature', *PHCC*, 22 (2002), 80-95; Kay, 'Gendered Postcolonial Discourse in the Mabinogi', p. 219.
[31] See Chapter Four, pp. 260-62.

In the medieval *Mabinogi*, two women, Branwen and Rhiannon, entertain fleeting, symbolic associations with birds. Yet, for many authors of the twentieth- to twenty-first-century versions they entertain a spiritual, idealized pastoral relationship to the nonhuman, which creates ambiguous, divine characters. Branwen's relationship with the starling has fascinated a large number of writers and poets. Out of the fifty-eight re-imaginings, eight versions concentrate on her story, nine if one includes Owen Sheers' *White Ravens* [Na2], which though a re-imagining of the whole Second Branch, betrays a specific fascination for the character of Branwen. In these nine versions, Branwen's relationship to the bird is read in large part as evidence for a society in which female human and nonhuman animal relations occupy a state of mutual understanding and companionship.

It seems that this relationship has been so enlarged precisely because of the safe distance to the nonhuman that birds preserve.[32] Indeed, as Claude Lévi-Strauss states, the striking physical difference between birds and humans allows for their comfortable comparison:

> Birds are given human christian names in accordance with the species to which they belong more easily then are other zoological classes, because they can be permitted to resemble men for the very reason that they are so different. They are feathered, winged, oviparous and they are also physically separated from human society by the element in which it is their privilege to move. As a result of this fact, they form a community which is independent of our own but, precisely because of this independence, appears to us like another society, homologous to that in which we live: birds love freedom; they built themselves homes in which they live a family life and nurture their young; they often engage in social relations with other member of their species; and they communicate with them by acoustic means recalling articulated language.[33]

[32] On anthropomorphic animal stories, see Rudd, 'Animal and Object Stories', esp. p. 243.
[33] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 204.

We will encounter the emphasis on bird song as a form of language, as well as the image of a bird nurturing their young, in many of the re-imaginings discussed below. In her *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, Yamamoto calls the human–bird relationship one of '*homology*', 'in which similar functions and properties are manifested through extremely different physical structures.'[34]

As will be shown, the birds hover in the liminal space between human and nonhuman, their voice transferring to human speech, and echoing the orality of the stories, their animal bodies separating them from the human. Beginning with Branwen and then following with a discussion of Rhiannon, this section will trace the change of the perfunctory nature of the women's link to animals in the medieval text, to a relationship which symbolizes a vocal but simultaneously unknowing, human and nonhuman companionship in the re-imaginings. This change results in the female characters becoming divinities or at least, unknowable figures in many versions by non-Welsh writers, while their link with the nonhuman elevates them to a specific Welsh 'Celtic' character in many Welsh writers' texts.

Branwen: The Welsh Language and the Nonhuman

A prominent female character in the medieval Second Branch [B2], Branwen is securely tied up within her cultural sphere as the sister of the King of Wales, Bendigeidfran, and later as the wife of the King of Ireland, Matholwch. She is banished from her husband's chambers, because of an insult against the Irish King committed by her brother Efnysien. *Sef dial a wnaethant, gyrru Branwen o un ystauell ac ef, a'y chymell y bobi yn y llys* ('They took revenge by sending Branwen

[34] Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 36.

from her husband's chamber, and forcing her to cook for the court').[35] The punishment reflects the idea that Branwen has shamed the entire court, which is why she has to serve them now; it is a reversal of roles and a public demonstration that she has no power anymore. In addition, the butcher gives her a daily box on the ear as part of her punishment: *[...] a pheri y'r kygyd, gwedy bei yn dryllyaw kic, dyuot idi a tharaw bonclust arnei beunyd.* ('[…] and they had the butcher come to her every day, after he had chopped up meat, and give her a box on the ear.')[36] She is therefore demeaned further through the humiliating process of being slapped in public, which is enhanced due to the punishment being carried out by a common man. Further, as Davies points out, this is a specific insult to a queen as set out in the medieval Welsh laws.[37] In number fifty-three of *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, called *Teir Gwith Baluawt Ynys Prydein* ('Three Sinister (Ill-omened) Hard Slaps of the Island of Britain'), the incident is presented as slightly different; there it is Matholwch who slaps Branwen once: *Vn onadunt a dreóis Matholóch óydel ar Vranóen verch Lyr* ('One of them Matholwch the Irishman struck upon Branwen daughter of Llŷr').[38] We find this scene in one re-imagining, Ellis' play 'Bronwen' (1922) [D1], in which Matholwch strikes Branwen. The stage directions state: 'Matholwch strikes her lightly and formally across the brow.'[39] The change to the butcher, who carries out the slap as well as its repeated nature in our medieval version of the Second Branch, intensifies the punishment. Branwen is forced from the realm in which, in the *Mabinogi*, a woman thrives. She is made to live outside the domain of her own society and thus is

[35] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 37; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 27-28.
[36] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 37-38; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 28.
[37] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 234, n. 28. See also Morfydd E. Owen, 'Shame and Reparation: Women's Place in the Kin', in *The Welsh Law of Women*, ed. by Dafydd Jenkins and Morfydd E. Owen (Cardiff: Unversity of Wales Press, 2017), pp. 44-77.
[38] Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 150, 151, and lxxii.
[39] Scott-Ellis, 'Bronwen', in *The Cauldron of Annwn*, II.1. 266 (p. 261).

not able to communicate within her own cultural sphere. She is silenced through her banishment; she is rendered voiceless and cannot defend herself.[40]

Branwen rears a starling *ar dal y noe* ('at the end of her kneading-trough'), a precise culturally defined space.[41] A clear contrast is built up between the butcher's slap – the Welsh word for butcher, *cigydd* (*cygyd* in Middle Welsh) relating to *cig* ('meat') – and the verbal, non-physical process of teaching a language.[42] The kneading-trough is where Branwen literally kneads things into shape, just as she will form the bird into a human-animal hybrid, by teaching it a human language – *a dyscu ieith idi* ('and taught it to speak').[43] Branwen's own name, which is literally translated as 'white crow' (*brân (g)wen*), will deepen the association of her person and birds in later versions, discussed below.

Her starling is not only taught to speak but also made to carry a letter (*llythyr*) to Bendigeidfran, rendering the bird's linguistic ability pointless, and creating a tension between literacy and orality, a theme elaborated on by many later texts (as we will see).[44] This tension questions the usefulness of Branwen's teaching, and strengthens the possibility that the teaching of a language to the bird is a symbolic act. When the starling meets the King of Wales, the bird does not speak with the men, but solely shakes out its feathers so that the letter falls out (*a garwhau y phluf, yny arganuuwyt y llythyr*).[45] As soon as the bird comes into contact with the men, its actions align it with the common carrier pigeon, rather than the human-animal hybrid which it seemed to be transformed into by Branwen. The emphasis thus lies on her as

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[40] See Nicole A. Thomas, 'Branwen's Shame: Voicing the Silent Feminine in Evangeline Walton's *The Children of Llyr*', in *Welsh Mythology and Folklore in Popular Culture*, ed. by Audrey L. Becker and Kristin Noone (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Company, 2011), p. 30-41 (p. 31).
[41] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 38; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 28.
[42] On the word *cigydd*, see *Y Geiriadur Mawr: The Complete Welsh- English, English- Welsh Dictionary*, ed. by H. Meurig Evans and W.O. Thomas, 13th edn (Llandysul: Gomer, 2014), p. 85.
[43] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 38; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 28.
[44] See this chapter, 'Branwen's Starling – Oral Storytelling'.
[45] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 38; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 28.

a character who is wronged at the hands of her enemies, and the symbolic gesture of sending out the starling for help underlines her desperate situation.

Branwen herself is described, according to common medieval formulae, as the most beautiful woman, famed for her white skin and white hair.[46] Her appearance is therefore not individual, but purposefully aligned with a standard concept of beauty in order to elevate her status in the storyworld. In the same way, the starling is not important as an individual bird, but is employed for the purposes of several symbolic images. Birds, through their flight, are connected to spirituality in medieval culture and so occupy territory unknown to humans.[47] Indeed, the linking of a female character to a bird is common throughout European literature. As Clason points out, there is Isolde and the eagle in Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan und Isolde* (c. 1210).[48] Susan Crane writes of a connection that is drawn between widows and turteldoves in Ambrose's *Hexameron*, and a woman and a falcon in Chaucer's *The Squire's Tale*.[49] Crane also writes on the genre of medieval romance, that '[b]irds were broadly conceived (and, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, were still conceived in modern France) as making up a society with a metaphoric relation to human society, in which birdsong fills the function of human language.'[50] The link between bird's song and speech is one that is certainly made in the corpus of re-imaginings.

As starlings are known for their group formations in flight, a single, lone bird evokes loneliness, abandonment, weakness – mirroring Branwen's situation in

[46] See for example Iseult's fame for her blonde hair. Roberta Milliken, *Ambiguous Locks: An Iconology of Hair in Medieval Art and Literature* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2012), pp. 13-15 and 43. Olwen in the Mabinogion's *Culhwch ac Olwen* is also famed for her blonde hair, indeed it is described as more yellow than the flowers of the broom, one of the flowers out of which Blodeuwedd is created. See Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 192.
[47] Clason, 'Animals, and Fish in the Middle Ages', pp. 46-48.
[48] Clason, 'Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages', p. 19.
[49] Crane, *Animal Encounters*, p. 84; Susan Crane, 'For the Birds', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 29 (2007), 23-41 (esp. p. 29). See also Sara Gutman, 'Chaucer's Chicks: Feminism and Falconry in "The Knight's Tale", "The Squire's Tale", and *The Parliament of Fowls*', *in Rethinking Chaucerian Beasts*, ed. by Carolyn Van Dyke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 69-84.
[50] Crane, *Animal Encounters*, p. 121. See p. 197 of this chapter for Lévi-Strauss on this subject.

captivity. Their formations often display fascinating murmurations in the sky, a rhythmic echoing, analogous to the rhythm of a verbal murmuration, 'the continuous utterance of low, barely audible sounds,' a further indication perhaps of the starling's symbol as messenger.[51] In his *Welsh Writing, Political Action and Incarceration*, Diarmaid Mac Giolla Chríost writes: 'That she [Branwen] chose the starling ought not to surprise us as the linguistic skills of this bird have long been well known, albeit variously looked upon as comic, unsettling or enchanting.'[52] Mac Giolla Chríost cites various scenes in which a starling speaks: from Pliny the Elder in which a starling declaims Latin and Greek, to a starling being linked to speech in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (part I, act I, sceen III), and in Müller and Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*.[53] In Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Hotspur declares,

> I'll have a starling shall be taught to speak
> Nothing but 'Mortimer', and give it him
> To keep his anger still in motion.[54]

Patricia Clare Ingham argues that Branwen's relationship with the starling places her on a cultural border 'linked specifically to linguistic technologies: the oral, prelinguistic, "natural" world of the bird and the textual, symbolic world of political action.'[55] She states further that 'Branwen's use of written text is superfluous given the bird's learned facility with speech; yet she can speak the language of both bird and

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[51] *Oxford English Dictionary*, electronic version, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). However, the starling is an unusual bird to be found in medieval manuscripts, see Brunsdon Yapp, *Birds in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 1981), esp. pp. 146-47.
[52] Diarmaid Mac Giolla Chríost, *Welsh Writing, Political Action and Incarceration: Branwen's Starling* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 3.
[53] See Mac Giolla Chríost, *Welsh Writing, Political Action and Incarceration*, p. 3. On Pliny, see J. Bostock and H.T. Riley, *The Natural History: Pliny the Elder* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1855). Quoted in Mac Giolla Chríost, p. 3.
[54] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Peter Davison, Charles Edelman, new edn (London: Penguin, 2015), I. 3. 224-26.
[55] Ingham, 'Marking Time: *Branwen, Daughter of Llyr* and the Colonial Refrain', p. 181.

text, and by her "bilingual" position gains a temporary liberation.'[56] Yet, there is no indication that Branwen is able to speak the language of birds, and there is also no suggestion that the starling actually communicates with Bendigeidfran. However, it is undeniable that it is the power of the human language which saves Branwen from her plight. That this language would be Welsh underlines the political nature of this narrative. As Mac Giolla Chríost writes: 'For the primordial Welsh, Branwen's starling appears to be seriously political – linking politicized incarceration and disciplinary silence, with the power of language. This diminutive creature carries a text penned by the incarcerated author, the content of which has portentous consequences for all of society beyond the prison cell.'[57] Indeed, the political aspect of Branwen's identity with the starling is enlarged in several later versions by Welsh writers, by making use of its ability to communicate in Welsh, while in certain re-imaginings by non-Welsh writers the starling comes to symbolize a universal, 'Celtic' connection between human and nonhuman. The Welsh language, however, retains its mystical link to the nonhuman which it possessed through the use of place-names as shown in Chapter Two.

Branwen – A Tragic Heroine

Branwen is a character who has been greatly expanded upon in later re-imaginings. This expansion is a direct result of the *Mabinogi* Effect, the approaching of the texts as myths. In the same way that the otherworld is expanded in many versions, Branwen's tenuous connection to the nonhuman is enlarged. It seems that approaching the *Mabinogi* as mythic, results in the expansion of the nonhuman. In the

[56] Ingham, 'Marking Time: *Branwen, Daughter of Llyr* and the Colonial Refrain', p. 181.
[57] Mac Giolla Chríost, *Welsh Writing, Political Action and Incarceration*, p. 3.

same way that the mythic is connected to the childlike in this corpus, so it is connected to the nonhuman. But, as will be shown, it is a certain type of nonhuman which is acceptable in this corpus – a romanticized, non-threatening nonhuman.

Beginning with Guest's portrayal of Branwen in her mid-nineteenth-century version [S1], the famed Welsh princess is in essence still the same character found in the medieval original. Guest's emphasis lies on an imagined domestic, feminine quality attributed to Branwen, which is exemplified through her relationship to the starling. The space in which she rears the starling is presented in a particular homely fashion. 'It […] follows that the art of the Victorian period, perhaps best known for its detailed three-dimensional or illusionistic imagery and symbolism, would employ spatial composition as a telling element of meaning.'[58] Certainly, for Guest the kneading trough in which Branwen rears the starling symbolizes a specific feminine space: 'And Branwen reared a starling in the cover of the kneading trough, and she taught it to speak […].'[59] Guest creates an enclosed environment for Branwen's interaction with the starling, under the 'cover' of the trough. This micro-feminine environment is later underlined by an observation that the Welsh warriors make when they see the bird arrive from Ireland: 'they knew that the bird had been reared in a domestic manner.'[60] The Middle Welsh version simply specifies that the bird was *meithryn yr ederyn yg kyuanned*, a 'bird [which] has been reared among people' as Davies translates, or simply 'among habitation or in an inhabited place'.[61] In Guest, Branwen has created a micro-household for herself and the bird under the cover of the trough. This is a positive relationship between human and animal, crafted against the

[58] Liana F. Piehler, *Spatial Dynamics and Female Development in Victorian Art and Novels: Creating a Woman's Space* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), p. 8.
[59] Guest, *Mabinogion*, III (1849), p. 115.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 38; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 28.

backdrop of widespread mid-nineteenth-century cultural debates about the connection between the Welsh and animals, which culminated in the Blue Books report.[62]

Yet, the starling is for Guest most certainly also of a symbolic nature. The bird is tended to 'in the cover of the kneading trough', instead of *ar dal y noe* ('at the end of her kneading-trough'), protected in the work space in which bread is formed into shape, as the starling is nurtured to transcend its animal being, in such a cultured, human space.[63] It is 'covered' both by Branwen's care and also by the physical cover of the trough, and in extension by the culture of the working kitchen that both the starling as an animal, and Branwen, as a royal member of the court, do not belong to. So both are outcast, their confined status enhanced through the image of the starling 'in the cover' of the trough, and Branwen becomes a tragic heroine in the vein of Tristram's Isolde. Branwen's tragedy is linked with the image of the starling, something that recurrs in several later re-imaginings. Indeed, her connection to the bird is fleshed out extensively in texts of the twentieth and twenty-first century, in that it becomes symbolic for the Welsh language, its relationship to the countryside and the very specifically Welsh notion of the *cyfarwydd*, the professional storyteller.[64]

Branwen's Starling – Oral Storytelling

Out of the nine versions which concentrate solely on the story of Branwen in the corpus of re-imaginings, seven are written by Welsh writers.[65] In this figure alone, the importance of Branwen as an emblematic figure among the Welsh writers of this

[62] For a reading of the bestial body in the Blue Books report, see Roberts, *Embodying Identity*. For further discussions on the Blue Books, see Chapter One, 'Otherworlds and the Myth of Wales'; Chapter Two, 'The Status of Welsh in the Canon'.
[63] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 38; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 28.
[64] On the *cyfarwydd*, see Chapter Two, 'Welsh for the Welsh: Tradition and the *Cyfarwydd*'.
[65] P7, C16, C20, Na2, D5, D6, and D7.

corpus is revealed, and this prominence lies in her connection to the starling and the oral narrative the bird embodies.[66]

Beginning in the last decade of the twentieth century with a poem by Gillian Clarke published in 1993 [P7], Branwen teaches the starling not to speak but to utter her name in its two syllables, a trope that is utilized frequently among the numerous plays and poems dedicated to her story:

> […] and I tell my name until
> he holds its two syllables
> of water in his throat […].[67]

The close association of Branwen with the sea in this poem – her name likened to the gurgling of water in the bird's throat – signifies that her selfhood is embedded into the notion of the nonhuman:

> I throw him into the wind
> calling 'Branwen, Branwen'
> to the far horizon.[68]

Her name becomes the bird's call – the repetition of the word creating a link between the Welsh name and the cry of the starling. In contrast to the medieval version, the starling is a male bird here, suggesting that the bird in Clarke is not solely symbolic of Branwen's plight. The emphasis lies on the transferal of language, the interaction between human and bird. Both Branwen and the starling are acknowledged as the same species, symbolically at least: 'both of us small birds at a window […].'[69] The association of Branwen with a bird is widened allegorically, so that the *Mabinogi*

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[66] On the tension between orality and literacy in the medieval Second Branch, see this chapter, 'Branwen – The Welsh Language and the Nonhuman'.
[67] Gillian Clarke, 'Branwen's Songs and the Lament of Bendigeidfran', in Clarke, *The King of Britain's Daughter* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993), IV. 8-10.
[68] Clarke, 'Branwen's Songs', IV. 13-15.
[69] Clarke, 'Branwen's Songs', IV. 2.

myth is permanently connected to the nonhuman – the bird symbolizing the oral transmission of the stories. Expanding on the link between words and flight, the image of Branwen's starling enlarges this idea by literally connecting words with a live bird.[70]

Lesley Kordecki writes of 'our own assumed ownership of words' and what this 'linguistic imperialism can tell us about the writer's perceived position in the world […], that stories with 'talking beasts' can 'challenge the hierarchy.'[71] For many *Mabinogi* versions, the starling certainly bridges the gap between language and the nonhuman. However, the emphasis lies on the Welsh language as already making this transition. In the play 'Branwen' by Conran (1984-7) [D6], for example, the ease with which the starling is able to learn the human language is palpable:

> Branwen has so often talked to him,
> So often despaired with him, so often given him syllables of her grief,
> He knows them by heart now. He can tell them like beads, out loud.[72]

The words flow like beads from the starling's beak; this imagery is very similar to Clarke's picture of the bird's speech being 'two pearls to bear across the sea.'[73] The human language, a precious gift of pearls and beads, flows from the bird's beak, in syllables but as an unbroken chain. The collective nonhuman has taken hold of the myth in Conran; the starling holds Branwen's name in his memory. Likewise, in Morden's novella *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23], the starling is taught the syllables 'Bran…wen…,' suggesting a similarity of the two sounds to a bird's call,

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[70] Most famously combined in Homer's winged words, but in the *Mabinogi* too, Math's words are said to travel on the wind in the Fourth Branch, see Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 68; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 47.
[71] Lesley Kordecki, *Ecofeminist Subjectivities: Chaucer's Talking Birds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 13.
[72] Tony Conran, 'Branwen', in *Branwen and Other Dance Dramas and Plays* (Llanrwst, Wales: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2003), IV. 2. 77-80. First performed by students from the University of Wales, Bangor.
[73] Clarke, 'Branwen's Songs, IV. 11.

evocative of Clarke's poem, and strengthening the symbolic relationship between Branwen's bird and oral storytelling.[74]

In Chapter Two of this thesis, the importance of the Welsh language in both Welsh and especially in English-language texts was shown. Place-names were revealed not to emphasize a certain place, but to create a specific version of the *Mabinogi*, often to enhance the imagined archaic nature of the narratives. Language in this corpus then, functions to reveal connections to a constructed text world, to deepen links with a specific nonhuman environment. Branwen's bird, through its nonhumanness and its voice, represents the union of these aspects. The oral background of the *Mabinogi* is in the first instance a link to the nonhuman. Like the specific use of place-names, the association created between language and the nonhuman is one of the results of reading the *Mabinogi* as a myth – they are the outcome of the *Mabinogi* Effect. In contrast to the use of place-names, Branwen's starling and the symbolism it offers, is employed both in texts by Welsh writers and those by non-Welsh writers. It is no coincidence that most of the versions discussed in this chapter are written in verse or the dramatic form. Language, the sound of words especially, rhythm and orality, are symbolically connected to the nonhuman in the shape of Branwen's starling.

Clarke intensifies the embeddedness of the nonhuman into human history by hinting in the last stanza of 'Branwen's Grave', that the starling is still calling out her name after her death:

> Her [Branwen's] memory erased
> from the stones
> by the wind and rain,

[74] Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, p. 45.

her name
on the tongue of a bird.[75]

Indeed, it seems that her name is called out by the bird long after her story has been forgotten, so that the bird is possibly a descendant of the first starling, the knowledge having been passed on from bird to bird. Alternatively, this one bird might represent all birds, their memory being portrayed as longer lasting than humans'. The oral transmission usurps the written one – any inscription on her grave has been removed by the wind and rain. Either way, the transmission of the story is in the hands of the birds and the nonhuman realm claims possession of the myth.

Correspondingly, in the picture book *Branwen a Bendigeidfran* by Meinir Wyn Edwards (2010) [C20], the narrator wonders whether a starling still sings a sad song at Branwen's grave: *Sgwn i a oes 'na ddrudwy bach yn canu can drist ar lan yr afon bob dydd?* ('I wonder if a small starling sings a sad song on the river bank each day?')[76] The accompanying illustration by Morgan Tomos shows a starling perched on one of the stones of Bedd Branwen 'Figure [11]'.[77] In this version, Branwen gains comfort from speaking Welsh with the bird. *Yr unig beth a fyddai 'n torri ar fywyd diflas Branwen oedd siarad Cymraeg â'r drudwy bach bob dydd.* ('The only thing that would interrupt Branwen's miserable life was speaking Welsh daily with the small starling.')[78] The emphasis on the Welsh language in contrast to the human speech of the other versions, highlights Branwen's situation as a foreigner in Ireland as well as hinting at the political undertones this Branch has both in the medieval version and in several modern takes.

[75] Clarke, 'Branwen's Grave', ll. 16-20.
[76] Meinir Wyn Edwards, *Branwen a Bendigeidfran*, illustr. by Morgan Tomos (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2010), p. 22 [my translation].
[77] Ibid., fig. 11.
[78] Ibid., p. 12 [my translation].

Sims-Williams argues for Irish influence on the medieval story of Branwen by demonstrating the redactor's knowledge of Irish geography.[79] Indeed, this branch, more so than any of the other three, is a story of international relations. This internationality can also be found in several re-imaginings, where the story is judged as a political commentary on Wales. In Conran's (1984-7) verse play [D6], for example, Branwen and her brothers are revolutionaries, the version is set in 'two neighbouring Third World countries: Ancient Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland', as the stage directions state.[80] Conran is playing with the concept of the 'underdeveloped' British Isles: while called 'ancient Britain', the setting of the play is undeniably present day, with guns used as weapons. Conran creates a continuum between pre-medieval Britain and present-day Wales: a commentary that highlights a struggling nation in constant danger of being eradicated. The starling represents Branwen's freedom, although he is ironically caged:

> He [the starling] cocks his eye like an old Welshman, a farmer from Malltraeth or Nefyn.
> He has studied words. He has the way of old metres.
> Meanings inhere in him.[81]

Nigel Jenkins writes in 1995 of this play that it is 'the most rootedly Welsh of any play yet written in English (and many that have been written in Welsh).'[82] Certainly the place names of Malltraeth and Nefyn are unashamedly local and rural, the starling a farmer, returning Wales to a nation of agriculture before the advent of the coal mines. This re-imagining of Wales, of a return to the pastures and the fields, stands in close relationship to the fantasists' pastoral, 'unchanging' countryside setting, so

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[79] Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence*, pp. 188-207.
[80] Conran, 'Branwen,' I.
[81] Ibid., IV. 2. 73-6.
[82] Nigel Jenkins, 'Introduction', in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, ed. by Jenkins, pp. 3-10 (p. 5).

poignantly expressed by Nimmo – except that Conran's version is a narrative of the people who work the land rather than the ones who visit.[83] It is clear that the nonhuman carries meanings, which represent a connection to an earlier time. Meanings inhere in the starling, the bird is the transmission, not only of the story but also of its values.

In a theatre production by the *West Glamorgan Youth Theatre and Dance Company* from 1996 [D7], Branwen explicitly alludes to her voice being transferred to the bird: 'They've taken my tongue so I talk to the birds.'[84] The title of this production, 'On the Tongue of a Bird', further indicates Branwen's reliance on the starling in this version. However, as in Clarke's poem (which is quoted in parts of the production), the starling only learns to speak Branwen's name: 'When the bird reached Wales, it was heard calling Branwen's name.'[85] In a way, the political aspect of the mistreated Welsh prisoner held in Ireland is romanticized through the image of the bird as messenger of woe. For this body of poetry, plays and picture books (with the exception of Morden's work, a novella), published in the last decade of the twentieth and the first of the twenty-first century, Branwen symbolizes the perceived connection between the sound of language and the nonhuman. That the majority of these versions are written as plays or works of poetry strengthens the importance ascribed to the language and its sounds in connection with the starling. Indeed, in the Welsh-language children's text *Straeon o'r Mabinogi* by Mererid Hopwood and illustrated by Brett Breckon (2011) [C23], the only Branch to be partially narrated in verse is the story of Branwen.

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[83] Chapter One, p. 88.
[84] 'On the Tongue of a Bird: The Story of Branwen', West Glamorgan Youth Theatre and Dance Company (Llandysul, Ceredigion: Gomer Press, 1998), XII. 14.
[85] Ibid., XII. 23-24.

Importantly, it is the Welsh language, a Welsh name, which creates this link to the wider more-than-human world. These versions by Welsh writers and poets create a specific Welsh myth through their emphasis on the Welsh language which is spoken by the starling. Thinking back to the use of place-names discussed in Chapter Two, we can see a correlation with the fantasy re-imaginings by Cooper, Alexander and Morris among others who use Welsh words or Welsh sound structures to form a nonhuman mythworld which their human characters are steeped in.[86]

A 'Celtic' Bird

In contrast to the versions discussed above, Walton's *The Children of Llyr* (1971) [N3] and Tegwyn Jones, *Stori Branwen* (1997) [C16] with illustrations by Jac Jones – also published in English as *Branwen* (1997) with words by Nimmo – make use of Branwen's relation to the starling in order to create a more general 'Celtic' myth, one in which Branwen exemplifies a heightened relationship between all humans and animals in their respective text worlds. Like Walton's archaic place-names discussed in the last chapter, this relationship is expanded to create a primordial narrative, set in another time.[87] *The Children of Llyr* is a rambling account of the Second Branch in which Walton invents an entire backstory episode in which the mother of Evnissyen and Nissyen is forced to sleep with a man who has taken her husband captive, furthering her origin story that she set up with her otherworld.[88] Walton indicates that Branwen's mother used to keep starlings, which the children taught to speak. 'We do not know how she kept it from speaking in the daytime, or how she taught it where it must go. In those days when the subtle senses were not yet lost […] understanding

[86] See Chapter One, 'Otherworlds and the Myth of Wales', esp. 'New Worlds: A *Mabinogi* Fantasy'.
[87] See Chapter Two, 'Creating a 'Celtic' *Mabinogi*.
[88] See Chapter One, 'New Worlds: A *Mabinogi* Fantasy'.

may have been easier between men and birds.'[89] The primeval setting of the story is equated with an enhanced relationship between humans and birds, and equated with a more refined sense of being, the 'subtle senses'.

Equally, in Nimmo's *Branwen* (1997) [C16], Branwen's relationship with the starling is enlarged so that she is portrayed as being able to speak with all birds: 'even wild creatures responded to her touch, and some said she could speak the language of the birds.'[90] This is elaborated when Branwen passes this knowledge on to her son: 'when he [Gwern] was old enough, Branwen would carry the little boy round the castle grounds, teaching him the language of the birds.'[91] The aspect of care which is read into Branwen's rearing of the starling is extended into the cherishing and mothering of all animals. Branwen's identity has morphed into the divinity Celtic scholars took her for, in the early days of *Mabinogi* scholarship, whose 'nature is an improved garden'.[92]

In Tegwyn Jones, *Stori Branwen* [C16] (whose cover and inside illustrations are reproduced without alteration in the English edition with words by Nimmo), Branwen does not speak with all the animals; instead she teaches the starling to sing a song in Welsh at the beginning of the narrative: *Roedd Branwen wedi canu ei chân mor aml iddi nes bod y ddrudwen wedi ei dysgu [...]* ('Branwen sung her song so often until the starling learned it').[93] This lends the text a definite political slant, and as in the case of Clarke and Conran's starlings, the Welsh language is the medium in which human and bird communicate. But, as in the version by Nimmo above, Branwen introduces her son Gwern to the starling and his song:

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[89] Walton, *The Children of Llyr*, p. 201.
[90] Jenny Nimmo, *Branwen*, illustr. by Jac Jones (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1997), p. 3.
[91] Ibid., p. 10.
[92] Carolyn Merchant, *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 32; Lykke, 'Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs', p. 23.
[93] Tegwyn Jones, *Stori Branwen* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1997), p. 3 [my translation].

> *[…] a bob dydd byddai Branwen yn mynd ag ef yn ei breichiau at y goeden afalau, ac yn canu ei chân i'r ddrudwen. Pan ddechreuodd Gwern siarad, fe ddysgodd yntau'r gân hefyd, ac weithiau byddai ef a'i fam a'r ddrudwen yn cael hwyl fawr yn canu gyda'i gilydd […].*
>
> ('[…] and each day Branwen would take him in her arms to the apple tree and sing her song to the starling. When Gwern started speaking, he, in turn, learned the song too, and sometimes he and his mother and the starling had great fun singing together.')[94]

The relationship between Branwen and the starling is continued through her child, indicating that by learning Welsh, one also learns to communicate with the nonhuman environment.

The teaching of language is undoubtedly connected to themes of childhood and childhood innocence, which is linked with concepts of nature and myth throughout the corpus.[95] Indeed, in three of the versions treated above, the aspect of care is greatly enhanced. In Guest's version, the starling is reared in an especially homely fashion; in Walton, Branwen's mother speaks to birds and in Jones/ Nimmo, Branwen passes on her knowledge to her own child. This theme culminates in a version by Haydn Middleton called 'The Last King of the Giants' (1987) [C13], where the starling, in effect, becomes Branwen's child:

> One day Branwen found a tiny starling, motherless and frightened, amid the refuse outside the kitchens. The butcher saw it too, and ordered Branwen to kill it. But instead she smuggled it into her own filthy quarters. There she reared the creature in secret, feeding it with titbits of food, loving it like a mother. Slowely then, with the greatest care, she taught the starling to understand words.[96]

Here the starling is taken out of the kitchen, in an extension of Guest's version of the 'cover of the trough', and taken into Branwen's own space. The nonhuman in the form of the starling is linked with the human child, furthering the idea that to be close to the nonhuman, one must 'return' to a more innocent, a more childlike state,

[94] Tegwyn Jones, *Stori Branwen*, p. 10 [my translation].
[95] See Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales-Innocent Wales'.
[96] Haydn Middleton, *Island of the Mighty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 15.

mirroring the pastoral turn to a pre-industrial Wales (discussed in Chapter One).[97] This is perhaps one of the reasons the nonhuman is so prominent in the corpus: why the *Mabinogi* Effect, the reading of the stories as myths, creates a centrality of the nonhuman. Myths are also seen as belonging to a more innocent, a 'ruder' time, the 'cradle of mankind'; and only by seeing the narratives through the lens of the mythic, can a return to nature be achieved and the nonhuman observed more closely.[98]

Extending these notions of the starling linking the human to the nonhuman through the Welsh language, Owen Sheers' novella creates a character whose entire self is connected to the nonhuman, so that the starling as the bridge between species is rendered unnecessary.

Branwen and the Embodiment of Nature

Like all of the twenty-first-century Seren re-imaginings, Owen Sheers' *White Ravens* (2009) [Na2] sharply deviates from previous versions. In this text, Branwen's story is set in the politically charged aftermath of the Second World War. Branwen lives on an isolated Welsh farm with her brother Ben, and she never teaches a starling to speak. Yet in many respects, Sheers' Branwen follows in the footsteps of the daughters of Llyr in the versions discussed above: determinedly on the side of Nature, she is, in fact, symbolically a bird. This novella is an example, of which there are many in this corpus, of a re-imagining which has been 'updated' in that it has been set in the twentieth century with a backdrop of contemporary socio-political issues, yet the 'values' that are linked with the *Mabinogi* are strangely reactionary.

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[97] See Chapter One, esp. 'Two Local Otherworlds?' and 'New Stories of the *Mabinogi*'.
[98] See Warner quoted on pp. 94-5; see Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales – Innocent Wales'.

During World War Two, the Irish soldier Matthew, who plays the role of Matholwch, is ordered to collect six ravens from a remote location in Wales to repopulate the Tower of London. According to legend, the Tower needs a population of ravens at all times, otherwise the Kingdom is threatened.[99] In Sheers, it is Bendigeidfran and Branwen who provide the ravens, both of whose names are linguistically associated with the word *brân* ('crow, raven').[100] Indeed, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Branwen translates as 'white crow' (*brân (g)wen*)', while Bendigeidfran means 'blessed raven' as mentioned by Sheers himself in the 'Afterword' to his novella.[101] The link drawn in this version between the protection of the ravens and the protection and guidance the old stories provide is underlined several times by Ben's insistence on the tales' importance. Branwen herself shows no direct relationship with the birds, instead, her symbolic status as a bird herself is made clear. The first time Matthew encounters her, he hears her singing before he even lays eyes on her.

> It was late in the morning when Matthew surfaced from the depths of his night's sleep. The farmhouse, so quiet when he'd arrived, was now at the centre of a mountain orchestra of wind, bleating lambs and birdsong. As Matthew fully crossed into waking, he could make out, coming from somewhere in the house underneath him, the strains of a woman's voice, singing.[102]

Branwen's voice is embedded into the sounds of the landscape, among the song of birds, the voices of the lambs and the wind. Her later explicit comparison to a raven is foreshadowed here: her singing defines her before Matthew meets her in person.

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[99] On this legend, see Sax, *City of Ravens*, in which he mentions the connection to the etymology of 'Bran,' but in the context of an interpretation that sees Bran as the remains of a deity (see p. 27).
[100] For a discussion of the names of Branwen and Bendigeidfran and other characters, see Jessica Hemming, 'Ancient Tradition or Authorial Invention? The "Mythological" Names in the Four Branches', in *Myth in Celtic Literatures*, CSANA Yearbook 6, ed. by Joseph Falaky Nagy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 83-104.
[101] Sheers, *White Ravens*, p. 194. On the complex meaning of Bendigeidfran and an overview of the discussion in Celtic Studies, see Hemming, 'Ancient Tradition or Authorial Invention? The "Mythological" Names in the Four Branches', pp. 92-94.
[102] Sheers, *White Ravens*, p. 96.

Branwen seems to be carved from the landscape in which she lives. Her beauty is such that she is given the status of a mythical persona, a timeless, otherworldly creature; it is as if the land had birthed her, as if she is kin to the rocks: 'Her features were supple and fine as if the edges of her face, the line of her nose, her cheekbones, her jaw, had been winnowed by the same millennia of winds and rains that had carved the rocks he'd seen from his window.'[103] Woman is not only on the side of Nature here; she has become part of it.[104] Indeed, her desirability derives from her perceived kin to the nonhuman.

This duality of women/ nature, man/ culture is of course a highly contested topic in ecofeminist discourse, where the association of woman with Nature in the context of the lapsarian origin story is raised, as well as symbols of the female as a cultivated garden and the conquest of the New World, leading to imagery of 'naturalized woman and feminized nature'.[105] In her chapter on geological folklore of Cornwall, Shelley Trower examines the symbolic character that is ascribed to rocks in the nineteenth-century Cornish landscape, representing the 'Celtic' primitivism of the inhabitants: '[…] [T]he race of Celts seems again a reflection of the wild, uncultivated, primitive landscapes, of the most ancient, unchanging of rocks, stuck in the pre-evolutionary past with their ancient stories of giants […].'[106] In a combination

[103] Sheers, *White Ravens*, p. 100.
[104] See Hélène Cixous' theory of binary opposites in Verena Andermatt Conley, *Ecopolitics: The Environment in Post-Structuralist Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 123-29 and 139-40. Even towards the end of the twentieth century, these binary opposites persist in literary and cultural studies. See e.g. Sylvie Muller, 'De Blathnat á Blodeuwedd ou de la Femme-Fleur à la Femme Adultère', *Ollodagos*, 7. 2 (1994-5), pp. 195-221. For a critique of this theory, see e.g. Jane Caputi, 'On Psychic Activism: Feminist Mythmaking', in *The Woman's Companion to Mythology*, ed. Carolyne Larrington (London: Harper Collins, 1997), pp. 425-40 (p. 434).
[105] See Kate Soper, Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature', in *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, ed. by Laurenc Coupe (London: Routledge, 200), pp. 139-43; Kate Soper, *What is Nature?: Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), esp. pp. 98-107, 149-52, 155-57; Merchant, *Reinventing Eden*; Merchant, *Earthcare*.
[106] Trower, 'Geological folklore: Robert Hunt and the Industrial, Aesthetic and Racial Composition of 'Celtic' Cornwall,' p. 125. See also Shelley Trower, *Rocks of Nation: The Imagination of Celtic Cornwall* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

of naturalized woman and ancient rocks, Sheer's Branwen is created in the image of the nineteenth-century 'Celt'.

Both Branwen herself and her brother Ben liken her person to bird imagery; indeed, when Matthew expresses a wish to see the white ravens he has come to collect, Ben says: 'Well, no need for that is there?' […] 'You're marrying your own aren't you? […]'[107] Branwen has replaced the ravens with her own nonhumanness. However, it is in the first instance language – her name – which makes Branwen a raven: harking back to Lleu's own cursed name, Branwen's name is a continuation of that belief: '[S]he'd been cursed by her own name, and like those white ravens, too different, too beautiful for the nest of her parents […].'[108] Her name has determined her fate from the beginning; Sheers' Branwen has no choice but to follow in the footsteps of the myth. Her name determines so strongly who she is that even her body conforms to the white raven, her beauty singling her out from the crowd, causing the alienation she experiences in Ireland. For Sheers' Branwen the identification with ravens is so complete that her troubles in Ireland are likened to her identification with the white ravens in the first instance, before harkening back to the narrative of the Second Branch.

Sheers' Branwen is a rare, strange creature: half-human, half-bird, she is the prize Matthew comes to seek in Wales. She is inherently connected to the Welsh landscape through her voice, her features and her name. In an extension of the versions discussed above, Branwen herself has become a 'child of nature.'[109]

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[107] Sheers, *White Ravens*, pp. 118 and 127.
[108] Ibid., p. 158.
[109] Emyr Humphreys calls Blodeuwedd 'a child of nature' in *Outside Time* (London: Channel Four Television, 1991), p. 13. See Chapter Four, p. 281.

The Starling: Bridging the Human-Nonhuman Divide

'Nature, newly understood to be somehow uncontaminated, innocent, nurturing and spontaneous, beckons as a remedy to the distortions and excesses of progress.'[110] The romanticized ideal of a human to nonhuman relationship highlights the unusual connection between Branwen and her starling in the medieval version. Instead of merely talking to the animal, she teaches it the human tongue, not out of love for the creature but out of necessity. Both human and nonhuman gain something out of this relationship; Branwen is able to send a message to her brother, while the bird is taken care of and fed. One might ask whether this mirrors the medieval text's attitude to the nonhuman as a resource which can be exploited, in the same vein that Manawydan needs to sow those fields in the Third Branch [B3], and that flowers are used to create a bride in the Fourth [B4]. Why is it that the knowledge exchange between Branwen and the starling is so straightforward, while it is shown to be near impossible between the woman created from flowers and the men who created her as discussed in the next chapter? Does the reason lie within the realm of speech? Looking back at the comparison of the Welsh language to unintelligible 'jabbering' in the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultural discourses discussed in Chapter Two, the starling's ability to speak Welsh is a reversal of this.[111] Thinking back to the leitmotifs found in this corpus of childhood, nature and myth, the acquiring of a human language is seen as equivalent to the gaining of knowledge and reason.[112] In the first chapter we saw how the nonhuman landscape of Wales is linked so closely with notions of the child and a mythical country in the corpus, that versions wishing to 'update' the *Mabinogi*, must 'rationalize' it and bring it into the human, peopled

[110] Warner, *Managing Monsters*, p. 55.
[111] Chapter Two, 'The Status of Welsh in the Corpus: A Fabled Language', p. 115.
[112] On the nature-culture contrast, see Edyta Lehmann, 'A Walk on the Wild Side: Women, Men, and Madness', *PHCC*, 29 (2009), 127-37 (p. 127).

cities. In the second chapter, the analysis of place-names showed that the names of remote sites found in the *Mabinogi* are also linked, in the corpus, to notions of myth and archaic nonhuman places, and further that the Welsh language itself is inherently linked with the nonhuman. The discussion of Branwen and the starling has underlined the fact that it is the nonhuman element which creates the link between the *Mabinogi* and children. Yet, for both Welsh and non-Welsh writers, the Welsh language is pivotal in the connection to the nonhuman, and this is a relationship which is desired and treasured. However, as will be explored further in Chapter Four, situated knowledges and local knowledges are seen as the preserve of human adults.[113]

As we have seen, the concept of the talking starling is connected to the transmission of the *Mabinogi* tales themselves. Certainly in Clarke and Nimmo, Branwen's starling symbolizes the oral nature of the tales and their continued existence in and belonging to the nonhuman realm. Indeed, the frequency with which Branwen's story is retold in poetry and plays underlines the emphasis on the oral quality of the tales and of the human to bird relationship. Cooper makes a reference to memory and birds in one of her writing notebooks: 'Bird Rock. The birds remember. It is the door.'[114] This note refers to the chant in *The Grey King* [YA4], discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, which will aid Will in defeating the Dark:

> On the day of the dead, when the year too dies,
> Must the youngest open the oldest hills
> Through the door of the birds, where the breeze breaks.[115]

On a similar note, starlings and memory are combined in Menna Elfyn's poem 'Ysgol Gân y Drudwns' ('Singing School for Starlings') translated into English by Gillian Clarke in *Ploughshares* (Spring 2015):

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[113] Chapter Four, 'The Significance of Flowers'.
[114] Cooper, 'Escaping into Ourselves' (1981), in *Dreams and Wishes*, pp. 43-50 (p. 48).
[115] Cooper, *The Grey King*, p. 486.

how birds remember
their old songs –[116]

An author's note references Branwen and her starling and a connection is drawn to the *cyfarwydd* and the remembering of stories.[117]

In contrast to the emblematic nature of Branwen's bird in the medieval text, which symbolized her imprisonment, all of the later re-imaginings connect Branwen's identity to her association with the starling, drawing an innate link between the female character and the bird. In an extension of this association, the character of Rhiannon is rewritten to personify 'Nature', therefore placing her outside of normative Welsh society and, in the same way that place-names are used to dislocate the *Mabinogi* from a specific time and place, rendering her malleable to fit the myth the re-imaginings are creating.

Rhiannon: From Medieval Queen to Nature Personified

Within medieval Celtic studies, Rhiannon's perceived connection to horses in the medieval *Mabinogi* has been emphasized more than any other human to nonhuman relationship. Indeed, from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the seventies – concurrent with the wave of nativist approaches – it was fashionable to argue that her origins stem from the continental Celtic goddess Epona, patron of horses.[118] In this

[116] Menna Elfyn and Gillian Clarke, 'Ysgol Gân y Drudwns / Singing School for Starlings', *Ploughshares*, 41.1 (Spring 2015), ll. 8-9 (pp. 69-70).
[117] Ibid., p. 70.
[118] See Henri Hubert, *Divinités Gaulloises: Sucellus et Nantosuelta, Epona, Dieux de l'Autre Monde* (Mâcon: Protat, 1925); Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*; Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge, 1967); Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London: Hamlyn, 1970); Brynley F. Roberts, 'Penyd Rhiannon', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 23 (1977), 325-27; Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 4-7. For a reading against the association between Rhiannon and Epona, see Hemming, 'Reflections on Rhiannon and the Horse Episodes in Pwyll', pp. 20-1. For a discussion of both sides, see Wood, 'The Horse in Welsh Folklore: A Boundary Image in Custom and Narrative', pp. 168-73.

line of argument Rhiannon's relationship with horses manifests itself in three events from the story. The first is her initial appearance to Pwyll in the First Branch when she arrives at the Gorsedd Arberth on horseback. The second is her punishment for her alleged crime of killing her son, for which she has to carry anyone who so wishes on her back through the city. This has been likened to the common international folktale motif of the Punishment of being Saddled and Ridden as a Horse.[119] The third is her captivity by Llwydd in the Third Branch, which takes the form of carrying the collars of asses around her neck. There is no doubt that these three events are connected symbolically, though more likely linking her initial triumph with her later punishments, rather than establishing her as possessing an association with horses.

When Rhiannon rides to meet Pwyll at the Gorsedd Arberth in the medieval version of the First Branch [B1], she is very much in control. Ronald Hutton points out that her riding a horse and wearing a silk gown indicates her status as royalty or aristocracy.[120] Her horse is either enchanted or magical itself, so that neither Pwyll or his men can catch up with her, until Pwyll finally asks her to slow down.[121] She states that she is *[k]erdet wrth uy negesseu* ('[g]oing about my business') and that she has come *e wybot dy attep di* ('to find out your answer') on the matter of marriage.[122] Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan points out that she loses the control she displays at the start of the story as soon as she marries Pwyll and that she is quite helpless when accused of murdering her child.[123] However, she still takes action into her own hand: *Hitheu Rhiannon a dyuynnwys attei athrawon a doethon* ('Rhiannon summoned wise and

[119] See Wood, 'The Calumniated Wife in Medieval Welsh Literature', p. 34-35; Roberts, 'Penyd Rhiannon'; Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, V, Q 493 (now accessible online under *Past Masters: Full Text Humanities* < http://www.nlx.com/collections/87>).
[120] Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities', p. 83.
[121] Davies has pointed out that the white colour of Rhiannon's horse could allude to her otherworldly status, in the same way the Arawn's hounds are white. See Sioned Davies, 'Horses in the Mabinogion', in *The Horse in Celtic Culture: Medieval Welsh Perspectives*, ed. by Davies and Nerys Ann Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), pp. 121-40 (p. 126).
[122] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 12-13; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 10-11.
[123] See Lloyd-Morgan, 'Gender and Violence in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 68-69.

learned men.')[124] And only after their council does she give up: *A gwedy bot yn degach genthi kymryt y phenyt nog ymdaeru a'r gwraged, y phenyt a gymerth.* ('And when she thought it better to accept her punishment than argue with the women, she accepted her punishment.')[125] Her punishment for murdering her son mirrors her first show of strength. 'From being a proud horsewoman she now has to offer herself as a shameful mount for everyone who comes along. This graphically symbolizes her change of status and suggests masculine hatred towards a woman who had shown independence and intelligence […].'[126] It seems fitting that the woman who won her own husband on horseback should impersonate a pack animal at her downfall.

Finally, in the last scene of the Third Branch [B3], the punishment Llwyd places on Rhiannon and Pryderi for tricking Gwawl in the First Branch is revealed. *Pryderi a uydei ac yrd porth uy llys i am y uynwgyl, a Rhiannon a uydei a mynweireu yr essynn, wedy bydyn yn kywein gueir, am y mynwgyl hitheu.* ('Pryderi had the gate-hammers of my [Llwyd] court around his neck, while around hers Rhiannon had the collars of the asses after they had been hauling hay.')[127] Symbolizing banishment and displacement – as a noble Pryderi should not have to knock on the gate – his punishment figuratively shames him. The important role of a gate-keeper in keeping out certain people and allowing nobles in, is epitomized in the Mabinogion's *Culhwch ac Olwen* (How Culhwch won Olwen), in which Culhwch is refused entry as a young boy.[128] The gate-hammers emblematically place Pryderi in the position of somebody who is lower born than he and symbolize that he has been excluded from courtly

[124] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, 21; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 17.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Lloyd-Morgan, 'Gender and Violence in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 69. Davies explains the use of a gate-hammer as an instrument to gain entry. Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 239, n. 46. The punishment of wearing a saddle has also been found to be a motif in international folktales as well as a punishment in tenth- to thirteenth-century Europe. See Jessica Hemming, 'Sellam Gestare: Saddle-Bearing Punishments and the Case of Rhiannon', *Viator*, 28 (1997), 45-64; Hemming, 'Reflections on Rhiannon and the Horse Episodes in *Pwyll*', *Western Folklore*, 57 (1998), 19-40.
[127] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc* p. 65; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 46.
[128] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 181.

society. This punishment mirrors Branwen's banishment from the court into the kitchen.[129] This is especially fitting as Pryderi's father, Pwyll, disguised himself as a beggar to win Rhiannon back from Gwawl in the First Branch [B1]. Rhiannon's own punishment mirrors her lowest point in the story, her forced play at pack animal, and further also harks back to her triumphant horsemanship at the Gorsedd. The horse in these episodes does not primarily suggest an inherent connection to Rhiannon herself. Rather it symbolizes firstly the strength of this woman, riding independently in a man's world, underlined by the use of horsemanship by men in all other scenes of the first branch (see e.g. Pwyll and Arawn's meeting discussed in Chapter One); and secondly, it symbolizes her downfall, the literal degradation from human to nonhuman.[130]

While there is then no doubt a symbolic connection between Rhiannon and horses, the Birds of Rhiannon – her other nonhuman feature enlarged in the later re-imaginings – are only mentioned twice in the medieval *Mabinogi* at the end of the Second Branch [B2]. *A llyna ual y teruyna y geing honn o'r Mabinyogi, o achaws Paluawt Branwen […] ac am Ganyat Adar Riannon […]*. ('And this is how this branch of the Mabinogi ends, concerning the blow to Branwen […] and the Singing of the Birds of Rhiannon […].').[131] From this paragraph one learns that the three birds, which sang to the men at Harlech after the battle in Ireland to free Branwen, are called the Birds of Rhiannon. They are described thus: *dyuot tri ederyn, a dechreu canu udunt ryw gerd, ac oc a glywssynt o gerd, diuwyn oed pobun iwrthi hi.* ('[…] three birds came and began to sing them a song, and all the songs they had heard before

[129] See this chapter, 'Branwen: The Welsh Language and the Nonhuman'.
[130] Chapter One, 'The Medieval *Mabinogi*'s Hybrid World'.
[131] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 48; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 34. See Davies on the birds of Rhiannon, Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 230, n. 11 and p. 236, n. 32.

were harsh compared to that one.')[132] It is clear that these birds have magical properties, but it is not clear what relationship, if any, they have to the Rhiannon of the story. In *Owein* (*The Lady of the Well*), one of the other seven wider Mabinogion stories, a different group of magical birds appear. They appear alongside other supernatural elements and indicate the arrival of a black knight, who challenges whoever stands before him.[133] It follows then that a group of birds with magical properties is not an isolated motif within the Mabinogion, and that these birds are therefore emblematic of the supernatural or the spiritual.

The birds of Rhiannon also appear at the end of the Second Branch, when Bendigeidfran orders his head to be cut off and tells his men that they will feast in Harlech for seven years *ac Adar Riannon y canu ywch* ('with the birds of Rhiannon singing to you').[134] In the Middle Welsh *Adar Riannon* ('the birds of Rhiannon') is capitalized, indicating that this is a phenomenon which was known outside of the text. Indeed, the birds also appear in the Mabinogion's *Culhwch ac Olwen* ('How Culhwch won Olwen') as Davies points out.[135] In this tale they are mentioned as one of the seemingly impossible tasks Ysbaddadan Bencawr sets for Culhwch who is wooing his daughter Olwen. *Adar Rhianhon y rei a duhun y marw ac a huna y byw a vynhaf y'm didanu y nos honno.* ('I want the birds of Rhiannon, they that wake the dead and lull the living to sleep, to entertain me that night.').[136] The medieval author of the *Mabinogi* frequently references stories that have not survived or never been transcribed, so that this reference could be a different version of Rhiannon's tale. The fleeting reference serves in the first instance to situate the medieval version into the

[132] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 46; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 33.
[133] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 129.
[134] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 45; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 32.
[135] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 236, n. 33.
[136] *Culhwch ac Olwen*, ll. 632-33 (p. 24); Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 196.

wider network of (most likely oral) narratives and does not necessarily reflect on the character of Rhiannon herself as drawn up in this version.

In all of the later re-imaginings discussed below, however, the birds are her defining feature, transforming her into a pagan 'Celtic' divinity.[137] In the combination of the nonhuman and the divine, a persona so removed from the medieval woman called Rhiannon is created, that any questions pertaining to her status as a Welsh female protagonist do not need to be asked. In the same way that many non-Welsh versions create an enlarged otherworld which divorces the narratives from Wales, and in the same way that some versions use place-names to distance themselves from the local *Mabinogi*, so is Rhiannon expanded in Morris' *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914) [N1], Walton's *Prince of Annwn* (1974) [N3], Morden's *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23], and Cawkwell's *The Story of Rhiannon* (2007) [C19] from a medieval Welsh woman to an otherworldly divinity. In the figure of a divine Rhiannon, the idea of being part of the nonhuman can be approached safely; the concept of 'human animality' is carefully encased within the unknowable, the celestial.[138] The peculiarity of the *Mabinogi* is more easily pigeonholed within a spiritualized text world, while the use of supernatural or divine figures allows the narrative to be placed within a wider mythical framework, which plays into the cultural narrative of ancient pagan divinities, seen in the creations of otherworlds in Chapter One.

The scene in which Pwyll sees Rhiannon for the first time is decorated vividly in Morris' *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914) [N1], revealing Rhiannon's innate connection to nonhuman Nature:

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[137] See Trower on a succinct summary of the connections between feminism, ecology and Celticism in her *Rocks of Nation*, p. 180.

[138] Helen Feder writes on monstrosity in Frankenstein: 'The conflict with the supernatural is, in fact, a conflict with the idea of being part of nature, with the fact of human animality.' Feder, *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture: Biology and the Bildungsroman* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 73.

> About her as she came the air quivered and glimmered into all the hues of the opal, the rose-pearl and the amethyst. Along the roadside bloomed forth hyacinths and daffodils of flame: mysterious daffodils and hyacinths and violets. Branches put out from invisible trees above her head, and on them apple-bloom and almond-bloom of star-fire. Always, around and in front above and behind her, shone and winged and sang, and quaveringly twinkled three bright, beautiful, wizard birds […].[139]

In this passage, Rhiannon is imbedded in a lush, blooming, supernatural landscape, which surrounds her wherever she goes. The flowers of spring – daffodils, hyacinths, violets and the blossoms of apple and almond trees are spring-blooming plants – conjure images of renewal and rebirth. This spring is not of the every day – this is a spring of the supernatural and the non-vegetal in its pearl and amethyst imagery. The association between Rhiannon and her birds has been enlarged into that of a supernatural Nature with a capital N, and rewritten as a Frazerian fertility myth.

James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, published in 1870, had a profound effect on the concept of a pagan 'Celtic' world, similar to Graves' *The White Goddess* in the twentieth century (which indeed was influenced by Frazer).[140] This can be seen in the chapter 'The Hallowe'en Fires,' Frazer ruminates on two festivities he imagines were celebrated by the Celts, namely May Day and Hallowe'en. He explains these dates as the beginning of summer and the beginning of winter, which would be vital dates for 'the European herdsman' and he claims this points to the fact that the Celts were 'mainly a pastoral people.'[141] Frazer further mentions various traditions that have survived in the Highlands of Scotland, Northern Wales and the Isle of Man, which supposedly derive directly from the pagan 'Celtic' festivities.[142] In *The Golden Bough* – among other texts from that period – we can see the beginnings of the ideas of

[139] Morris, *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed*, pp. 25-26.
[140] Sioned Davies, ' "Venerable Relics"?: Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*,' p. 161.
[141] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Methuen, 1954), pp. 632-41.
[142] Ibid., see e.g Chapters 62 and 63.

remote locations, pagan remnants and pastoral Celts which have survived in many-re-imaginings in the *Mabinogi* corpus. In various chapters Frazer further elaborates on human sacrifice, on the worship of trees (especially oaks) and on other elements, which are part, to this day, of the popular imagination of 'Celtic' culture.[143]

In Walton's *Prince of Annwn* (1974) [N3] – another text which shows ideas of the 'Celt' outlines in Frazer's work – the same scene in which Pwyll meets Rhiannon is also announced by Rhiannon's birds, in an excess of pastoral imagery:

> A sound roused Pwyll. A thin sweet sound clear as pure water, fresh and clean as the water of mountain springs. Yet it was golden too, golden with the tender gold of young mornings, far finer and more precious than the hard cold gold of earth.[144]

The similarity between Walton's symbolism and Morris' is striking. In *Prince of Annwn*, too, image of renewal and rebirth are raised through the picture of the 'pure water' which is also 'fresh' and 'clean'. The sound of the birds – the 'gold of young mornings' – conjured an image of the rising sun in spring. When Pwyll finally does catch up with Rhiannon in *Prince of Annwn*, her birds alight on her shoulders, the physicality of the act underlining the connection: 'One perched upon her head, the other two upon her shoulders. All four looked at Pwyll, and he had a sudden queer feeling that all four were one […].'[145] Rhiannon has become otherworldly, nonhuman, at the loss of the very human woman called Rhiannon in the medieval *Mabinog*i.

Throughout the corpus, Rhiannon's connection to birds and birdsong is used to create an otherworldly presence. In the more recent version by Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23], Rhiannon's presence, and in extension her selfhood, is fused

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[143] Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, e.g. chapters 64; 15; 10 (in which the 'relics' of tree worship in Europe is examined).
[144] Walton, *Prince of Annwn*, p. 93.
[145] Ibid., p. 101.

with birdsong: 'She [Rhiannon] vanished into the forest. The birdsong stopped.'[146] Meanwhile, in the poem 'Moon-Rider' by George Moor (1981) [P3], Rhiannon's birds are not only specified as 'seven nightingales' but she is also described as '[i]rised and antlered'.[147] The convolution of the number seven and her antlered self creates in Rhiannon a Gravesian otherworldly apparition, for which '[w]orld and we are one in wonder.'[148] Similarly, in the illustrated novel *Son of Two Worlds* (1987) [C14] by Haydn Middleton and illustrated by Anthea Toorchen, Rhiannon is cast as a horse-goddess who gives birth to foals.[149] Indeed, Rhiannon's otherworldly persona is to be found outside the corpus: The novel *Destiny's Path: Rhiannon of the Spring* by Alan Frewin Jones (2011), while not a re-imagining, is an example of how certain names from the *Mabinogi* carry within them the connotations created by the re-imaginings corpus, and features a Rhiannon who is a goddess of the forest.[150]

The perceived link between Rhiannon and Nature is clearly connected to her imagined divinity, presenting a conventional background for this hunting goddess persona, for which a 'return to the natural' is acceptable.[151] Through the creation of this persona, pertinent questions concerning the link between a female Welsh character and Nature are neatly sidestepped.

In an extension of the Frazerian fertility goddess which Rhiannon has been turned into in the texts by Walton, Moor, Jones and Morris, Cawkwell's birds of

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[146] Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, p. 18.
[147] George Moor, 'Moon-Rider', in *Arianrhod's Dance* (Eastbourne: Dowlander Publishing, 1981), l. 7.
[148] Moor, 'Moon-Rider', l. 3. On Graves and the number seven, see *White Goddess*, pp. 251-52, 255-56, 373, and 459; on Herne the Hunter, see pp. 85 and 146.
[149] Haydn Middleton, *Son of Two Worlds: A Retelling of the Timeless Saga of Pryderi*, illustr. by Anthea Toorchen (London: Rider, 1987).
[150] Indeed, this is not a new development: some *Mabinogi* names existed outside of the Four Branches in the Middle Ages. Rhiannon is referenced in fourteenth-century poet Goronwy Gyriog, Branwen in work by Dafydd ap Gwilym and Justus Llwyd. See Bromwich, 'The Mabinogion', in Sullivan, *The Mabinogi: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 3-18 (p. 4).
[151] Lykke, 'Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs', p. 23; Sylvia Bowerbank, 'Does Woman Speak for Nature?' in *Between Monsters, Goddess and Cyborgs*, ed. by Lykke and Rosi Braidotti, pp. 120-32.

Rhiannon possess the ability of transforming Dyfed from a wasteland into a wonderland in *The Story of Rhiannon* (2007) [C19]: 'As they stood there, the birds of Rhiannon flew out over Dyfed. They sang the wasteland back to life. They sang the corn into the earth, the men and the animals back onto the fields'.[152] In this version the inherent connection of Rhiannon with her birds is extended to include the landscape of Wales. Instead of creating an ambiguous divine figure which divorces her from the medieval character on whom she is based, in Cawkwell Rhiannon's birds are part of a fertility myth which is deeply connected to the Welsh landscape. Here, she is likened to the Irish Cathleen, whose fertility is bound to Ireland's soil. She is the personification of the sovereignty goddess trope, a motif found in medieval Irish literature, whose self and whose body is inherently connected to the fruitfulness of the land of Ireland itself (and which will be discussed further in Chapter Four).[153] 'Related to the "sovereignty goddess" stereotyping of women in Irish literature is the enduring idea that women in Celtic (and especially Irish) narratives are intimately connected with the land and with natural forces, and therefore represent "nature" as opposed to the male realm of "culture." '[154]

Rhiannon has become a prototype of existent myths, her personality swallowed by the personification of 'Nature'. With a nod to feminist spirituality of the 1970s, woman is related to Nature with all its uncomfortable connotations.[155] This connotation even stretches to academic interpretations. Alfred Siewers writes that the devastation of Dyfed in the Third Branch is caused by 'Pwyll's earlier lack of wisdom in caring for the land as embodied by Rhiannon […]'.[156]

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[152] Walton, *The Story of Rhiannon*, p. 62.
[153] Chapter Four, 'The Sovereignty of Myth in a Rural Setting'.
[154] Findon, *A Woman's Words*, p. 9.
[155] See this chapter, p. 217, n. 104 and 105.
[156] Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 58; see also pp. 43-45. Lewis comments on this in his 'Celtic Ecocriticism', p. 76.

The functional and sparse relationships of the women and animals in the medieval texts have been enlarged into affiliations of a spiritual nature. The distortion of Rhiannon's character in the texts follows neatly in the footsteps of the 'intellectual colonialism' which once attached itself to the idea of the 'ungoverned Celt who stood in the way of Western Modernity and got steam-rollered'.[157] The Romantic concept of the 'Celtic' woman, who is at once sovereignty goddess and personification of Nature, prevails in both Welsh and non-Welsh versions.

In contrast to Branwen and Rhiannon's perceived positive interactions with the nonhuman which exemplify the desire throughout the corpus for a human-nonhuman relationship, Lleu's, and especially Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's contact with animals demonstrate the simultaneous fear of human animality which these associations lay bare.

The Men of the Mabinogi – the Fear of Human Animality

In the medieval *Mabinogi*, apart from Blodeuwedd's transformation into an owl in the Fourth Branch [B4], and the transformation of Lludd's wife into a mouse, all interspecies transformations happen to men.[158] In general, relationships between male prowess, liminality, wilderness and animals abound in medieval Celtic texts. In the Irish tradition, especially, transitions between species are frequent. However, the flavour of these Celtic narratives, which feature men leaving society and finding a home in the woods, differs fundamentally from that of the transformations found in the Fourth Branch. The figure of Derg Corra in the Irish Finn Cycle, for example, is a servant who is banished by his master, Finn, and forced to leave the confines of a

[157] Lewis, 'Celtic Ecocriticism', p. 76.
[158] Blodeuwedd's transformation is discussed in Chapter Four.

social structure and take refuge in the wilderness of the forest.[159] When tribe members find him in the forest they do not recognise him at first. He has taken on the behaviour and even the appearance of an animal: *Luid didiu Derc Corra for loinges 7 arfoēt caill 7 imtighed for luirgnib oss n-alta (si uerum est) ar a ētrumai.* ('Then Derg Corra went into exile and took up his abode in a wood and [went] about on shanks of deer (si uerum est) for his lightness.')[160] This narrative thematizes the concept of liminality, as shown by Nagy, which is found throughout the Finn Cycle.[161] These stories of outlaws, who leave their social environment to live among animals of the forest, are often accompanied by themes of wisdom, otherworldliness, and madness. Indeed, Finn himself is a poet outlaw who lives outside of normative society.[162] In the wider Mabinogion story *Owein* (*The Lady of the Well*), Owein, out of shame because he has not fulfilled a promise, briefly becomes a wild man who roams through the forest:

> *Ac ef a vu y velly ar dro hyny daruu y dillat oll, ac hyny daruu y gorff hayach, ac yny dyuawd blew hir trwydyaw oll; a chytgerdet a bwystuilet gwyllt a wnai, a chytymborth ac wynt yny oedynt gynefin ac ef.*
>
> ('And he wandered about like this until all his clothes disintegrated and his body all but gave out and long hair grew all over him; and he would keep company with the wild animals and feed with them until they were used to him.')[163]

Apart from the outlaw figures described above, there is another tradition found in medieval Celtic texts in which warriors and wolves are symbolically and physically

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[159] Kuno Meyer, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree,' *Revue Celtique*, 25 (1904), 344-49.
[160] Meyer, 'Finn', pp. 346-47. On the figure of the 'wild man', see e.g. Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952); Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993). On the similarities of the Fìan to the Welsh tradition, see Alexander Falileyev, 'Welsh Equivalents to the Irish *fían*? Some Further Considerations on Juvenile Delinquency in Medieval Wales', in *CMCS*, 73 (Summer 2017), 31-59.
[161] Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, see esp. pp. 131-40 on Derg Corra.
[162] Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, see pp. 17-40. See also John T. Koch, 'Fíannaíocht', in *Celtic Culture*, II, pp. 744-46.
[163] R.L. Thomson, *Owein or Chwedyl Iarlles y Ffynnawn* (Dublin: DIAS, 1968), ll. 575-78 (p. 21); Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 131.

linked. These can be found in the works of Taliesin, in Aneirin's *Gododdin*, in Gerald of Wales' famous description of the Irish werewolf in his *Topographia Hibernica*, as well as in connection with the Irish Ulster Cycle's infamous Cú Chulainn.[164] In the *Goddodin*, for example, a warrior is described as *blaidd ym maran*, 'a wolf in fury'; while in *Aduwyneu Taliessin* (Book of Taliesin 8.21-10.3) we find the line: *Atwyn Nud, ud bleid naf* ('Fair is Nudd, a leader, a lord like a wolf').[165] Cú Chulainn undergoes a famous transformation before battle, so that he is even more ferocious and dangerous:

> *Is and so cétríastartha im Choin Culaind co nderna úathbásach n-ílrechtach n-ingantach n-anaichnid de. Crithnaigset a chríni imbi imar crand re sruth nó imar bocsimin fir sruth cach mball 7 cach n-alt 7 cach n-ind 7 cach n-áge de ó mulluch co talmain. […] Táncatár a t[h]raighte 7 a luirgne 7 a glúne co mbátár dá éis. Táncatár a sála a orcni 7 a escata co mbátár ríam remi. […] Imslo[i]e indara súil dó ina chend; iss ed mod dánas tairsed fiadchorr [a] tagraim do lár a grúade a hia[r]thor a c[h]locaind. Sesceing a sétig co mboí for a grúad sec[h]tair. Ríastartha a nél co úrtrachta. Srengais in n'ól don fidba chána comtar écnaig a ginchróes. Táncatár a scoim 7 a t[h]romma co mbátár ar etelaig ina bél 7 ina brágit.*
>
> The first Torque seized Cú Chulainn and turned him into a contorted thing, unrecognizably horrible and grotesque. Every slab and sinew of him, joint and muscle, shuddered from head to foot like a tree in the storm or a reed in the stream. […] His feet and his shins and his knees jumped to the back; his heels and his calves and his hams to the front. […] he sucked one of his eyes so deep into his head that a wild crane would find it difficult to plumb the depths of his skull to drag that eye back to its socket; the other popped out onto his cheek. His mouth became a terrifying, twisted grin. His cheek peeled back from his jaws so you could see lungs and liver flapping in his throat.[166]

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[164] For a discussion of the Taliesin, Aneirin and Gerald of Wales, see Aleksander Plukowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 137 and 173. On Cúchulainn, see *Táin bó Cúailgne: Recension 1*, ed. by Cecile O'Rahilly (Dublin: DIAS, 1976); Ciaran Carson*, The Táin: A New Translation of the Táin Bó Cúailnge* (London: Penguin, 2007).

[165] A.O.H. Jarman, *Aneirin: Y Goddoddin, Britain's Oldest Heroic Poem* (Dyfed: Gomer, 1988), V. 49 (p. 4). Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, l. 5 (p. 94).

[166] O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailne*, ll. 2245 (p. 86); Carson*, The* Táin, pp. 108-09. Cú Chulain also undergoes this transformation, in somewhat more muted form, as a young boy, see John Strachan and J.G. O'Keeffe, *The Bó Cúailgne, from the Yellow Book of Lecan with Variant Readings from the Lebor Na Huidre* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1912), ll. 391-97 (p. 16). On Cú Chulainn and his link to dogs and the wider motif in Celtic Studies, see Phillipp A. Bernhardt-House, *Werewolves, Magical Hounds, and Dog-Headed Men in Celtic Literature* (Lampeter, Ceredigion: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).

He becomes nonhuman, super-human, defying death with his contortions; he is a liminal figure between the living and a corpse. As mentioned, these themes of wilderness are often accompanied by the idea of madness, which is inherently connected to the wild, as in Cú Chulainn's battle frenzy.[167] Other examples for the linking of wildness and madness occur in the concept of the *dám dásachtach* ('retinue, troop of madmen') found in the medieval Irish *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, which carries linguistic associations with 'rabid', as Kim McCone writes, and in extension with werewolves.[168]

Cú Chulainn's name itself is an indication of his connection to animals, translating as 'the hound of Chulainn', while the poet outlaw Finn is connected to the wolf, *fael*, through Faelān.[169] For these two heroes of Irish tradition, their connection to animals constitutes their entire identity. For Cú Chulainn, as shown above, his nonhuman transformation allows him to be the best warrior there is; for Finn his connection to the wilderness is essential for his position in the text world. His place and the place of his Fianna, is a liminal one, acting outside of society, in a similar fashion to the Germanic *Männerbund* and the Scandinavian *berserkir*.[170]

The animal personae taken on by the male characters in the medieval *Mabinogi* serve primarily as a means to a narrative end (instead of symbolizing a specific characteristic of the morphed human, such as ferociousness or an animalistic

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[167] On the madman in Irish literature, see Pádraig Ó Riain, 'A Study of the Irish Legend of the Wild Man', *Éigse 14* (1972), 179-206; Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Fools and Adultery in Some Early Irish Texts', *Ériu*, 44 (1993), 105-24.

[168] Alexander Falileyev, 'Welsh Equivalents to the Irish Fian?', pp. 40-42; Kim McCone, 'Werewolves, Cyclops, Díberga, and Fíanna: Juvenile Delinquency in early Ireland', *CMCS*, 12 (Winter 1986), 1-22 (p. 16), quoted in Falileyev, p. 142.

[169] Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature* (Dublin, Four Courts: 2009), p. 58. On these two heroes and wilderness, see also McCone, 'Werewolves, Cyclops, Díberga, and Fíanna'.

[170] See Ní Bhrolcháin, *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*, p. 58, and McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*, pp. 166-213. For a comparison of Germanic and Celtic heroes, see Joseph F. Nagy, 'Beowulf and Fergus: Heroes of Their Tribe?', in *Connections Between Old English and Medieval Celtic Literature: Three Essays*, ed. by Karen. G. Borst and Patrick. K. Ford (Berkeley: University of California, 1983), pp. 31-44; Joseph F. Nagy, 'Heroic Destinies in the *Magnímrada* of Finn and Cú Chulainn', in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 40 (1984), 23-39.

frenzy), although they are often symbolical and linguistic. Thus when Lleu is transformed into an eagle in the Fourth Branch, it enables him to fly away, consequently escaping his murderers, while the transformations of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are punishments set out by Math.

Lleu: Between Linguistic and Corporeal Transformation

Lleu, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's bodies are unstable in the medieval *Mabinogi*, so that they change species and even their sex. Their bodies are not constant entities, and while female bodies transform too, as in Blodeuwedd's case and the wife of Llwyd, the outcome of their transformations is disastrous, whereas the male transformations result in positive conclusions. Lleu's transformation in the Fourth Branch [B4] occurs when Gronw, the lover of Blodeuwedd, attempts to kill him. Blodeuwedd, created out of flowers by the magicians Gwydion and Math to be Lleu's wife, meets Gronw who becomes her lover. They plot to murder Lleu so that they can be together. However, Lleu can only be killed in a certain way. First a spear has to be made one year in advance, to be worked on each Sunday of the week, then Lleu has to be positioned as follows for the blow to strike home: a bath with a roof has to be constructed on a riverbank, Lleu has to place one foot onto the bath and the other onto a goat, and in that position only can he be killed.[171]

Jackson compares Lleu's threefold death to several folktale motifs found in Stith Thompson's motif-index. The following can be applied to Lleu: 'Secret of vulnerability disclosed by hero's wife' (K.2213.4.1); 'Secret of strength treacherously discovered' (K 975); 'Hero tells enemies how he may be killed' (K975.1.1); 'clever peasant daughter' (J1111.4); the Sons of the King and the Smith (K1921.1); Achilles'

[171] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 86; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 60.

Heel (Z 311).[172] This is a symbolic trope, as Davies writes: 'unique vulnerability is often a characteristic of heroes […].'[173] Purely in terms of the storytelling, this motif heightens the tension in the scene when Lleu informs Blodeuwedd of his weakness, and when the two lovers plan Lleu's murder.

The symbolic liminality of this strange situation echoes the transition of Lleu's body. When Gronw fulfils all of these requirements with the help of Blodeuwedd, Lleu, instead of being killed, is transformed or transforms himself into an eagle. Like Suibne in the Middle Irish text *Buile Suibhne*, Anne E. Lea argues, Lleu transforms when flying from combat.[174] Yet Suibne's ability to fly is not necessarily caused by a complete transformation, while Lleu metamorphs completely and instinctively, as we will see. With Lleu, the physical change does not seem to be called for by magic or intentionality. Lleu has no time to prepare himself; he is ambushed by Gronw, who is hidden in the bushes. Angela Grant writes that Lleu transforms 'as a kind of reflex'.[175] It seems as if his body changes of its own accord, out of necessity, and it results in his survival.

Lleu is a character well attested to outside of the *Mabinogi*, and he has frequently been linked to the 'Celtic' deity Lugus, so that his mythologization outside of the corpus is possibly, with Rhiannon's, the most complete of all of the *Mabinogi* protagonists. Lleu appears, for example, in the Triads in *Tri Eur Gryd Ynys Brydein* ('Three Noble (Golden) Shoemakers'), *Tri Ruduoaó Enys Prydein* ('Three Red Ravagers of the Island of Britain'), *Tri Anyweir Deulu Enys Prydein* '(Three Faithless

[172] Jackson, *The International Popular Tale*, pp. 107-12; Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, IV, pp. 484; 358; 359; 71; 455; and V, p. 565. On the threefold death, see Jackson, 'The Motive of the Threefold Death in the Story of Suibne Geilt', in *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill*, ed. by John Ryan (Dublin: Sign of the Three Candles, 1940), pp. 535-50.
[173] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 243, n. 60.
[174] Anne E. Lea, 'Leu Wyllt: an Early British Prototype of the Legend of the Wild Man?', *The Journal of Indo-European* Studies, 25.1, 2 (Spring/Summer 1997), 35-47 (pp. 40-41); J. G. O'Keefe, *Buile Suibhne*, Irish Texts Society, 12 (London: Irish Texts Society, 1913).
[175] Angela Grant, 'Magical Transformation in Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi and Hanes Taliesin' (unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2010), p. 9.

Warbands') and *Tri Rodedicuarch Enys Prydein* '(Three Bestowed Horses').[176] Yet, the transformation scene in the only medieval version we have does not attest to any divine powers; rather it is a desperate attempt to escape his fate. Nor can the eagle be read as an embodied aspect of Lleu's soul, a ghost; for the bird is too bodily, too material, it decays and provides food for a sow later on in the narrative.[177] It is possible that this is an example of pre-Christian features; the transformation from human to nonhuman is a solid, bodily affair, not spiritual in any way.[178]

> *Ar benn y neill glin y kyuodes, ac a'r guenwynwayw y uwrw, a'y uedru yn y ystlys, yny neita y paladyr ohonaw, a thrigyaw y penn yndaw. Ac yna bwrw ehetuan o honaw ynteu yn rith eryr, a dodi garymleis anhygar. Ac ny chahat y welet ef odyna y maes.*
>
> ([O]n one knee he [Gronw] aimed at Lleu with the poisoned spear, and struck him in his side so that the shaft stuck out of him but the head remained inside. And then Lleu flew up in the form of an eagle and gave a horrible scream, and he was not seen again.)[179]

Lleu flies up in the form of an eagle without the process of metamorphosis being alluded to in any way. Lleu's transformation is one of necessity, his body taking on the 'form' of an eagle in order to elude death. Helen Fulton calls this 'agentless occurrence of wonders' which one can often find in Early Welsh and Irish tales, a 'supernatural marvellous' within the narrative mode of 'magic naturalism'.[180] The word signifying shape in Welsh (as in Irish) 'has been appropriated to the special poetic function of composing (W. *pryd*, Ir. *cruth* 'a shape'; *prydydd* 'poet', *creth*

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[176] Bromwich, *The Triads*, pp. 39, 66-67; 103; and 185. He is also found in The Stanzas of the Graves and in the Book of Taliesin. See Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities', p. 69. Sir John Rhys first linked Lleu with Lugus. See Rhys, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion* and *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*. For an overview, see Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities'.

[177] On the metaphor of the soul in connection with birds, see P.L. Henry, *The Early English and Celtic Lyric* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), pp. 127 and 137-51.

[178] On the metamorphosis of the devil, witches etc. in medieval eschatology, see Warner, *Metamorphoses*, p. 35.

[179] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 88; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 61.

[180] Helen Fulton, 'Magic and the Supernatural in Early Welsh Arthurian Narrative: *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*', in *Arthurian Literature XXX*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 1-26 (pp. 1 and 24-25).

'poetry'),' indicating that the transformation process could also be interpreted on a symbolical level.[181] Thus, Lleu's escape is both physical and metaphorical: if he is 'a poetic shape, composition' of an eagle, an eagle composition, it is perhaps through linguistic prowess that he has transformed himself. One cannot help but think of the importance of the Welsh language as evidenced in the use of place-names, or indeed, as demonstrated through the link created in many re-imaginings between Branwen's starling and oral storytelling. In all these instances, the Welsh language demonstrates an ability to convey more than its lexical meaning; in Lleu's case it enables a human to nonhuman transformation.

While Lleu's transformation into an eagle allows him to escape his murderer, he is nevertheless struck by Gronw's spear, and so Gwydion must work his magic to aid him. Following a sow which leaves her pen every day for unknown reasons, Gwydion finds Lleu in the shape of an eagle, sitting in a tree. *A phan ymyskytwei yr eryr, y syrthei y pryuet a'r kic pwdyr o honaw, a'r hwch yn yssu y rei hynny.* ('And when the eagle shakes himself, the worms and the rotten flesh fall from him.')[182] In a reversal of the symbolic devouring of female flesh by male perpetrators, which plays a large role in Blodeuwedd re-imaginings discussed in the next chapter, the sow feeds on Lleu's cast-offs, consuming his rotting flesh.[183] The decomposing flesh reflects back onto Gronw who fashioned a poisoned spear to kill Lleu, so that the audience's sympathy most certainly lies with Lleu and his transformation is reflected in this sympathetic reading. Gwydion is not sure whether this bird is Lleu, *medylyaw y mae Lleu oed yr eryr* ('[h]e thinks that the eagle is Lleu'), suggesting that Lleu's eagle

[181] Patrick K. Ford and Eric P. Hamp, 'Welsh *asswynaw* and Celtic Legal Idiom', *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26.2 (May 1975), 147-60 (p. 150).
[182] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 89; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 62.
[183] Chapter Four, 'Flowers, Sexuality and the Female Body'.

form is complete.[184] The need for a song by Gwydion indicates that Lleu does not know who he is in his eagle form, and that therefore the transformation is total: he has become an eagle, not simply a human in the shape of an eagle.

This is similar to a scene from the Old Irish Finn Cycle, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', mentioned above, in which a fían member, Derg Corra, is banished to the woods and takes refuge in a tree.[185] Derg Corra is a lowly member of the fían especially known for making fire and cooking, and Finn's mistress falls in love with him; yet when Derg Corra refuses her, she accuses him of rape to Finn, who then banishes him.[186] When the fían look for him, they find him in the tree but do not recognise him at first, indicating that Derg Corra has undergone a complete physical transformation, especially as he is described as moving about *luirgnib oss n-allta* ('on shanks of deer').[187] Nagy suggests that the banished Derg Corra is Finn's alter ego: 'a representation of the hero as he was in his youth: an exile banished from society because of the crime of seduction, an outlaw hidden in the inner sanctum of nature where he lives like a wild creature.'[188] In Lleu's case, it is possible that his eagle form is also symbolic: he flies away from the shame of his wife plotting his death, and so finds refuge from it.

After his transformation in the Fourth Branch, Lleu must be tricked down from the tree, or perhaps reminded of who he truly is. The *englyn* mentions his noble birth, *[m]irein modur ymywet* ('[t]he refuge of a handsome prince') and Blodeuwedd, *[o] ulodeu Lleu* ('Lleu's Flowers') as the culprit for his present state.[189] In order to restore Lleu back to his human shape, Gwydion simply has to *y trewis* ('strike') him

[184] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 89; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 62.
[185] Meyer, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', pp. 347-49. See pp. 231-32.
[186] Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, pp. 131-32.
[187] Kuno Meyer, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', pp. 346-47. See also Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, pp. 135.
[188] Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, p. 135.
[189] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 89-90; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 62.

with his *hudlath* ('magic wand').[190] Davies translates *hunan* as shape, but it also translates as 'self', indicating a complete transmogrification. The fact that Gwydion has to remind Lleu who he is, plays along with the idea of the linguistic transformation: he has to follow recognizable words which relate to him – *modur*, 'prince', and *blodeu* ('flowers') – in order for him to return to himself. While the uncomplicated return to human form signals a straightforward transition between species, Lleu's transformation has nevertheless been fraught with dangers, and it is not at all clear whether he is able to return to human form when Gwydion first finds him. Like Merlin who is changed from wild man to socialised human in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*, Lleu is changed from animal to human through song. For Merlin the song reminds him of human sorrow other than his own; for Lleu, Gwydion's words remind him who he is as a human.[191] Lleu's transformation is then, in contrast to Merlin's, a complete physical and mental one.

According to Michael A. Faletra, 'the many transformations in the *Mabinogi* do not threaten to unsettle the reader's faith as Gerald's hybrid bodies do, perhaps because transformation in the *Mabinogi*, as the birth of Blodeuwedd exemplifies, is always a controlled, purposeful affair.'[192] The author of the medieval *Mabinogi* does not attempt to rein in Lleu's transformation. Indeed, the completeness of Lleu's transformation receives linguistic support from the words *pryd* ('shape') and *hunan* ('shape,' 'self'), which suggest both physical and metaphorical change; thus is this state of change embedded into the language of the narrative. A fluidity between language and body is revealed which does not differentiate between the human and the nonhuman form. This linguistic flexibility is evident in many other places in the

[190] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 90; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 63.
[191] *Life of Merlin: Vita Merlini*, ed. by Basil Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), ll. 170-97.
[192] Michael A. Faletra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination: The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 142.

corpus, not least in the meanings of place-names, which can reveal so much more than the place they name; indeed, often the opposite of the place they name. Yet, with regard to Lleu's transformation, and in direct contrast to Branwen's starling, where the linguistic significance is enhanced by many later versions, the description of the metamorphosis is often used to disconnect Lleu's human body from the nonhuman he becomes.

Lleu's Human Identity in Eagle Form

Moving now from the medieval *Mabinogi* discussed above, to a number of twentieth- and twenty-first-century versions, this section will consider how these transformations are taken up variously in the re-imaginings, often shown to be a step-by-step metamorphosis with Lleu's human identity still intact, indicating a conflict with 'the idea of being part of nature, with the fact of human animality.'[193] Discussing Morden's 2012 *Tree of Leaf and Flame* [C23] side-by-side with the graphic novel by Collins / animated film version from 2002/2003 [G1] and Margaret Jones' illustrations (1984) [C10], this section will finish with a look at Conran's dance poem 'Blodeuwedd' (1983/1988) [P6] which takes a different stance towards Lleu's eagle appearance altogether.

In Morden's *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23], Lleu's transformation is described as a visible yet fast morphing process: 'Lleu gave a shrill scream. There was a fierce flash of light. His outstretched arms became wings. He became an eagle and rose into the sky […].'[194] The process is more complex, more visibly magical than it is in the medieval version. A 'fierce flash of light' indicates a supernatural or

[193] Feder, *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture*, p. 73.
[194] Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, p. 84.

magical event, while 'his outstretched arms' point to a readiness, a preparedness for the take-off as a bird. In the creation of a parallel between 'arms' and 'wings', a physical similarity between the human and the eagle is drawn up, thus attempting an explanation of the transformation. Here Lleu seems to be ready to turn into an eagle, or even evoke the magic himself. It is not a reflex of the physical body, as shown above in the medieval text. The body needs to be magically transformed, magically and violently – the 'fierce flash of light' indicating a rift in the atmosphere – because human and nonhuman bodies cannot easily merge.

Similarly, in the Welsh-language graphic novel, *Y Mabinogi* by Mike Collins (2002) [G1], Lleu's transformation is shown step by laborious step. This graphic novel was also turned into a film of the same name, which aired in 2003 on S4C (*Sianel Pedwar Cymru*) and was directed by Derek W. Heyes. An entire spread is devoted to the changing of Lleu's human features into eagle features, although it is clear that the transformation itself cannot have taken more than a couple of seconds, as he is depicted in mid-flight.[195] His face is the last body part to transform, so that he resembles, for a short second, the image of a harpy 'Figure [12]'. A similarity between man and bird is evoked: the previous image shows Lleu as a man, leaping into the air, screaming: 'Naaaa…', while on the next spread his human cry morphs into that of the eagle, while his body transforms: 'Arrcc…'[196] Linguistically, a parallel between the human voice and the cry of the eagle is created, in the same way that the sound of Branwen's name is linked to the cry of the starling.[197] This linguistic connection disrupts the barrier between human and nonhuman, so that a transformation is plausible and acceptable.

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[195] Mike Collins, *Y Mabinogi* (Cardiff: Hughes a'i Fab, 2002), [no pg nrs].
[196] Ibid.
[197] See this chapter, 'Branwen's Starling-Oral Storytelling'.

Correspondingly, Lleu's transformation is depicted as a morphing process in Margaret Jones' illustrations, which accompany Thomas and Crossley-Holland's 1984 version [C10], highlighting the similarities between the human and animal bodies, yet at the same time, underlining the step by step process which is undertaken.[198] Indeed, in her depiction of Lleu as an eagle, being coaxed down from the tree by Gwydion, he is visibly still a man 'Figure [13]'. Instead of having transformed completely into a bird, he is a man covered in feathers, with wings and a beak, one human foot and one claw, a safe reminder that he is still human under all that nonhuman guise.[199] The body is called on to show some form of human characteristic, for the identity of Lleu to be safeguarded.[200] Similarly, in the recent translation by Matthieu Boyd [S34], Lleu, here called Blondie, 'transforms' into an eagle, the agency of the action lying on Lleu/Blondie and the emphasis is on his knowing metamorphosis.[201] From instantaneous change in the medieval version to detailed metamorphoses, these later re-imaginings make use of Lleu's transformation to underline his humanness, displaying a profound anxiety with the male nonhuman body.

Conran's 'Blodeuwedd' (1988) [P6] uses this anxiety to create a death which is at once human and nonhuman. It is a 'poem for dancing', a lengthy twenty-one part drama, told, in the main, from Blodeuwedd's point of view.[202] Lleu's near-death is described in corporeal detail:

I was so near I saw the sky explode out of his eyes.

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[198] Thomas and Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, pp. 82 and 83.
[199] Ibid., fig 23.
[200] Similarly, Caroline Walker Bynum writes on Dante that: […] Dante employs metamorphosis where no traces endure in a way that shows us the impossibility of identity perduring (in any logical sense) without the survival of vestiges of body or "shape."' *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), p. 185.
[201] Boyd, *The Four Branches*, p. 88.
[202] First performed in Bangor and Swansea. Conran, *Branwen*, p. 13.

I felt the jerk of his buttocks like an earthquake.
I heard the blood of his belly scream on the ground.
I smelt the urine of fright cloud the bright air.
I was so near I tasted his salt.[203]

Lleu's body convulses as he is hit by Gronw's spear: this is not a hero's death, but a mortal man's. The focus on his mortal body, 'the jerk of his buttocks', 'the blood […] on the ground', 'the urine of fright' and 'his salt', create an image of the body having the last say before death. It is both a human and animal death. Yet, where the speaker gazed closely at Lleu's bodily death, the gaze is averted from the transformation and it occurs (or not?) out of the corner of the eyes:

In those vast moments I saw – or perhaps I saw
[…]
Wide fingering wings and bare claws below them,
A grey head, a slow sweeping beat
Of a wounded eagle making for the trees.[204]

Whereas Blodeuwedd's creation from flowers is shown through dance in this text, this version shies away from portraying Lleu's transmogrification directly.[205] In this sense, Conran's version reveals similarities with the medieval narrative: both lean on the linguistic possibilities of Lleu's transformation. While the medieval *Mabinogi* suggests both a physical and metaphorical metamorphosis, Conran emphasizes an allegorical transformation. This version teases out the implication of the similarity between a human and animal body in its physicality, yet the transformation between the two species must become linguistic: the loss of human identity is too horrendous to contemplate. While in some versions the possibility of the Welsh language connects the human and nonhuman, the linguistic transformation of Lleu in this text

[203] Conran, 'Blodeuwedd', VII. 9-13.
[204] Ibid., 19-24.
[205] Conran published another version of 'Blodeuwedd' in his 2003 Branwen and other Dance Dramas and Plays, adding stage directions.

serves to sever the human-nonhuman transformation, rendering it a non-physical, imagined event.

There is one other transformation, however, that seems to be so strange, so unsettling, that very few versions include it in their narratives: Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformation into animals of the forest.

Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's Shame: Between Masculinity and Incest

> With beliefs in hybrid offspring and supernatural couplings, late medieval interpretation of bestiality could be said to have come full circle to what had been considered the norm in classical times. Only now, instead of being tolerated or even admired, man's intimacy with animals was viewed with fear, disgust and horror. To a large degree, this was undoubtedly because the unbridgeable divide or clear boundary that formerly separated animal from human could no longer be assumed to be secure in the face of bestiality, but was all too easily crossed with results that threatened man's very definition of what it was to be human. And arguably, this is where attitudes towards bestiality have remained up to the present day.[206]

At the beginning of the Fourth Branch [B4], Gwydion and Gilfaethwy lure Math away from his seat by causing a war between his kingdom and Pryderi's, so that Gilfaethwy gains free access to Math's 'footholder' Goewin and rapes her. As punishment, both brothers are transformed into animals of the forest by Math:

> *Ac yna kymerth e hutlath, ac y trewis Giluathwy yny uyd daran ewic; ac achub y llal a wnaeth yn gyflym, kyt mynhei dianc nys gallei, a'y taraw a'r un hutlath yny uyd yn garw.*
>
> (Then he [Math] took his magic wand, and struck Gilfaethwy so that he changed into a good-sized hind, and he caught Gwydion quickly – he could not escape although he wanted to – and struck him with the same magic wand so that he changed into a stag.)[207]

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[206] Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages*, p. 228.
[207] Williams, *Pedeir*, p. 75; Davies, *Mabinogion*, 53.

The author takes care to describe the animal that Gilfaethwy has been turned into as 'a good-sized hind' and Gwydion's attempt at an escape is obviously comical. There is no doubt that the men are animals in shape and constitution, since they produce animal offspring. Further, Math intones for them to *yn un anyan a'r gwyduilot yd ywch yn eu rith* ('[…] take on the nature of the wild animals whose shape you are in […]').[208] The offspring that the men produce as animals are healthy; there is no suggestion that this bestial pairing results in feeble or tainted descendants.[209] This intimates that a positive image is attached to these animals of the forest, which are, after all, a large part of medieval society through the practice of the hunt.[210]

The first offspring is described as *cryf* (Davies translates it as 'sturdy', but it also means 'strong' which she translates for the third cub, or 'powerful,' and 'nourishing'), the second is *chrynllwdyn da* ('good-sized young one') and *breisc oed yn yr oet oed arnaw* ('big for its age') and is transformed into *yn uab braswineu telediw* ('a large, handsome, auburn-haired lad'), and the third is a *chrubothon cryf* ('strong wolf cub'); again *cryf* is used with its connotations of strength, power and wholesomeness.[211] In addition to his revenge, Math also gains three young children, conveniently all male. The rhyme that Math speaks after he has gained all three sons describes them as *chenryssedat kywir* ('true champions').[212] While it is no doubt seen as a humiliating punishment for Gwydion and Gilfaethwy to bear sons to each other –

[208] Williams, *Pedeir*, p.75; Davies, *Mabinogion*, 52-3.
[209] On incest as a political means to preserve power, see Daniel F. Melia, 'Notes on the Value of Incest in Traditional Narrative and Geneaology', *PHCC*, 34 (2014), 215-24.
[210] On the associations of the hunt à force, see Crane, *Animal Encounters*, pp. 101-19. On land and forests in medieval Wales, see Plukowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, pp. 60-62. On the motif of sex-changes in medieval Celtic texts, see Phillip A. Bernhardt-House, 'The Motif of Sex-Metamorphosis in Insular Celtic Literatures and Folklore', *Béascna* 3 (2006), 54-64.
[211] Williams, *Pedeir*, p. 75-6; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 53-4. On incest in the *Mabinogi*, see Sarah E. Zeiser, 'Performing a Literary Paternity Test: "Bonedd yr Arwyr" and the Fourth Branch of the "Mabinogi"', *PHCC*, 28 (2008), 200-15.
[212] Williams, *Pedeir*, p. 76; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 54. See Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983) for an example in which sexuality is a highly sensitive aspect of male social interactions in Icelandic saga, especially the role it plays in insults, which is linked to the idea found in these texts that homosexuality and effeminacy are connected to cowardice. See for example pp. 79-87.

a chywilyd mawr a gawssawch, bot plant o bob un o honawch o'y gilid ('you have been greatly shamed that each of you has offspring by the other') says Math – their animal transformations do not seem to create any inherent problems.[213] Davies notes that the punishment fits the sexual nature of the crime, however, the sexual activity is only part of the penance.[214] The species transformations seem simply to be a convenient way for Math to perform a sex change on both men, in order for them to mate. In addition, the fact that all three children are sons, and therefore more desirable in the patriarchal text world, and that they are prophesied to be heroes, indicates an unproblematic transition between species, and there is no suggestion that these children are the spawn of the devil, as could be expected in a text composed in a medieval monastic environment.[215]

John Aberth points out that Greek and Roman mythology feature numerous episodes in which a god mates with humans in animal form; a similar manymindedness is present here.[216] Furthermore, the concept of bestiality does not fully apply here as the men are considered to be wholly animal.[217] Yet there are also numerous examples of human to animal transformations in classical myth, which are punishments for 'a fall from human grace', such as Circe's transformation of Odysseus' men into swine.[218] It could be tentatively suggested that the easy, matter-of-fact transformation between men and animals indicates elements of a pre-Christian nature, especially in the positive outcome of said transmogrifications. Alternatively, this could also be another example for the *locus amoenus* text world which the

[213] Williams, *Pedeir*, p. 76-77; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 54.
[214] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 242, n. 54.
[215] On metamorphosis as the devil's work with a look at Dante's *Inferno*, see Warner, *Metamorphoses*, pp. 35-39.
[216] Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages*, p. 225.
[217] See Nagy on a similar argument relating to Fenian heroes, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw*, p. 44.
[218] Warner, *Managing Monsters*, p. 56.

medieval author has constructed, looking back to an 'earlier and ruder period', to use Lanier's phrase – or indeed a combination of these elements.[219]

The wild man's journey into the wilderness, introduced at the start of this chapter, is compelled either by his own grief – as in Merlin's case in the *Vita Merlini* – or by his own shame, or as punishment. With regard to the classification of Merlin's episode in the forest, however, it bears more resemblance to the transformation of *Suibne Geilt*, in that the experience in the forest equals madness. While Merlin's escape into the forest results from his intense grief at his companions dying in battle, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformations are forced upon them by Math.[220] In the *Vita Merlini*, it is an escape from grief, from civilization, that characterizes Merlin's flight into the forest, while in the Fourth Branch, it is a punishment. For Merlin to live as an animal and among animals is to forget his humanness and its accompanying grief, while for the brothers to live as animals is to lose their humanness, and to become less human in the process. The last motif, the banishment into the wilderness, as seen in the case of Derg Corra described earlier, comes closest to the episode in the Fourth Branch in which Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are punished. However, the crucial difference is that the brothers are directly transformed into animals: they do not undergo the mental and physical metamorphosis present in all the other examples of the wild man trope. This means that the learning curve of the wild man, the communing with nature, is non-existent in the brothers' storyline. This is a development of the wild man trope, one which subverts the meaningful conversion of the outcast man, and transforms it into a parody of what the wild man might be doing, all alone, with only animals for company.

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[219] Lanier, *The Boy's Mabinogion*, p. v.
[220] Vita Merlini, ll. 65-80.

The question remains whether the men were still aware of their own identity as humans while residing in animal form. In the case of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy this does not become clear; however, for many later texts, this unknown factor is too complex to tackle.

Is Nature a Woman?

The transformation and consequent sex-changes of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are scenes which have been most frequently omitted from the re-imaginings. Contrary to what one might expect in light of the use of Lleu's transformation and Branwen and Rhiannon's relationships to animals, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transmogrification is actively played down or even ignored altogether. This section will investigate why this specific scene is not included in the creation of the specific *Mabinogi* myth fashioned within the corpus.

Some versions leave out the first half of the Fourth Branch entirely, such as Saunders Lewis' 'Blodeweudd' (1923-5) [D3], Graves' short narrative found in chapter seventeen of his *The White Goddess* (1948, 1952, 1961) [S13], Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2], Morden's *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23] and Rhiannon Ifans' *Hud y Mabinogi* (1988) [C15], while Olwen Bowen's *Tales from the Mabinogion* (1969) [S16] leaves out the Fourth Branch altogether. In her nineteenth-century version Guest [S1] acknowledges the transformations of the two men, but leaves out their sex changes, simply presenting the offspring without detail of how the sons were procured.[221] In the film version *Y Mabinogi* from 2002/2003 (as well as the accompanying graphic novel by Mike Collins) [G1] the scene is left out, while most other prickly scenarios such as Aranrhod's public birthing are shown. In this version,

[221] Guest, *The Mabinogion*, III (1849), pp. 228-30.

Gwydion simply relates his punishment to Blodeuwedd, saying that *gwnaeth Math i fi fyw fel anifail* ('Math made me live as an animal'), omitting the sex changes and mating with his brother.[222] Indeed, out of all the ten expanded versions of the Fourth Branch present in the corpus – that is, versions which create complex and enlarged text worlds, excluding the scholarly publications, which for obvious reasons, are complete editions – only four versions include a scene detailing the brothers' misfortunes: Ellis' 'The Children of Don' (in *The Cauldron of Annwn*) [D1], Walton's *The Island of the Mighty* (1936, 1964) [N3], Gwyneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree* (2010) [Na4], and Gwyn Thomas' (English version by Crossley-Holland) *Y Mabinogi* (1984) [C10].

These omissions open up intriguing questions about 'the normative pairing of nature with *hetero*sexuality.'[223] Indeed, following this train of thought, the numerous re-imaginings of Blodeuwedd's story and the hesitation with which Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's tale is approached, point to just such a pairing. If we follow this thought back to Branwen's starling and Rhiannon's birds, it is certainly noticeable that the relations of the female characters to the nonhuman dominate the corpus. While the brothers' punishment obviously created anxiety and shame for both men in the medieval version, the exact nature of their shame is magnified in the later versions through the perception of the writers' modern sensibilities. As Ruth Mazo Karras writes in her *Sexuality in Medieval Europe* on the three terms 'sex,' 'gender,' and 'sexuality': 'It is important for our purposes to recognize that in the Middle Ages the distinction among the three was not just blurred, it did not exist. If someone deviated from the expected models of sexual behaviour, people did not assume that the

[222] Collins, *Y Mabinogi* [no pg nrs]. *Y Mabinogi*, dir. by Derek Hayes (Miracle Communications, 2003) [my translation].
[223] Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, 'A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies', in *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* ed. by Hiltner, pp. 159-63 (p. 161).

variation was a matter of biology *o*r gender identity *or* sexual desire; the three worked together.'[224]

Nimmo's *The Chestnut Soldier* (1989), a re-imagining of Branwen's story in twentieth-century Wales, has Gwydion allude to the punishment, making light of the incident but at the same time indicating that his seeming enjoyment of it establishes Gwydion as a problematic character.

> Gwydion laughed. 'My uncle turned me into a stag once, for misbehaving, and on another occasion a wild sow.' He threw back his head and gave a delighted guffaw. 'Imagine,' he roared, 'a sow. I can't tell you what it was like. I found myself relishing, well, you wouldn't believe it!'[225]

The transformation – cloaked in an uneasy comic narration – is told but not shown in this as in many other versions. Like Lleu's transformation in Conran, the brothers' predicament cannot be regarded too closely. In Stanley Knill's recent semi-verbatim narrative, *The Mabinogion brought to Life* (2013), Math threatens to make the brothers 'behave as the beasts you have become,' clearly alluding not only to their physical change but also to the rape they committed as men.[226] While the original medieval text uses the word for 'wild animal' (*gwyduilot*) in this context, as does Davies in her 2007 translation, Knill's employment of 'beast' indicates a stronger, more negative connection to animal behaviour.

In Ellis' 'The Children of Don' [D1], the brothers are transformed into wolves by Math but it is not specified that they undergo sex changes or mate with each other. The transformations are not complete; their canine bodies become prisons:

> From shift of shape does none return

[224] Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 6.
[225] Jenny Nimmo, *The Chestnut Soldier* (1989), repr. in *The Snow Spider Trilogy* (London: Egmont, 2005), p. 450.
[226] Knill, *The Mabinogion Brought to Life*, p. 57.

> The same in spirit,
> But clad in alien flesh they learn
> And must inherit
> Flavour of life wherefrom they draw.
> So from their prison they shall bring
> Tain of their state
> Foul hunger in them and the sting
> Of rooted hate,
> Whereby they shall set hackles at all law.[227]

Through their imprisoned state, their personalities morph into the 'wild' beings they embody, recalling the link between wildness and madness in medieval Irish texts (discussed earlier).

One of the few versions which explicitly alludes to the sex changes is Crossley-Holland and Thomas' semi-verbatim version (1984) [C10]: 'Since you like to be together, you can live together and become male and female […].'[228] In the Welsh edition of this version, Math says: *Gan eich bod chi'n gweithio efo'ch gilydd, mi wna i ichi fyw efo'ch gilydd a bod yn wryw ac yn fenyw efo'ch gilydd […].* ('Since you work together, I will make you live with each other and be male and female with each other.')[229] In contrast, the medieval version and Davies' 2007 translation do not connect the sex changes so explicitly with the brothers' closeness, instead, the focus lies on the mating of the animals: *Canys ywch yn rwymedigaeth, mi a wnaf ywch gerdet y gyt, a'ch bot yn gymaredic* ('Since you are in league with each other, I will make you live together, and mate with each other […].')[230] The questionable connection between heterosexuality and closeness between two people that is drawn up in Crossley-Holland and Thomas, links back to Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson's 'normative pairing of nature with *hetero*sexuality', and raises the

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[227] Scott-Ellis, 'The Children of Don', in *The Cauldron of Annwn*, III.1.177-186 (p. 81).
[228] Thomas and Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, p. 69.
[229] Thomas, *Y Mabinogi*, p. 69 [my translation].
[230] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 75; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 52-53.

possibility that this is an additional reason for the absence of this scene in six out of ten expanded re-imaginings.[231]

Walton, following on from her use of monsters and inhuman creatures in her otherworld, produces the only version beside Gwyneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree* (2010) [Na4], which not only includes but actively enlarges the scene. In her *The Island of the Mighty* (1936, 1964) [N3], she plays on the brothers' guilt and on the expected disgust of the reader. '"You have been slaves to your passions," he [Math] said. "Now shall your bodies too be enslaved. [….]."'[232] Like Knill, Walton uses the term 'beasts' to clarify the bestial behaviour the brothers are about to demonstrate, and to clearly demarcate this behaviour from human conduct. 'They [the brothers] had been sent back to that stage of being which their conduct best befitted, to that particular step on the stairway of life where creatures can follow their own desires heedless of right or wrong or the rights of others, and yet remain sinless.'[233] Walton's 'beasts' are not able to converse, in stark contrast to the starling with whom Branwen speaks so easily in this version. 'For their beasts' tongues could not shape converse, only yelp noises of pain or pleasure, fear or tenderness or yearning. They were not instruments subtle enough for the exchange of thought.'[234] Walton's 'beastly' yet 'sinless' animals hark back to an imagined primordial past, in the same way that the child is imagined as a kind of pre-human entity, through which the mythic can be more easily reached, as discussed in Chapter One.[235] In Walton then, we must distinguish between 'beastly' animals and those which are closer to humans, such as Branwen's starling and Rhiannon's birds. This beastliness seems to result from the role they play in the story,

[231] Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 'A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies', p. 161.
[232] Walton, *The Island of the Mighty* (1964, publ. as *The Virgin and the Swine*, 1936), repr. in *The Mabinogion Tetralogy*, 4 vols (New York: Overlook, 2004), IV, p. 510.
[233] Ibid., p. 511.
[234] Walton, *The Island of the Mighty,* p. 511.
[235] Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales-Innocent Wales'.

rather than stem from a type of species. The transformations of the brothers mark the animals they turn into as ontologically threatening. Indeed, Walton portrays the members of Math's court as 'shocked and offended' when the brothers in the form of deer venture close to the court, for '[t]here was something abnormal and improper about such deer.'[236] This is an explicit statement of the anxiety which the nonhuman effects when it is allowed to move too close to the human. The fear of human animality, physically manifested in Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, results in the shaming of the animals they become.

Gwyneth Lewis' science fiction novella *The Meat Tree* (2010) [Na4] could not be more different from Walton's fantasy epic. Yet, this is the other one version which expands the brothers' transformation and incest episode. The scene occurs relatively early on in the text, shortly after Nona has been raped by Gilfaethwy in the Virtual Reality game. The Inspector of Wrecks takes on the role of Gilfaethwy, while his apprentice Nona is Gwydion. They are transformed by Math and live as animals in the forest, mating with each other. While their bodies are physically transformed and they experience animal instincts, their minds have not completely changed from those of humans, so that they constantly question their behaviour:

> Inspector of Wrecks
> […] *To have sex with my brother! With my assistant! To know the sound of her grunting behind me. That bastard Math.*
>
> Apprentice
> *Forget about the weirdness. This feels so right. I'm swimming a stream which goes through her back, into her body and I feel inside…*[237]

Through the Virtual Reality game the boundaries become blurred, so that it is not clear anymore, whether it is Gilfaethwy and Gwydion mating with each other as

[236] Walton, *The Island of the Mighty*, p. 512.
[237] Gwyneth Lewis, *The Meat Tree* (Bridgend: Seren, 2010), p. 63 [text's emphasis].

animals, or the humans Nona and Campion. Virtual Reality stands between events and reader, and in a way, distances the reader from what is happening. Since both Nona and Campion's minds are still human, and they are thinking about their actions while performing them, it suddenly is not incest between brothers anymore, but sex between the male boss and his female assistant, even though she is the stag and he is the doe. Like the fantastical element in the fantasy versions of the twentieth century, and the child reader in the illustrated editions, the Virtual Reality game stands between text and reader so that the strangeness of the story is made acceptable.

As in Walton's novel, the emphasis of the punishment in Lewis lies in the beastly nature of the rape. Nona says: '*He's turned us into animals because we behave like beasts. But the point is that he's transformed Gwydion into a stag and Gilfaethwy into a hind.*'[238] The emphasis of the punishment lies in the shame of incest, and strangely, in Gilfaethwy's transformation into a female animal, which implies that the sex change adds to Gilfaethwy's humiliation. In the medieval version, both brothers change their sex at one point; in Lewis, there is only one transformation.

The distortion of the medieval transformations results in a refiguring of the stories in the re-imaginings. The focus of inter-species relations in many versions shifts to the women, whose link to birds is widened and enlarged. The intensely physical link found in the medieval *Mabinogi* between humans and animals in the transformation scenes of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy poses an uncomfortable concept for the authors of the later versions, so that this bond is erased from the story in many instances; where it is kept, an uneasy comical quality is often added and the view of the reader distorted. In the romanticized mythologization of the nonhuman, resulting

[238] Lewis, *The Meat Tree*, p. 61 [text's emphasis].

from the *Mabinogi* Effect in the re-imaginings, Nature must, it seems, be at least heterosexual, and at most, female.

Conclusion: A Nonhuman Myth?

The hybrid personas of Lleu, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy unsettle the normative definition of what it means to be human in the re-imaginings corpus. This questioning, this unknowing has an especially fierce impact in the stories of the two brothers Gwydion and Gilfaethwy. It is their story, therefore, which is most stridently ignored. Lleu's transformation is often employed to attest to his divine origins – he becomes a dual creature, half man, half eagle, yet his human personality stays intact throughout his transformation, as seen for example in Margaret Jones' illustration [C10]. His transformation is also read as a mental collapse by Conran [P6], underlining the difficulty of accepting this hybrid human throughout the corpus. This distortion of the duality of the humans in the re-imaginings, who can become nonhuman in the medieval *Mabinogi*, results in the re-imaginings tapping into and enhancing the strangeness of the original texts. Thus, in Morden's *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012) [C23] for example, Lleu's transformation is a violent morphing, while in *Y Mabinogi* by Mike Collins (2002) [G1] a linguistic link between human and nonhuman voice is created. The unknowable human-nonhuman hybrid is underlined through the foregrounding of his impenetrable identity. He cannot be regarded too closely, but is held at a distance. This is especially vivid in the re-fashioning of the brothers' fate, which is never shown directly. The writers literally place themselves between event and narration.

In contrast to the distortions of the men's transformations, Branwen's relationship with her starling has become the embodiment of the multifarious

nonhuman which pervades the corpus. In many later versions the starling is most definitely shown to be more valued than the animals of the forest which the brothers are transformed into, while in the medieval text, the animals of the forest produce valuable male heirs. Is this an indication of the worth of the forest animals which have lost most of their meaning for today's society? The symbolic significance of a bird, in contrast, seems to have gained importance in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century texts. Branwen's story has been expanded to symbolize the link between myth and the nonhuman, between storytelling and birdsong. Undoubtedly, a challenging correlation can be drawn to the 'coding of nature as feminine – which is deeply entrenched in Western thought, but has also been said by anthropologists to be crosscultural and well-nigh universal', which Kate Soper explains through 'the double association of women with reproductive activities and of these in turn with nature.'[239] While this coding seems to prevail in the re-imaginings discussed here, we must perhaps look to the symbolic link between oral storytelling and birdsong as a strong factor for this coding. One of the appeals of Branwen's story is undoubtedly the figurative link between the orality of the *Mabinogi* myth and the perceived emphasis on speech in the starling's story. Branwen's bird symbolizes the link between the mythical *Mabinogi* and the nonhuman. Thus the nonhuman in Nature becomes the carrier of the myth. As shown in the previous chapters, the myths are seen as contained within Nature – this Nature being firmly derived from the Romantics in that it is an idealized pastoral and simultaneously sublime entity. Because of women's perceived close link with Nature, as observed in this chapter, they become the storytellers of the *Mabinogi*. That is, the myths affect them most, which is also a trait seen in many Blodeuwedd re-imaginings discussed in the last chapter. Branwen's starling bridges the divide

[239] Soper, 'Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature, p. 139. See also, Soper, *What is Nature?*.

between human and nonhuman storytelling, symbolizing the situatedness of the *Mabinogi* myth in the nonhuman realm.

In the same way that place-names, discussed in the previous chapter, contribute to the mythologization of the *Mabinogi* in that they are perceived as archaic and concurrent with oral storytelling, the link between Branwen, Rhiannon and birds is interpreted as a window into a primordial, pastoral society, and so the fragmentation of the *Mabinogi* is manifest in the characters also.

The next chapter concentrates on the most fascinating of all *Mabinogi* characters: Blodeuwedd, the woman created from flowers. An in-depth reading of her as a vegetal automaton teases out the importance of her dual human-nonhuman status for the corpus, and the contradictions of the natural, artificial and supernatural that she embodies.

4. 'You took my spirit captive among the leaves:' The Creation of Blodeuwedd

Blodeuwedd, the woman of flowers, is neither human nor nonhuman.[1] Not only is her story, beside Branwen's, the most frequently re-imagined episode from the Four Branches – ten versions in the corpus concentrate solely on her story – Blodeuwedd is also the most ambiguous of all the characters from the *Mabinogi*. The two magicians Math and Gwydion create her from flowers for her future husband Lleu, who has been cursed by his mother so that he cannot have a wife from a race that is presently on this earth. She then takes a lover, the hunter Gronw, and is turned into an owl for punishment. Unlike Branwen and Rhiannon's connection to birds, Blodeuwedd's association with owls is a negative one.[2] The most intriguing aspect of Blodeuwedd is her alien characteristic – the fact that she is made from flowers – and her simultaneous similarity to her human creators. In the medieval tale she is created from oak, broom and meadowsweet, and once enchanted, Blodeuwedd is completely integrated into courtly society and her vegetal origin is not mentioned again.

While the female characters in the Four Branches have received abundant attention in academic discourse on account of their relatively prominent status (in comparison to contemporary medieval texts), the figure of Blodeuwedd is

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[1] The spelling *Blodeuedd*/ *Blodeuwedd* can be used alternately; here the latter is favoured because of its frequent use in the re-imaginings. In the medieval version, *Blodeued* is used to denote the woman made from flowers, whereas *Blodeuwed* is the name for the owl explained through the tale. On the spelling, see e.g. Ian Hughes, "Blodeuwedd", in *The Celts: History, Life and Culture*, ed. by John T. Koch and Antone Minard, 2 vols (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), I, p. 99; Gruffydd, *Math*, pp. 263-5.
[2] On Branwen and Rhiannon, see Chapter Three, 'The Women of the *Mabinogi*-Between Voices and Bodies'.

contradictory in that respect.[3] She is arguably the leading female figure in the second half of the Fourth Branch [B4], but simultaneously portrayed as the perfectly constructed female – a vegetal automaton – who, created for the pleasure of her husband, turns on him with her lover. This chapter will trace the changing portrayal of Blodeuwedd's creation and her nonhumanness, ranging from an early twentieth-century re-imagining to a twenty-first century version. Building on the analysis of the previous chapters, the portrayal of the nonhuman and its function in the creation of a *Mabinogi* myth can truly be tested here.

There are three mainstream interpretations of the medieval Blodeuwedd. The most recent reading looks foremost to literary characterization and analyses Blodeuwedd as the personification of nature who seeks revenge against the controlling men who force her into human shape.[4] This tradition leans towards the feminist critique of the 1970s in which the dualism 'nature/culture equals female/male' was examined.[5] Both in Celtic Studies and in the re-imaginings, this reading is in general marginalised, while the other two outlined below, even though they are old-fashioned, are far more common in the corpus. This is evocative of the trends visible in connection with the figures of Branwen and Rhiannon, discussed previously.[6]

The second reading of Blodeuwedd's character is seen as an out-dated analysis popularized in the 1950s by scholars such as Gruffydd, who looked to mythology for his interpretation.[7] This approach falls within the so-called nativist tradition, which was discussed in the introduction, in which pre-medieval, pre-Christian values were

[3] See Chapter Three, pp. 195-96.
[4] See e.g. Andrew Welsh, 'Doubling and Incest in the Mabinogi', *Speculum*, 65.2 (April 1990), 344-62.
[5] Andermatt Conley, *Ecopolitics*.
[6] See Chapter Three, pp. 195-96.
[7] Gruffydd, *Rhiannon*.

sought in the texts.[8] Female characters were here seen as reflexes of deities, so that their actions had to be interpreted with their mythological background in mind. In this tradition Blodeuwedd has been read as a sovereignty goddess, who must find the rightful husband to uphold the fruitfulness of the land.[9] This reading ignores the fact that the *Mabinogi* is a literary text created in the Middle Ages, and looks back to an imagined pre-Christian, mythical past. The medieval narratives are here sometimes also conflated with Iron Age artefacts to create a homogenized 'Celtic' culture.[10] This reading of the *Mabinogi*, which started as a trend in the Irish branch of Celtic Studies, is the one approach which has proved to be the most enduring way of reading the Four Branches among the re-imaginings corpus as well as in compilations of 'Celtic myth and folklore.'[11]

Third, Blodeuwedd is seen as a woman who attempts to break out of social conventions but who fails and causes the destruction of many.[12] This morally charged interpretation looks to the social history of the fourteenth century and aligns itself with many medieval Celtic narratives in which a woman is the cause of ultimate destruction.[13] An example for this is Goewin from the Fourth Branch who is, innocently, the cause of a war. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Juliette Wood suggests Branwen and Rhiannon are two examples of the Calumniated Wife motif.[14] However, as Wood points out, the character of the motif is innocent of the crimes she

[8] Introduction, 'The Creation of a Myth'.
[9] See e.g. Caitlín Matthews, *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain: Kings and Goddess in the Mabinogion* (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 220 and 226; Thomas Charles-Edwards, 'Native Political Organization in Roman Britain and the Origin of MW *brenhin*', in *Antiquitates Indogermanicae*, ed. by Manfred Mayrhofer and others (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, 1974), pp. 39-45; Mac Cana, *The Mabinogi*; Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales*; more recently: James MacKillop, *Myths and Legends of the Celts* (London: Penguin, 2005).
[10] On the idea of the 'Celtic', see Chapter One, pp. 61-62; for an overview of the nativist/ non-nativist debate, see Koch, 'A Welsh Window on the Iron Age'; McKone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*.
[11] See Jackson, 'A Window on the Iron Age.' Examples for such collections include: Rolleston, *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*; MacKillop, *Myths and Legends of the Celts*.
[12] See Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*.
[13] For an overview of this motif and interpretations of it concerning the *Mabinogi*, see Wood, 'The Calumniated Wife in Medieval Welsh Literature'. See Chapter Three, pp. 195-56.
[14] Wood, 'The Calumniated Wife', p. 27.

is accused of, whereas Blodeuwedd is most often read as the instigating partner in the attempted killing of Lleu.[15] Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, for example, write in the introduction to their 1948 translation that the story of Lleu and Blodeuwedd is that of 'The Unfaithful Wife' and Blodeuwedd is likened to Samson's Dalilah.[16] In this respect she is interpreted in a similar way to the figure of the Irish Medb, in that the onus is on the woman, who, with the help of her womanly charms, destroys her husband and any other men who are in the way. The interpretation of Blodeuwedd and Medb with the emphasis on their womanhood is thus placed in the context of the social history of the Middle Ages in this reading.[17] In Irish Studies, Dooley calls this approach 'the structuralist or binary model,' in which 'the feminine achieves the level of visibility in culture by being posited in dialectical tension with the patriarchy.'[18]

As mentioned, these last two readings are examples of the wider nativist and non-nativist debate which has spanned the last century of the Irish branch of Celtic Studies, and stands in close contact with the contrasting beliefs in the influence of Christianity or paganism on the medieval texts; the latter line of thought found in many of the re-imaginings.[19] As discussed in Chapter One, certain techniques in the later versions serve to disconnect the *Mabinogi* from its local origins and situate the the stories into a wider mythical framework. These techniques include placing certain characters within a recognizable narrative, such as that of a pre-Christian Arthur in Cooper's *The Grey King* [YA4] for example, or re-imagining characters to fit a recognizable folklore figure, such as that of a pagan Herne the Hunter in Alexander's

[15] Wood, 'The Calumniated Wife', p. 27.
[16] Jones and Jones, 'Introduction', pp. xvii and xix.
[17] See also Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*.
[18] Dooley, *Playing the Hero*, p. 158.
[19] See e.g. Introduction, 'The Creation of a Myth'; Chapter One, pp. 61-62; Chapter Two, 'Creating a 'Celtic' *Mabinogi*'; Chapter Three, pp. 195-56.

Prydain Chronicles [YA3].[20] In the same way, Blodeuwedd's perceived mythical status is re-imagined to create diverging narratives within the corpus.

The tension between the human and the multifarious nonhuman, which has pervaded this thesis, comes to its climax in the figure of Blodeuwedd. Her trans-species transformation and hybrid human/ nonhuman existence pulls together all of the anxieties and desires explored in the previous chapters concerning the position of the nonhuman in the *Mabinogi* corpus. In Blodeuwedd the myth of the *Mabinogi* is manifest: she is re-imagined diversely as a symbol for Wales, and as a universal allegory.

Blodeuwedd in the Corpus

Blodeuwedd's nonhuman origins have acted as a great draw on the twentieth- and twenty-first century re-imaginings I shall discuss in due course. The large number of versions which re-imagine her story testify to the argument set out in this thesis that it is the nonhuman component of the Four Branches, rather than interest in the human or moral characteristics of the narratives, which acts as the magnet for the diverse writers attracted to the *Mabinogi*.[21] In the corpus, ten versions concentrate on the story of Blodeuwedd alone (this includes Gwyneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree* which is technically a re-imagining of the entire Fourth Branch but in which Blodeuwedd's character features disproportionately). Most of these texts attempt to enlarge the character of Blodeuwedd and tell her side of the story.[22] The earliest version is Saunders Lewis' Welsh language play 'Blodeuwedd' published first in 1923-5 and

[20] See Chapter One, 'New Worlds: A *Mabinogi* Fantasy'; Chapter Two, 'The Fantasists' Wales'.
[21] See p. 95 n. 186.
[22] For an appraisal of this approach to myth, see Diane Purkiss, 'Women's Rewriting of Myth in Contemporary Poetry', in *The Woman's Companion to Mythology*, ed. by Larrington, pp. 440-57.

revised in 1948 [D3]; Garner's young adult novel *The Owl Service* came out in 1967 [YA2]; while the largest concentration of Blodeuwedd re-imaginings have been written in the last thirty years by the poets Hilary Llewellyn-Williams [P5], Tony Conran [P6], Gillian Clarke [P4], Vicki Feaver [P8] and Anna Lewis [P9]. Batt's *Blodeuwedd* was published in 2001 [Na1], Gwyneth Lewis' dystopian novel *The Meat Tree* in 2010 [Na4], and the most recent version of Blodeweudd appears in Margaret Lloyd's *Travelling on My Own Errands* (2017) [P11], a collection of poetry about the *Mabinogi*'s women. The diverse angles from which these texts approach Blodeuwedd's story, and the differing time-periods they were written in, present us with concise images of Blodeuwedd's journey after the publication of Guest's translation in the nineteenth century. Saunders Lewis rewrites the woman of flowers as a Welsh Cathleen Ni Houlihan; Garner as a universal, non-local supernatural figure; while Gwyneth Lewis and the poets Feaver, Conran, and Clarke focus on her as a woman who is outcast on account of her vegetal origins.

In the same way that Branwen's story is re-imagined mostly in verse and in dramatic form, which strengthens the symbolic relationship drawn up between the starling and oral storytelling, it is noticeable that many versions of Blodeuwedd's story are also told in verse or in dramatic form, thus underlining the connection between language and the nonhuman in this story too.[23] In the names of the flowers out of which she is created, an entire persona is constructed. In the medieval text this persona is immediately human after her creation; in the later re-imaginings the link between her name, the names of the flowers and her nonhuman self is ineradicable.

Apart from Saunders Lewis' play, most of the Blodeuwedd versions were published in the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-

[23] Chapter Three, 'The Women of the *Mabinogi*-Between Voices and Bodies'.

first. It is no great leap to suggest that her story is especially relevant in today's cybernetic society, against a backdrop of recent cyborg criticism, genetic engineering and the idea of the posthuman.

Indeed, Angela Grant makes the connection between the figure of Blodeuwedd and the idea of an automaton in her *Magical Transformation in Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi and Hanes Taliesin*: '[…] either Math or Gwydion have contrived to create a soul, or Blodeuedd is a kind of soulless automaton, animated only in the sense that an oak or a flowering plant are alive.'[24] In her introduction to *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, Wendy Beth Hyman outlines the fluid nature of the term 'automaton', which seems to represent in the first instance the inanimate infused with life, and was only later associated with science and technology.[25] Famous examples of these include the myth of Pygmalion, E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* and *The Nutcracker*.[26] Sarah L. Higley writes of the myth of the creation of a female golem, moving statue, automaton, homunculus, or robot by learned or scientific men, which has existed '[o]ver the past two millennia.'[27] Indeed, the figure of Blodeuwedd entertains many similarities with the creation of automata in the literary canon, as well as with the association of Blodeuwedd with scientific progress which is found in many of the later versions. In fact, the themes which can be found in Hoffman's *Der Sandmann* – male desire, the perfect female, the 'cold' touch of the automaton – are undoubtedly comparable to those found in the different versions of Blodeuwedd. Further, thinking of the biblical golem, which was in origin

[24] Grant, 'Magical Transformation in Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi and Hanes Taliesin', p. 67.
[25] Wendy Beth Hyman, 'Introduction', in *The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. by Hyman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 1-17 (pp. 6 and 8-9).
[26] On the subject of automata in children's literature, see Lois Rostow Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis, and Development* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), especially pp. 180-204.
[27] Sarah L. Higley, 'Alien Intellect and the Roboticization of the Scientist', *Camera Obscura*, 40-41 (1997), 131-62 (p. 131).

a religious practice, the question of Blodeuwedd's soul plays a key role in her characterization.[28] Indeed, the problem of her soul in light of her immediate integration into human society is posed uncomfortably by the medieval version discussed below.

This chapter begins by examining the persona of Blodeuwedd in the medieval text, especially in relation to her vegetal origins, and compares her to the specific narratives, which are created through the re-fashioning of her in the later re-imaginings. The second part of this chapter turns to the symbolic significance of flowers found in the corpus from the medieval to the modern versions.

Medieval Blodeuwedd

Stories of automata often dwell upon the nonhuman aspect of the automaton; indeed, this is often the source of major tensions in the narratives, as can be found in later versions of Blodeuwedd. In the medieval Fourth Branch [B4], however, Blodeuwedd's vegetal origin seems unremarkable. We do not know how the medieval audience would have responded to the transformation of flowers into a human being, but it has been suggested that for the monastic environment of the medieval text the question of Blodeuwedd acquiring a soul would be deeply unsettling.[29] While one might imagine that medieval attitudes to the body differed vastly from ours today, as Bill Burgwinkle points out, medieval people were just as confused and had diverse

[28] Gershom Scholem, 'The Idea of the Golem', *On the Kabalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schoken Books, 1960), p. 124. Quoted in Sarah L. Higley, 'Alien Intellect and the Roboticization of the Scientist', p. 136.
[29] See Grant, 'Magical Transformation in Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi and Hanes Taliesin', p. 67.

concepts of the relationship between body and soul.[30] Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Three, birds were especially symbolically connected to the concept of the soul.[31]

Yet, Blodeuwedd's transformation into an owl at the end of the Fourth Branch lies within a long medieval tradition of drawing associations between the owl and themes of darkness, fear and evil.[32] Texts such as Odo of Cheriton's 'St Martin's Bird' and 'Of the Sparrowhawk, the Dove and the "Duke"' in his thirteenth-century *Parables*, give explanations why the owl hunts at night which attest to its apparent wicked nature.[33] The thirteenth-century *The Owl and the Nightingale* also portrays the owl with negative connotations.[34] There is further an image in British Library, Harley MS 4751, folio 47, which shows the owl being attacked by other birds.[35] Grant suggests that Blodeuwedd represents 'the *first* owl, a creature of darkness and ill-omen that all other birds are to hate and attack.'[36] In the tales above, the owl is rejected by other birds because of its negative associations, as indeed Gwydion warns that Blodeuwedd will be.[37] Indeed, when Blodeuwedd and her maidens flee backwards from their prosecutors at the end of the Fourth Branch, they are mirroring a medieval belief that owls fly backwards.[38] As we will see below, in the medieval version, Blodeuwedd's nonhumanness is in the first instance symbolic.

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[30] Bill Burgwinkle, 'Medieval Somatics', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, ed. by Hillman and Maude, pp. 10-23.
[31] See p. 237 n. 174.
[32] Clason, 'Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages', p. 50.
[33] Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought*, pp. 362-64. For the Latin text, see L. Hervieux, *Les Fabulistes Latins*, IV (Paris: 1896), p. 203, 214, and 183. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS. Lat. 441.
[34] Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought*, pp. 365-66. London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A IX, fols 233r-246r, ll. 15-18 and 25-28.
[35] Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought*, p. 363, image 213.
[36] Grant, *Magical Transformation in Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi and Hanes Taliesin*.
[37] Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought*, p. 365. Quoted in Clason, 'Animals, Birds, and Fish in the Middle Ages', p. 50.
[38] On the owl in the Middle Ages, especially in bestiaries, see for example Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 156-60.

Hyman writes of categories in early modern Europe of animate, inanimate, human and animal, which 'were contested and in flux, resulting in automata that alternatively promise the idealization of the human, or threaten complete disruption of the natural order altogether!'[39] Indeed, the medieval text refers to this dilemma directly. Immediately after Blodeuwedd is created, she is also baptised: *[a]c y bedydyaw o'r bedyd a wneynt yna* ('[a]nd they baptised her in the way they did at that time').[40] Here the author is clearly distancing him/herself from the story, positing it as a tale which belongs to a bygone age.[41] This method is also used once in the First Branch [B1], in which Teyrnon and his wife have Pwyll and Rhiannon's son baptized *a wneit yna* ('in the way it was done at that time.')[42] This creates the effect of a more mysterious tale – a technique that later versions use, especially Walton's [N3] – and at the same time relegates the questionable status of Blodeuwedd (is she vegetable or human, does she have a soul?) to an earlier time in which this story supposedly originates.[43] The author is thus extricating him/herself from grappling with these troubling questions. Whether the medieval redactor wished to cause a stir through the question about Blodeuwedd's soul or whether they wanted to portray a pre-Christian society, as Sioned Davies suggests, her downfall at the end of the story safely suggests that she has been punished for her intermediate (and possibly soulless) state.[44]

The medieval text does not touch on the fact that Blodeuwedd was vegetation before she was fashioned into human form – in fact, she adapts to human social

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[39] Hyman, 'Introduction', p. 7.
[40] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 83; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 58. See Davies' note on baptism, p. 231, n. 18.
[41] See Lloyd-Morgan, 'Gender and Violence in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 67, and Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 230.
[42] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 23; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 18.
[43] On Walton, see Chapter Two, 'Creating a 'Celtic' *Mabinogi*'.
[44] Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 231.

situations immediately after she has been created. Lleu and Blodeuwedd spend the night together after the celebrations of their union, which constitutes their marriage pact: *Gwedy y kyscu y gyt wy ar y wled […]* ('After Lleu and Blodeuwedd had slept together at the feast […]').[45] According to medieval Welsh law, 'sexual intercourse rather than a marriage ceremony marked the *rite du passage* necessary for a *morwyn* (maiden) to become a *gwraig* (wife).'[46]

Her movements do not betray her vegetal origin in any way: just before Blodeuwedd meets her lover, she is depicted as *troi o uywn y llys* (*a wnaeth hi*) ('wandering around the court').[47] Literally translated *troi o uywn y llys* reads not so much as 'wandering around the court' but as 'turning within the court'. The verb *troi* translates as 'to turn, wrap' in movement. It is used in the First Branch in the scene in which Pwyll tries to catch up with Rhiannon: *Troi yn y hol a oruc ef, a gadel y uarch drythyll llamsachus y gerdet* ('He turned after her, and let his spirited, prancing horse go at its own pace').[48] The preposition *mywn* (lenited to *uywn*) means 'into, inside', and also denotes a movement. It is used, for example, again in the First Branch when Pwyll visits Arawn's court and observes the troops and the queen entering, *yn dyuot y mywn* ('coming in').[49] Blodeuwedd's humanness and simultaneous confined status are obvious in this simple description. Her enclosed state is doubly emphasised through the verb *troi* indicating a moving in circles, and the preposition *mywn* which draws attention to the court as a specific, walled in space. The text draws on images of a

[45] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 84; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 58. For a discussion of the concept of marriage in the *Mabinogi*, see Gruffydd, *Math*, p. 128 and Jane Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Test in Medieval Welsh Prose', in *Medieval Virginities*, ed. by Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 56-79.
[46] Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Test in Medieval Welsh Prose', p. 56. See also R.R. Davies, 'The Status of Women and the Practice of Marriage in Late-Medieval Wales', in *The Welsh law of Women* ed. by Owen and Jenkins, pp. 106-30 (p. 119).
[47] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, 84; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 59.
[48] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 12; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 10. See Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. 68.
[49] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 4. See Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet*, p. 63.

medieval walled garden, which in turn raises the association with the Garden of Eden. The question of Blodeuwedd's soul is amplified in this image. Blodeuwedd's turning about the court further indicates a possible anguish that her husband has just left her alone for the first time after their marriage.

Blodeuwedd is portrayed as knowing the customs of her society as well as anyone. She explains the invitation of her future lover Gronw into the court as follows: *'Dioer,' heb hi, 'ni a gawn yn goganu gan yr unben o'e adu y prytwn y wlat arall, onys guahodwn.'* ('"God knows," she said, "the chieftain will pour scorn on us for letting him go at this hour to another land if we do not invite him in."').[50] Her language, moreover, is exactly that of her human contemporaries: *Dioer*, literally 'indeed,' 'faith', is an interjection used frequently in the Four Branches. It is also derived from the word for God, *Duw*, thus solidifying the text's Christian environment.[51] In the beginning of the Fourth Branch alone it is used by a group of messengers, Gwydion, and Aranrhod on multiple occasions.[52] To consolidate Blodeuwedd's integration into the customs of the text even more, her court is in full agreement with her actions: *iawnhaf yw y wahawd* ('it is only proper to invite him in').[53] Indeed, it is *iawnhaf* ('most proper'), acknowledging that she is acting according to the social code of the court.

Like the magical occurrences found in the scene from the First Branch [B1] in which when Pwyll meets Rhiannon (discussed in Chapter One), which create a setting of heightened tensions and stakes to showcase the characters navigating courtly customs, so too do Blodeuwedd's unusual origins create uncommon circumstances for

[50] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, 84-5; Davies, *Mabinogion*, 59.
[51] Derived from *Dyw a wyr* ('God knows'), see Simon D. Evans, *Buched Dewi: O Lawysgrif Llanstephan*, 27, 2nd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005, p. 44, n. 16. See also John Lloyd-Jones, *Geirfa Barddoniaeth Gynnar Gymraeg* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1931), p. 363.
[52] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, pp. 73, 79, 80, and 82; Davies, *Mabinogion*, pp. 51, 55, 56, and 58.
[53] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, 85; Davies, *Mabinogion*, 59.

the social drama to take place in.[54] Blodeuwedd represents a meddling woman in this patriarchal text world; her vegetal nature only adds another factor to her disobedience. Turning to the later re-imaginings of the twentieth and twenty-first century, Blodeuwedd's vegetal origins become her defining characteristic and are made use of to create the specific *Mabinogi* myth fashioned in the corpus.

A Welsh Cathleen Ni Houlihan

The first concentrated text version of Blodeuwedd appears in Saunders Lewis' play 'Blodeuwedd' (1923-4, 1948) or 'The Woman Made of Flowers' translated by Joseph P. Clancy [D3], which is in structure, plot and characterization close to the medieval text (Lewis himself dates the Fourth Branch to the second half of the twelfth century).[55] In this version, Blodeuwedd's husband is called Llew, which, according to Gruffydd means 'lion' and is used in the Red Book and in most cases in the White Book, but he suggests that the original form was *Lleu*.[56] Utilising *Llew*, Lewis links his male character with an animal, just as Blodeuwedd is linked with the owl, suggesting a nod to the allegorical fable, and perhaps also to the story of *Samson and Delilah*, a tale in which the point of 'weakness' in the man is his downfall.

We are first introduced to Blodeuwedd when she is already fully integrated into courtly society (or so it seems). Llew asks a servant where his wife is:

> *Yn ei hystafell, Unben,*
> *Yn brodio, hi a'i morynion ac yn gwrando*
> *ar delyn y bardd.*
> (In her chamber, sir,
> Embroidering, she and her maids, and listening

[54] Chapter One, 'The Medieval *Mabinogi*'s Hybrid World'.
[55] For Lewis on dating the Fourth Branch, see Lewis, "Math fab Mathonwy," *Y Traethodydd*, (1969), 185-92. T.M. Charles-Edwards disputes this in 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi'.
[56] Gruffydd, *Math*, p. 60.

To the bard harping.)[57]

This image of the woman of flowers stands in stark contrast to her vegetal creation. She is engaged in social and cultural activities, talking to her maids, embroidering and listening to music – while Llew is depicted as the commanding patriarchal husband: *'Doed hithau ar fyrs i ganu'n iach i ni.'* ('She is to come at once and bid us goodbye').[58] The play enlarges the sparse descriptions of the medieval text with ideas of a medieval male-controlled society. In this context it is clear that Blodeuwedd is a woman trying to break free from the constraints of a male dominated culture, a theme which has also been read into the medieval text as a rebellion against the 'patriarchal idea of happiness.'[59] Bruce Griffiths writes on Saunders Lewis' Blodeuwedd: 'She is the amoral passion spirit of Nature incarnate, resentful at being caged in flesh and forced to be a wife before being a maid, looked on as a possible bearer of children rather than loved for herself.'[60] Yet Lewis' play, reflecting his own nationalist ideals, re-writes her as a Welsh Cathleen Ni Houlihan, as we will see, the mythical woman who embodies Ireland itself and is most famously immortalized in Yeats' 1902 play of the same name.[61] Indeed, Peter Gruffydd calls Blodeuwedd 'the Welsh Cáitlín' in his 1995 poem 'Marsh-marigolds: *Caltha palustris*, Aberdaron (for Tony Conran)'.[62]

In this reading, Blodeuwedd's vegetal origins become vital as they point to her connection with the land and become emblematic of her embodiment of Wales itself. It is the effect of expanding Blodeuwedd's connection to the nonhuman in his *Mabinogi* version, which creates a mythical and national figure in Lewis' text. Like

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[57] Saunders Lewis, *Blodeuwedd: Drama Mewn Pedair Act* (Dinbych: Gwasg Gee, 2009), I. 6-8; Saunders Lewis, 'The Woman Made of Flowers', in *The Plays of Saunders Lewis*, trans. by Joseph P. Clancy (Llandybie, Gwasg Dinefwr, 2002), I. 7-8.
[58] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 12; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 2.
[59] Davies, *The Four Branches*, p. 79.
[60] Griffiths, 'His Theatre', p. 83.
[61] William Butler Yeats, 'Cathleen ni Hoolihan: A Play in Prose' (Chiswick, [n. pub.], 1902). See Henry Meritt, ' "Dead Many Times": Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Yeats, Two Old Women, and a Vampire', *The Modern Languages Review*, 96.3 (July 2011), 644-53.
[62] Gruffydd, 'Marsh-marigolds', l. 31.

the enlargement of Branwen's connection to her starling, discussed in the previous chapter, the nonhuman becomes a pivotal factor in Blodeuwedd's characterization.

Lewis' Blodeuwedd does not truly conform to human ways; she is painted as distinctly other and alien to her husband. Her nonhuman attributes soon become visible when Llew discovers her one night *[a] hithau'n dawnsio yn y ddrycin wyllt* ('[a]s she was dancing in the gale's wild fury').[63] The emphasis certainly lies on the wildness of the scene, as it is not only *ddrycin* ('stormy weather') but it is *ddrycin wyllt* ('wild, stormy weather'). Blodeuwedd is dancing in this *ddrycin wyllt,* and we can imagine her body moving with the turbulent wind, symbolizing her unity with the nonhuman. Indeed, the use of '(g)wyllt', which can mean both 'wild' and 'mad', is suggestive of the Middle Irish narrative *Buile Suibhne*, in which Suibne goes mad and runs wild in a forest, suggesting that Blodeuwedd has gone mad here too.[64]

The tempestuous weather is further significant in that it promotes the idea of her disobedience of conventional human social behaviour, a foreshadowing of her taking a lover in Gronw. This combination of wildness and otherness creates a classic example of the postcolonial other, who is seen as belonging outside culture and to nature.[65] She is the weather, she is the storm, symbolically she is Wales. Like the pastoral landscapes discussed in Chapter One, she is very much a 'wild', unpeopled Wales.

Llew does not comprehend the nonhuman world his wife has been created from:

Brwnt yw pob gwyllt,
Llwfr a thaeog, yn lladd dyn yn ei gefn.
Buost tithau fel gardd i mi
(All wild things are savage,

[63] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd* I. 74; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 85.
[64] O'Keefe, *Buile Suibhne*. See also Chapter Three, p. 236.
[65] See Said, *Orientalism*.

Craven and slavish, killing a man from behind.
You [Bloeuwedd] have been like a garden to me.[66]

Anything that is 'wild' – not human and therefore uncivilized – is malicious: '*yn lladd dyn yn ei gefn'* ('killing a man from behind'). Llew insinuates that some part of nature, however, can be tamed. Blodeuwedd has been '*fel gardd i mi'* ('like a garden') to him, symbolizing an enclosed space created for the purpose of recreation and enjoyment – in the vein of the *hortus conclusus* of the *Song of Songs* – while the layout is controlled to maximise the pleasure of the landscape and view.[67] Blodeuwedd is portrayed as caged and forcefully cultivated. '*Tydi a ddaliodd f'ysbryd rhwng y dali'* ('You took my spirit captive among the leaves').[68] Her spirit is captive, just like the spirit of Wales, which Lewis believed, needed the revival of the Welsh language to recover its life force.[69] Blodeuwedd herself says:

Fy Arglwydd Wydion, gwnaethost imi ddrwg
Pan roist gadwyni cnawd ac esgyrn arnaf
(Lord Gwydion, you did me harm
When you laid chains of flesh and bones upon me).[70]

Blodeuwedd's vegetal origin has been masked in human flesh: *roist gadwyni cnawd ac esgyrn (*'chains of flesh and bones') have been laid *arnaf* ('upon her'), robbing her of her identity, physically grounding (chaining) her, and imposing an android existence upon her. The human body functions as a prison, incidentally mirroring a medieval belief, and indicating that on the inside Blodeuwedd is still vegetation.[71]

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[66] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, III. 130-32; Lewis, *The Woman*, III. 176-78.
[67] For a discussion of this, see e.g. Alison Byerly, The Uses of Landscape: The Picturesque Aesthetic and the National Park System', in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 52-68. See also Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*.
[68] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 110; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 131.
[69] See Lewis' speech *Tynged yr Iaith*. See Chapter Two, 'Welsh for the Welsh', p. 117.
[70] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 126- 7; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 148-49.
[71] On the body in the Middle Ages, see Burgwinkle, 'Medieval Somatics'.

Blodeuwedd, the Welsh Cathleen, embodies the allegory of the land. Her vegetal origin is symbolic: for Lewis the return to a Welsh literary canon (in Welsh) must also be a return to a pre-industrial land.[72] While Garner's *The Owl Service* is set in 1960s Wales in contrast to Lewis' medieval setting, Garner's Blodeuwedd also unfolds in a rural setting.

The Sovereignty of Myth in a Rural Setting

Garner's Blodeuwedd is a half-goddess. She is a terrifying, powerful and mythical creature in the vein of Robert Graves' White Goddess, who influences the protagonists through gothic appearances in the shape of owls. Graves' text is one that has influenced several of the writers of the corpus.[73] It is with Garner that his influence is most noticeable. Northrop Frye writes in a review of Graves' *Collected Poems*: 'He [Graves] does not lead us towards an objective or systematic mythology: he leads us towards the mythical use of poetic language, where we invent our own myths and apply them to an indefinite number of human themes.'[74] This is the appeal of *The White Goddess* to writers in the corpus: the mythical approach to language, an attitude which can be seen clearly in the use of place-names. Another attraction is the romantic rural-based rhetoric of Graves' text, emphatic in the following extract, in which he explains why he believes so many readers misunderstand his meanings:

> Call me, if you like, the fox who has lost his brush; I am nobody's servant and have chosen to live on the outskirts of a Majorcan mountain-village, Catholic but anti-ecclesiastical, where life is still ruled by the old agricultural cycle. Without my brush, namely my contact with urban civilization, all that I write

[72] See Lewis on Welsh literature, pp. 88-89 (Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales – Innocent Wales').
[73] Graves has been mentioned in connection with Alexander, Garner and Cooper, see pp. 106; 163-64.
[74] Northrop Frye, 'Review: Graves, Gods and Scholars', *The Hudson Review*, 9. 2 (Summer 1956), 298-302 (p. 301).

> about the White Goddess, the patroness of poets, must read perversely and irrelevantly to such of you as are still geared to the industrial machine […].[75]

It is not so much what Graves writes that has had an impact on these writers, but how he approaches his sources. Graves states further: 'The study of mythology, as I have shown, is based squarely on tree-lore and seasonal observation of life in the fields.'[76] Graves, like many authors discussed in this thesis, bases his 'muse' in an imagined rural, pastoral past of the present.

Garner's novel is very much situated in the post-World War Two fantasy wave, in which texts such as the *Mabinogi* are re-imagined as Gravesian, cyclical, archetypal narratives. We meet Blodeuwedd only through her possession of the female protagonist Alison. Blodeuwedd does not possess a physical body; she is a curse, half-whispered by the inhabitants of the valley, so transparent she could be read as a Freudian metaphor for female fertility and the medieval belief of accompanying madness. As in Saunders Lewis' text, the link between wildness and madness – seen in narratives such as *Buile Suibhne* – is made clear through Blodeuwedd's effect on the female protagonists: her possession of them results in inexplicable behaviour. 'As woman is aligned with nature, irrationality and the body, in direct opposition to culture, reason and the mind, she cannot occupy the position of the human subject. Woman is never "fully" human.'[77]

The story of Blodeuwedd, Lleu and Gronw is played out between Alison, the daughter of English holidaymakers in Wales, her stepbrother Roger, and local boy Gwyn. Previous generations living in the same valley were equally forced to act out the medieval tale, including Gwyn's mother Nancy. When Gwyn follows Alison from

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[75] Robert Graves: 'The Language of Myth: Addenda to *The White Goddess'*, *The Hudson Review*, 4. 1 (Spring 1951), 5-21 (p. 5).
[76] Graves: 'The Language of Myth: Addenda to *The White Goddess*', p. 7.
[77] Kim Toffoletti, *Cyborgs and Barbie Dolls: Feminism, Popular Culture and the Posthuman Body* (London: Tauris, 2007), p. 19.

her bedroom one night, he finds her sitting in the hen hut, a place commonly connected to dirt and fertility, cutting out paper owls: 'Alison was huddled over her torch, which she had propped against a stack of plates, and was cutting owls out of a roll of tracing paper. She worked quickly, discarding each owl as soon as it was finished to begin the next. [...] She rocked on her heels with concentration.'[78] Alison is relegated to an outside space, in the same way that Lewis' Blodeuwedd traverses the courtyard, but in *The Owl Service* Alison is not a willing outcast. Even Alison's movements mirror her surroundings: she is rocking on her heels, mirroring the pecking of the birds who usually occupy the space. She is trapped, not physically like Lewis' protagonist, but mentally by the haunting of a spirit-like Blodeuwedd. She tries to explain to Gwyn why she feels she has to make the owls: 'I get all worked up and edgy, and its [sic] the only thing that makes me feel better.'[79] It is clear that Alison is in some way possessed by Blodeuwedd, and that this possession results in irrational and sometimes violent behaviour. In the same vein as Saunders Lewis' version, irrationality and an animalistic (used here in the sense as linked to animals) passion are the trademarks of the woman of flowers or in Garner's case, the woman of owls, calling to mind the frequent connection between women, 'madness' and perceived bestial behaviour across the literary board.[80]

Even though Garner sets his version against the backdrop of the 1960s holiday housing crisis in Wales – in which predominantly English holidaymakers bought up properties in remote Welsh villages, which stood empty during the majority of the year and thus ruined local communities – the novel does not result in a comment on

[78] Garner, *The Owl Service*, p. 89.
[79] Ibid., p. 91.
[80] The most famous example is arguably Jane Eyre and the madwoman in the attic motif. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2000).

the socio-political environment in which it is set.[81] Rather, the setting acts as a framework to showcase the relevancy of the 'myth' in contemporary society. The effect of portraying Blodeuwedd as a mythical figure means that the location is required to be a wild and isolated, and necessarily, pre-industrial place. In Lewis's play, the Blodeuwedd myth represents the land of Wales, in Garner's novel, she is an archetypal myth that unfolds in an isolated, rural place.

In Chapter One, it was shown how writers such as Guest [S1] and Cawkwell [C19] create an otherworld of rural Wales; in Chapter Two place-names in a maps such as Brett Breckon's [C22] and in novels such as Cooper's [YA4] were shown to invent unpopulated landscapes; and in Chapter Three, Rhiannon becomes a pagan divinity connected to pastoral Nature, as seen in versions such as Morris' [N1]. In the same way, Blodeuwedd in *The Owl Service* is linked with a pre-industrial, marginal place.

Overall, the corpus can be divided into those versions which use a fantasy, pre-medieval, medieval, quasi-medieval or futuristic setting, i.e. settings that are divergent from contemporary experience, and those which are set in the modern day, or the modern day of the text. Apart from *The Owl Service*, few texts fall into the latter camp: Only four enlarged re-imaginings are set in a modern-day Wales [YA5, YA4, Na5, and Na2]. Nimmo's *Snow Spider Trilogy* [YA5] is not set in a specific place with a specific history, but a vague, mountainous, rural village setting. Socio-political aspects do not play a role; rather it is, like Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* [YA4], a stage setting for the fight of the Good versus the Bad. Lloyd Jones' *See How They Run* [Na5], also set in contemporary Wales, contrasts virtual reality with that of a pastoral dream, while Sheers' *White Ravens* [Na2] presents a character as an

[81] On the housing crisis, see for example Davies, *Welsh Language: A History*, pp. 101-57.

embodiment of Nature. It is in these texts, in which one might expect a more obvious discussion of relevant social or political issues, that the *Mabinogi* Effect, the consequence of approaching the *Mabinogi* as myth, shows itself most. The myth in these versions is portrayed as existing outside the confines of time and sometimes space. It can influence the daily lives of protagonists regardless of their specific socio-cultural situations. These versions ask general existential questions, not specific socio-political ones.

Turning to a discussion of poems published at the end of the twentieth century, Blodeuwedd is neither a specific nor a universal myth, but seen in contrast with the human and its society, in work by Feaver, Conran and Gillian Clarke.

Blodeuwedd – Human or Nonhuman?

For the poets Feaver, Conran and Gillian Clarke, Blodeuwedd's hybridity is a means to grapple with the implications of being human. The poems by Feaver [P8] and Conran [P6] underline Blodeuwedd's vegetal origin as the reason (and an excuse) for her morally questionable behaviour. 'I was never by him given a childhood' laments Conran's woman of flowers.[82] In Feaver's 'Blodeuwedd', she is portrayed as having missed out on the childhood lesson of what is right and wrong:

> 'We killed my husband together
> No one taught me it was wrong.
> I was never suckled at a breast.
> I never had baby teeth
> to bite a gold cross
> that hung from a mother's neck.'[83]

[82] Tony Conran, 'Blodeuwedd', in Conran, *Blodeuwedd* (Ogmore-By-The-Sea: Poetry Wales Press, 1988), II. 13.
[83] Vicki Feaver, 'Blodeuwedd', in Feaver, *The Book of Blood* (London: Random House, 2006), ll. 13-16.

The gold cross carries the weight of motherhood here: with religion comes both safety and a set of rules to be followed. The image of the baby teeth grappling with the adult jewellery – which is never experienced – suggests the struggle against societal norms that creates an adult out of a child. The lack of a childhood is the dominant reason for Blodeuwedd's ruthless behaviour in these versions, indicating that social codes which are learned during this time are what distinguish humans from nonhumans. This link between being human and childhood is also manifest in the link between the perceived connection between myth and children: with childhood understood as the 'cradle' of human life in the same way that myth is supposed to contain the origin of human stories and values.[84] In these poems it is the lack of an upbringing, caused by the creation out of flowers, which contribute to Blodeuwedd's supposed lack of human morals. Through her vegetal origins Blodeuwedd possesses an inexperience in line with the Romantic idea that children and animals are innocent.[85] The desire to return to a more 'innocent' state, as discussed in Chapter One in connection with an otherworldly Wales, is here turned on its head. Blodeuwedd's unknowing creates her downfall in a world dominated by adult situated knowledges.[86]

While Branwen and her starling have come to symbolize the oral transmission of stories, Blodeuwedd mirrors the portrayal of the *Mabinogi* myth as a whole: an unknowable entity plucked from a perceived ancient culture with its perceived links to the nonhuman, at odds with the modern adult world into which it is being brought. This goes back to the idea of children as an ideal audience for the *Mabinogi* (discussed in Chapter One) and seen for example in Guest's dedication of her

[84] For a concise discussion of the perceived correlation between childhood and fairytales/myths, see Hunt, *Children's Literature*, pp. 273-77. See also Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters*. For an in depth discussion on traditional storytelling and children, see Stephens and McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture*. On the evolution of the fairytale for children, see Zipes, *Fairy tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale*, pp. 23-34.
[85] Famously expressed in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Dent, 1963).
[86] See Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges'.

Mabinogion versions to her children, which has been (falsely) taken to mean that her intended audience for her work were children.[87] The fact remains, that three major leitmotifs which pervade the corpus of re-imaginings have been intertwined in our literary history, especially since the nineteenth century: 'Nature', 'Welshness' and 'myth', and that all three are associated, problematically or not, with 'innocence' and 'childhood'.[88] It is no coincidence, then, that the perception of viewing a mythical *Mabinogi*, the *Mabinogi* Effect, results in the expansion of the nonhuman. Indeed, academic interpretations of the medieval Fourth Branch mirror the themes found Feaver and Conran's verse: Emyr Humphreys comments on the medieval version that Blodeuwedd is 'a creature of untamed emotions and appetites, a child of nature with the face of a flower, a lawless heart and no conscience to speak of.'[89] Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan echoes Humphreys in saying that Blodeuwedd in the medieval text is 'a child of nature who will never bear her own child, who follows her instincts without considering the consequences of her actions for herself or others.'[90]

Similarly to the connection between childhood, social learning and morals in Feaver's poem and in the comments above, Blodeuwedd's immorality in Gillian Clarke's poem 'Blodeuwedd' (1985) [P4] is connected to her exclusion from social activities. Here she is presented in her state as an owl, and as such is described as connected to the dark and the night, while she herself is clothed in the colours of light and innocence. She is described as '[c]olourless,' as having a 'white face,' her feathers are:

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[87] Guest, *Mabinogion* (1849), I, p. iii.
[88] See e.g. Chapter One, 'Otherworlds and the Myth of Wales'; 'Otherworldly Wales – Innocent Wales'; Chapter Two, 'Welsh as a Link to the Past'.
[89] Humphreys, *Outside Time*, p. 13.
[90] Lloyd-Morgan, 'Gender and Violence in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', p. 72.

> cream as meadowsweet
> and oakflowers […].[91]

Yet she is:

> condemned
> to the night, to lie alone
> with her sin.[92]

Her sin is connected to the night, which effectively banishes her from human society – the first line of the poem indicates that she rises 'too soon', too early for human social interaction.[93] The human women in the poem are engaged in activities which suggest a resulting companionship:

> We pare and measure and stir,
> heap washed apples in a bowl, recall
> the day's work, our own fidelities.[94]

Her sin, her infidelity to Gronw is one that has resulted from her initial exclusion. It is this exclusion from society which makes her nonhuman.

The figure of Blodeuwedd allows these writers to grapple with what it means to be human. In contrast to Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's transformations, discussed in the previous chapter, Blodeuwedd's vegetal origins, though questionable, do not threaten human identity.[95] Indeed, Blodeuwedd as flowers or Blodeuwedd as an owl, she stands as a measure of the human condition. As Saunders Lewis' Blodeuwedd stands for Wales and Garner's for a universal myth, the poets Feaver, Conran and Clarke bring her into the human realm and find her wanting. Turning now to Gwyneth

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[91] Gillian Clarke, 'Blodeuwedd', in Clarke, *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997), ll. 6 and 7-10.
[92] Ibid., ll. 6 and 7-10.
[93] Ibid., l. 1.
[94] Ibid., ll. 18-20.
[95] On the brothers' transformations, see Chapter Three, 'Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's Shame: Between Masculinity and Incest'.

Lewis' re-imagining, it is artificial intelligence which has become the nonhuman to threaten human ontology.

Blodeuwedd the Cyborg?

Leaping into the year 2210, albeit in a twenty-first century text, Gwyneth Lewis' Blodeuwedd has been transformed into a being that disturbs boundaries of species and sex: a possible cyborg.[96] This version is very much written in the context of the environmental crisis of the twenty-first century.[97] The first time we encounter Blodeuwedd in *The Meat Tree* (2010) [Na4] is in the last quarter of this science fiction story. The only two human protagonists, the Inspector of Wrecks, Campion, a veteran space traveller and his female Apprentice, Nona, are on a mission in the year 2210 to discover the history of an ancient spaceship. This ship is an amalgam of several technologies, the oldest of which includes 'cassette tapes', the newest Virtual Reality (VR), all of which seems dated to the young apprentice. They decide to play a VR game, found in the wreck, in order to establish the history and culture of the former inhabitants of this spaceship. Their experience of the reality of this VR environment, their perspective of a distant time, mirrors our perspective of the medieval *Mabinogi*. This game is set in the medieval world of the Fourth Branch [B4] and the players are the characters of the story, so that Campion, who has taken on the role of Math, creates Blodeuwedd:

> Inspector of Wrecks
>
> *To be ... a flower. Why don't we make a woman from flowers to be his wife? If we conjure her from this coming season's growth she's not of a race already on the Earth.*

[96] On cyborg theory, see Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s', *Socialist Review* 80, 15. 2 (March-April 1985), 65-107. See also Caputi, 'On Psychic Activism: Feminist Mythmaking'.

[97] See Chapter One, p. 44 n. 34 for an overview of medieval ecocriticism scholarship.

Apprentice
A woman from flowers?

Inspector of Wrecks
She'll be fruitful.

Apprentice
This must be a joke.[98]

In the creation of a human from vegetation within the VR, a cyborg is created, 'a hybrid of machine and organism'.[99] The conjugation of a woman from flowers is unquestionably portrayed as a man's sexual fantasy: when Campion and Nona debate what attributes they think they would want in a wife, he names two: beauty and the ability to reproduce; in contrast, Nona replies with faithfulness and companionship.[100] It underlines the fact that this re-imagining is in the first instance an allegory: whereas Blodeuwedd symbolized the land of Wales in Saunders Lewis, here she symbolizes the collective female, a parable in which woman speaks for nature.[101]

When the vegetal golem Blodeuwedd is created by Campion in the Virtual Reality (VR), Nona simultaneously experiences a mental transformation: 'I wake exhausted from dreams of green. [...] I stand erect. I have no eyes but a feel for gravity, from my dark, damp root up to the finest veins and the tips of my flowers.'[102] This is the birth of Nona as Blodeuwedd: phallic, unknowing, grounded; Blodeuwedd disrupts images of sex, gender and Nona's sense of self. Indeed, we find out later that Bodeuwedd is the spaceship itself – 'cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling'.[103] Yet, Nona as Blodeuwedd is in the first instance, 'a flower made of meat', a heavy, bodily plant, diverging from the airiness of the flowers in the

[98] Lewis, *The Meat Tree*, p. 152 [author's emphasis].
[99] Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs', p. 65.
[100] Lewis, *The Meat Tree*, p. 151.
[101] Bowerbank, 'Does Woman Speak for Nature?'.
[102] Lewis, *Meat Tree*, pp. 157 and 161.
[103] Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs', p. 68.

medieval version, human flesh and vegetal matter, and later technology, combine to form a new species.[104] In direct contrast to the heteronormative portrayals of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's sex changes (also found in *The Meat Tree*) discussed in Chapter Three, Nona/ Blodeuwedd's hybridity unsettles the very meaning of being human. Blodeuwedd in her vegetal state, and, as Nona, in her initial female sex, can disrupt meanings that the brothers in their initial male, nonhuman animal state cannot in this corpus.

By the end of the story, both Campion and Nona have morphed, mentally, into the characters of the VR. They discover that a new species of life has formed on the spaceship, an amalgam of humans and plants, and finally of the spaceship itself. In the end, Nona is consumed by the cyborgian ship feasting on her imagination, while Campion is able to escape. The cyborgian ship has, all along, been the narrator of the Fourth Branch; like Branwen (discussed in the last chapter), woman becomes the storyteller of the *Mabinogi*. The ship's devouring of Nona echoes the internal devouring of Alison by the owls in Garner: 'Alison's cheek was scored with parallel red lines, but they seemed to be under the skin.'[105] For both women, the nonhuman feasts on their female human bodies, indicating both affinity with the nonhuman and a flexibility of their own bodies, mirroring the medieval *Mabinogi*'s male bodies, which as shown previously, transform easily between species. In these texts, 'updating' the *Mabinogi* equals creating a physical link between woman and the nonhuman. *The Meat Tree*'s Blodeuwedd is then not quite a cyborg in the vein of Haraway's concept; instead, the texts re-creates, in a way, the agricultural metaphors linking woman to the land, discussed in the next section. This connection is intensified further, through the divergent meanings of flowers between the medieval and the later versions.

[104] Lewis, *Meat Tree*, p. 173.
[105] Garner, *The Owl Service*, p. 214.

Blodeuwedd's perceived eroticism results in her becoming emblematic of the land; a generic land in some versions, the country of Wales in others.

The Significance of Flowers

The observation that all of the adaptations of the story of Blodeuwedd focus on her sexuality in connection to her nonhumanness, demonstrates that her hybrid human-nonhuman being generates deep anxiety in this corpus. The symbolic connection between flowers and sexuality is a theme upon which all of the re-imaginings dwell, while there is no indication of this trope in the medieval *Mabinogi* – another indication perhaps of a pre-Christian element, and of pre-forbidden fruit imagery?[106] Blodeuwedd is perhaps a sexual figure because she takes a lover when her husband is absent, but less so because she was created from flowers. Indeed, if one ignores her vegetal origins as the medieval text does, she is clearly a woman who is unhappy and lonely in her marriage. Her vegetal origin is a means to heighten the tension in the narrative, the same way that Rhiannon's magic or that of her horse reflects on Pwyll's character rather than on a possible otherworld (as discussed in Chapter One).[107] Taking a look at the symbolic significance of flowers in the medieval text, the divergence in the perception of the role that the flowers play in the later versions becomes evident. Blodeuwedd's creation in the medieval text is described as follows:

> *Ac yna y kymeryssant wy blodeu y deri, a blodeu y banadyl, a blodeu yr erwein, ac o'r rei hynny, asswynaw yr un uorwyn deccaf a thelediwaf a welas dyn eiroet.*

[106] See Marina Warner, *Metamorphoses* in which she discusses fruit and sexuality in relation to metamorphoses, e.g. p. 69.
[107] See Chapter One, 'The Medieval *Mabinogi*'s Hybrid World'.

> (Then they took the flowers of the oak, and the flowers of the broom, and the flowers of the meadowsweet, and from those they conjured up the fairest and most beautiful maiden that anyone had ever seen.)[108]

Blodeuwedd is created from flowers because of a destiny uttered by Aranrhod on her son Lleu: *na chaffo wreic uyth, o'r genedyl yssyd ar y dayar honn yr awr honn* ('that he will never have a wife from the race that is on this earth at present').[109] Therefore, Gwydion and Math conjure her through magical means, and the flowers are likely chosen at least in part because they are common plants and easily available. Gruffydd suggests that 'oak [was chosen] to form her bones, the broom for her hair, and the meadow-sweet for her skin.'[110] Davies writes of the significance of the colour white (of both meadowsweet and oak), which can signify 'ideal female beauty and purity', as well as the association of a 'maiden's hair' with yellow broom.[111] Consulting Roy Vickery's *Dictionary of Plant-Lore*, the entry for meadowsweet shows that the flower, also named 'queen of the meadow', possesses a particularly dire meaning in Wales, described as 'a fatal flower'.[112] Interpreted in this way, Blodeuwedd's faithlessness to her husband is linked to her vegetal origin only in a symbolic way, and the flowers can be read as emblematic of the disastrous outcome of their marriage.

While the flowers in the conception of Blodeuwedd are not described in sexual imagery at all, an incident from the first half of the Fourth Branch displays a plethora of sexual allusions. The virginity test of Aranrhod, the mother of Lleu, and

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[108] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 83; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 58.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Gruffydd, *Math,* 252.
[111] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 243. As Davies points out, Olwen's hair in the Mabinogion's *Culhwch ac Olwen* is also likened to broom. In the triad seventeen *Tri Hualaóc Enys Prydein* ('Three Fettered Men of the Island of Britain') we find *Riwallaón Wallt Banhadlen* '(Rhiwallawn Broom-Hair'), and in the Triad *Tri Deifnyawc Enys Prydein* ('Three Well-Endowed Men of the Island of Britain') *Riwallawn Wallt Bandhadlen* ('Rhiwallawn Broom-Hair') appears again. Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 32 and 9.
[112] Trevelyan, *Folk-lore and Folk-stories of Wales*, p. 96. Quoted by Roy Vickery in *A Dictionary of Plant-Lore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 85.

simultaneous conception of Dylan and Lleu in the Fourth Branch are suffused with sexual symbols.[113] *Yna y kymerth ynteu yr hutlath a'y chamu. 'Camha di dros honn,' heb ef, 'ac ot wyt uorwyn, mi a ednebydaf.'* ('Then he [Math] took his magic wand and bent it. "Step over this," he said, "and if you are a virgin I shall know."')[114] Following this procedure, Aranrhod *adaw* ('leaves') two children.[115] This indicates a marked difference between these forms of conception in the medieval text. Indeed, in his later re-imagining of the story, Batt unquestionably portrays Math's virginity test as a rape of Arianrhod (Aranrhod), which, in light of the sexual symbolism of the king's 'rod' is entirely plausible.

> King Math takes out his magic wand and manipulates it such that the rod becomes large, slightly bent, upright and red. He instructs Arianrhod:
>
> - Sit astride this, young Arianrhod, and if thou art a maiden, well then, I shall know it.[116]

If the conception of Dylan and Lleu is unquestionably sexual – even the strange incubation of Lleu as a foetus in Gwydion's chest is easily read as symbolic of a womb – the creation of Blodeuwedd is peculiarly asexual and non-biological in the medieval version.[117] Her creation is described as magical, the only tools being the flowers and the magicians' powers. Math decides: *'keisswn ninheu, ui a thi, oc an hut a'n lledrith, hudaw gweirc idaw ynteu o'r blodeu'* ('"let you [Gwydion] and I try through our magic and enchantment to charm a wife for him out of flowers."')[118] In the 1948 translation by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, the verb used to describe the

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[113] For Math's magic rod as sexual symbol, see Valente, 'Gwydion and Aranrhod: Crossing the Borders of Gender in *Math*', and Cartwright, 'Virginity and Chastity Texts'.
[114] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 77; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 54.
[115] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 77. In the Middle Welsh, *adaw* ('to leave') is used, translated by Davies as 'to drop', p. 54. See Evans, *A Grammar of Middle Welsh*, p. 116.
[116] Batt, *Blodeuwedd*, p. 3.
[117] For a reading of the symbolism of Gwydion's chest, see e.g. Valente, 'Gwydion and Aranrhod'.
[118] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 83; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 58.

creation is 'to conjure', again, emphasizing the magical process.[119] The emphasis of the procedure lies in the magical powers of the men, and the text further stipulates solely the flowers as props out of which they conjure (*hudaw*, literally 'to charm') a wife: there is no mention of rods, magic wands or any other phallic implements which might indicate a sexual process. Blodeuwedd is, however, presented as Math's daughter by Aranrhod, as well as Lleu's brother, in the contemporary medieval text *Bonedd yr Arwyr*.[120] Nevertheless, the concept of flowers as symbolic for her sexual desire or for the reason Blodeuwedd takes a lover and plots to kill Lleu, which many of the re-imaginings promulgate, does not exist in the medieval version.

If flowers do not represent sexual desire in the medieval Fourth Branch, what do they symbolize? The mentioning of flowers is a rare occurrence in the *Mabinogi* as a whole; in fact, the only other incident in which vegetation is mentioned occurs when Gwydion uses it in his magic. He conjures a ship and Cordovan leather from *delysc a morwyal* ('dulse and wrack', types of seaweed).[121] In both cases, they seem to present a means to an end, chosen not so much for emblematic purposes but rather for their physical and semiotic connections to the desired product of the magical process. Seaweed is chosen to conjure a ship because of its connection to the sea and water, while meadowsweet, broom and oak are selected to create Blodeuwedd on account of their physical attributes which could allude to the female human body. The flowers are a symbolic means to an end in the medieval creation process. In the later re-imaginings, they become emblematic of the anxiety and the desire of the nonhuman in

[119] Jones and Jones, *Mabinogion*, p. 68.
[120] 'Bonedd yr Arwyr', ed. by Peter C. Bartrum, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 18 (1959), 229-52; or Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*. For a discussion of 'Bonedd' and the Fourth Branch, see Zeiser, 'Performing a Literary Parternity Text: 'Bonedd yr Arwyr' and the Fourth Branch of the "Mabinogi"', p. 211. Claude Sterckx also mentions the connection in 'Les Malheurs Conjugaux de Lleu et de Lugh', *Ollodagos*, XII (1999), 227-48.
[121] Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 79; Davies, *Mabinogion*, p. 55.

the human, expressed through the symbolic link, which the later texts make, between flowers, sexuality and the female body.

Flowers, Sexuality and the Female Body

While Saunders Lewis [D3] expands on the theme of an unhappy woman in a patriarchal society from the medieval version, in contrast to the earlier text, Llew's expectations of Blodeuwedd are unquestionably sexually charged in connection to her vegetal origins. Llew describes his first sight of her after she has been created by the magicians Math and Gwydion:

> *[…] yn noeth fel blodeu'r wawr*
> *A'r gwlith heb sychu ar ei bronnau oer,*
> *Bronnau diwair megis calon lili*
> *Pan blygo'r nos i'w mynwes, cerddai hi,*
> *Enaid y gwanwyn gwyrf mewn corff o gnawd.*
> ([…] naked as the blossoms of dawn,
> The dew undried upon her cold breasts,
> Breasts as pure as a lily's heart when night
> Holds it to her bosom, there she walked,
> The virgin spring's soul embodied in flesh.)[122]

Blodeuwedd is naked, accentuating her virgin state of being, and her breasts are wet with dew, reminiscent of the state of a romanticized newborn, moist but strangely clean from the mother's womb. This Blodeuwedd is the physical image of the conjunction of agricultural metaphors and the female body: *Enaid y gwanwyn gwyrf mewn corff o gnawd* ('The virgin spring's soul embodied in flesh') – and this association with blossoming fertility and the virgin soil places her in a submissive position from the outset. This imagery is mirrored in Feaver's poem [P8], in which

[122] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 51-5; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 61-5.

the essence of Blodeuwedd is described as: 'lips, labia, oozing honey nectar', while in Conran's verse [P6], she is 'in fruit, and ripen[s] with the year.'[123]

> [W]hile the pastoral tradition symbolised nature as a benevolent female, it contained the implication that nature when plowed and cultivated could used be as a commodity and manipulated as a resource. Nature, tamed and subdued, could be transformed into a garden to provide both material and spiritual food to enhance the comfort and soothe the anxieties of men distraught by the demands of the urban world […].[124]

While (the Welsh) language enabled Branwen and her starling to become the *cyfarwyddiaid* (storytellers) of the *Mabinogi*, here (the English) language (so easily) fashions a woman's body into that of flowers.

This body in Lewis is not warm and seething with life, but cold and 'as pure as a lily's heart when night / Holds it to her bosom', foreshadowing her betrayal and subsequent transformation into an owl. Llew remembers how he longed to embrace her but encountered her *gwregys dur* ('cincture of steel').[125]

> *[...] roedd hi'n oer, yn oer.*
> *[...] Yn ei gwedd*
> *Ni welais i wrid erioed, ond harddwch lloer*
> *Yn gwawrio yn ddihitio dros y byd.*
> ([…] but she was cold.
> […] I have never seen
> Warmth in her face, only the beauty of a moon
> Dawning indifferently above the world.)[126]

The connection of flowers with night-time is an interesting motif, since biologically, vegetation can only thrive under the influence of the sun. But at night the flower is

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[123] Feaver, 'Blodeuwedd', l. 12; Conran, 'Blodeuwedd', IX.1.
[124] Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983), pp. 8-9. See also *Gender and Space in Rural Britain, 1840-1920*, ed. by Gemma Goodman and Charlotte Mathieson (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014).
[125] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 59; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 69.
[126] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 63-7; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 76-9.

cooled by the lower temperatures, mirroring the 'coldness' of Blodeuwedd herself. Indeed, the lily is a poisonous flower, perhaps calling into question the 'innocence' of Blodeuwedd. What is conceivably implied here is that the withering of the vegetation that is Blodeuwedd is caused through the forceful transformation into human form, so that she seeks night and death. Llew, solely interested in his wife as a physical object, desires her to be warm and respond to him sexually. Indeed, in Feaver's poem 'Blodeuwedd', Lleu's fingers are described as touching her 'like frost' – the reverse of the fantasy of creation – suggesting that Blodeuwedd is warmer than human flesh.[127] In both texts, Blodeuwedd's vegetal origins are linked to her heightened sexuality, in Lewis' play through Llew's expectations, in the Feaver's poem through the warmth of her flesh. In Garner's *The Owl Service*, the tension between the female body and the eroticism of the nonhuman is increased through the teenage protagonists' sexual anxieties.

In Garner's *The Owl Service* [YA2], Blodeuwedd hovers over the valley, threatening to posess the female protagonists. While the woman made from flowers is represented symbolically and physically through owls in this version, her eroticism is connected to her vegetal origins and most poignantly expressed through the penetrating scent of meadowsweet, which affects Gwyn and Roger, and is the driving force behind all that happens in that fated valley. Yet, at the same time, the female human body is linked with strangeness and irrational behaviour. At the start of *The Owl Service*, Alison has her period, which seems to be innately connected to the sound of scratching of owls in the roof above her bedroom: 'it's been scratching when

[127] Feaver, 'Blodeuwedd', l. 9.

the pain's bad.'[128] Here connections between a woman's period and the moon are raised, not only through the link to owls, but also through the occurrence of the scratching at night, enhancing the eeriness and clandestineness with which the female body is associated in this text. The plates from which Alison traces paper owls – found in the attic of the house – affect her in a more intense way than they do Gwyn and Roger, who realize this and attempt to hide them from her: 'Get them away from her first, and then we can think.'[129] In the television series *The Owl Service* (Granada 1969), Alison's possession by Blodeuwedd has definite erotic connotations. In a scene from Episode two, in which Roger finds her raving, she is sprawled on her bed in a red nightgown, which is pushed up almost to the hip, and she scratches Roger's face so that it bleeds.[130] While Mike Collins' graphic novel *Y Mabinogi* from 2002 portrays Blodeuwedd as emerging out of a womb-like pool.[131] Her the focus on her sexual appetite is enhanced through a transparent shift she is given to wear, as well as bright red lipstick, which she manages to keep smudge-free during several sexual encounters with Gronw 'Figure [14]'.

If Blodeuwedd's vegetal origins are symbolically erotic and Alison's female body is linked to strangeness in *The Owl Service*, then female sexuality (both physical and sensual) is the root of the disasters which unfold in the valley, going right back to the figure of Medb and the image of a woman as the cause of destruction in medieval Celtic texts.[132]

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[128] Garner, *The Owl Service*, p. 8. See White, *A Century of Welsh Myth*, p. 87; Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, p. 161.
[129] Garner, *The Owl Service*, p. 48.
[130] For an analysis of the TV series and Graves' influence, see Fimi, *Celtic Myth*, pp. 173-75.
[131] Collins, *Y Mabinogi*, [no pg ns].
[132] See the beginning of this chapter, pp. 260-62.

In extension of this theme, we need to turn to a medieval Irish literary motif, the much-debated Sovereignty Goddess.[133] This motif concerns a female figure who represents sovereignty, and is often used to draw a connection between a female goddess and the land, in which the goddess must marry the rightful king in order to maintain the land's fruitfulness.[134] The Middle Irish tale *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin* ('The Adventure of the Sons of Eochaid Muigmedóin') is the exemplary narrative for this motif, in which an old woman asks three brothers for sexual favours, and turns into a beautiful, young woman when one of the brothers, Niall, agrees.[135] The woman tells him that she is sovereignty, and that he will gain the kingship of Tara.[136] As we have seen earlier in the previous chapter through the figure of Rhiannon, this motif allows for a complete eradication of the human character.[137] Indeed, Robert Graves, whose view of the fragmented nature of the medieval texts is a dominant influence (as discussed), extensively debates this motif in his *The White Goddess*.[138] In Garner's novel, female sexuality can either cause irrational behaviour in the form of owls, or fruitfulness in the form of flowers. Alison is unable to choose

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[133] See R. A. Breatnach, 'The Lady and the King, a Theme of Irish Literature', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 42 (1953), 321-36; Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature', *Etudes Celtiques,* 7 (1955-56), 76-114; Mac Cana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature', *Etudes Celtiques*, 8 (1958), 59-65; Rachel Bromwich, 'Celtic Dynastic Themes and the Breton Lays', *Etudes Celtiques*, 9 (1960-61), 431-79; Kim McCone, 'Fírinne agus torthulacht', *Léachtai Cholm Cillé*, 11 (1980), 136-73; John Carey, 'A British Myth of Origins?', *History of Religions*, 31.1 (August 1991), 24-38 (p. 31); Màire Herbert, 'Goddess and King: The Sacred Marriage in Early Ireland', in *Women and Sovereignty*, 7, ed. by Louise Olga Fradenburg, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 264-75. This motif does not exist in medieval Welsh literature, see Erica J. Sessle, 'Exploring the Limitations of the Sovereignty Goddess through the Role of Rhiannon'.

[134] Also discussed in Chapter Three, 'Rhiannon: From Medieval Queen to Nature Personified'. For the connection between this motif and Irish Nationalism, see Joseph Valente, 'The Myth of Sovereignty: Gender in the Literature of Irish Nationalism', *ELH*, 61.1 (Spring 1994), 189-210.

[135] Victoria Simmons, 'Sovereignty Myth', in *Celtic Culture*, IV, pp. 1621-22. For the text of *Echtra mac nEchach*, see Whitley Stokes, 'The Death of Crimthann Son of Fidach, and the Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Muigmedón', *Revue Celtique* 24 (1903), 172-207. See also Amy C. Eichhorn-Mulligan, 'The Anatomy of Power and the Miracle of Kingship: The Female Body of Sovereignty in a Medieval Irish Kingship Tale', *Speculum*, 81. 4 (Oct. 2006), 1014-54.

[136] Stokes, 'The Death of Crimthann Son of Fidach, and the Adventures of the Sons of Eochaid Muigmedón', p. 201. The folk-tale motif of the sovereignty myth is D732 'The Loathly Lady'. Simmons, 'Sovereignty Myth', p. 1621.

[137] Chapter Three, 'Rhiannon: From Medieval Queen to Nature Personified'.

[138] Graves, *The White Goddess*, esp. pp. 374-77.

herself because she has succumbed to the possession of Blodeuwedd, so, through their own decisions, the male protagonists Gwyn and Roger determine her fate for her. As Alison Waller writes: 'Alison is not only represented as being insanely possessed by the spirit of Blodeuwedd, losing her mind to meaningless ritual and violent action, she is also a "silly gobbins" who can only regain any sense of real identity with the rational help of the male characters.'[139]

If Blodeuwedd symbolizes the country of Wales in Saunders Lewis's play and an archetypal, unknowable myth that only affects female characters in Garner's novel, in Gwyneth Lewis's *The Meat Tree* [Na4], the emphasis lies on her as a woman, mirroring the shift from readings which focus on possible mythical aspects to those which emphasise the characters in Celtic Studies (discussed earlier). Nona pinpoints the problematic treatment of forcing flowers into human form:

> Apprentice
> *And what about her?*
>
> Inspector of Wrecks
> *How do you mean?*
>
> Apprentice
> *Forced to be human, to follow a script dreamt up by two perverts in order to please a bastard created by incest?*[140]

In *The Meat Tree* the forcing of flowers into a human form is classed as rape, just as Nona is raped by Gilfaethwy in the virtual reality. Her understanding of Blodeuwedd's creation as a kind of rape of nature mirrors the imagery of aggression inflicted on the land by a male-dominated society, which we have seen in Saunders

[139] Alison Waller, *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 77.
[140] Lewis, *Meat Tree*, pp. 152-53 [author's emphasis].

Lewis' play, and the seeming devouring of Alison by the owl in *The Owl Service*.[141] In a reversal of the inherent connection between Alison's period and Blodeuwedd in *The Owl Service*, Campion mistakenly thinks Nona has her period on account of her strange behaviour, when in reality she is morphing into Blodeuwedd. In both texts, the female body and otherness are entangled, although, poignantly, it is the male protagonist who perceives this in *The Meat Tree*.

While Blodeuwedd's creation out of flowers is classed as a violation in *The Meat Tree*, in Saunders Lewis' 'Blodeuwedd' is a prisoner in her human body. Blodeuwedd evokes the following outburst of self-description in Saunders Lewis' re-imagining on being informed that there is a hunter nearby.

> *Cyffro a rhyddid yw f'elfennau i,*
> *A'm deddf yw chwant, y chwant sy'n gyrru'r had*
> *I chwalu'r pridd a'i ceidw rhag yr haul.*
> *Mae ynof innau egin sy'n mynnu dydd*
> *I dyfu'n fraisg a cheinciog uwch y llwyn*
> *Heb gyllell neb i'w docio.*
> (My elements are freedom and excitement,
> And my law is lust, the lust that drives the seed
> To thrust through the soil that keeps it from the sun.
> There is a shoot in me that longs for a day
> To swell fruitful and full-branched above the grove
> With no one's knife to prune it.)[142]

Bruce Griffiths argues that '[t]he theme is one adumbrated in *The Eve of Saint John*: the clash between *serch* (*eros*, romantic love, carnal and often illicit, always anti-social) and *cariad* (*agape*, love transcending *serch*, spiritual and in harmony with the social order).'[143] Yet this cannot be a question of *serch*, since she falls in love with the

[141] For a discussion of patriarchal linguistic imagery, see e.g. Soper, *What is Nature?*.
[142] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 265-70; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 294- 99.
[143] Bruce Griffiths, 'His Theatre', in *Presenting Saunders Lewis* ed. Alun R. Jones and Gwyn Thomas (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), pp. 79-92 (p. 83).

idea of the hunter because he is in tune with the nonhuman, her former self, rather than with the man himself. Blodeuwedd declares further:

> *A'r heliwr yntau'n un ag egni'r ffridd –*
> *Mi allwn garu heliwr –*
> (And the hunter is one with the moorland's vigour –
> I could love a hunter –).[144]

The closeness of the hunter to the nonhuman world is the characteristic which is so appealing to her. His active, physical interaction with the land, *egni'r ffridd* ('the moorland's vigour'), is something which Blodeuwedd finds lacking in Llew. She also needs movement and fresh air, '*[c]yffro a rhyddid yw f'elfennau i'* ('"[m]y elements are freedom and excitement"'). Her description of her inner self is in some way male in its physicality: *[i] chwalu'r pridd* ('[t]o thrust through the soil'), mirroring the language used in Gwyneth Lewis' novella: 'I stand erect', Nona dreams. Tellingly, Joseph P. Clancy's translation of the verb *chwalu* is not quite literal; it more generally translates as: demolish, shatter, spread, to crash, to bring down.[145]

It is not clear in Saunders Lewis' play if Blodeuwedd longs to be sexually active and conceive a child, or whether this is in fact her old self as a flower which needs to burst free of the human flesh. Crucially, she is not able to conceive either with Llew or Gronw, which is another indication of her 'unnatural' state of being. In Garner's work, in which women must be either fruitful or mad, the theme is similar: unfruitfulness troublingly equals unhumanness. Blodeuwedd is neither vegetation nor human, but a strange combination of the two, who seeks the night and is unfruitful. Certainly, in the patriarchal, medieval *Mabinogi*, women who do not have children are associated with negative events: Teyrnon's wife persuades him to keep Pryderi,

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[144] Lewis, *Blodeuwedd*, I. 234-35; Lewis, *The Woman*, I. 261- 63.
[145] See e.g. *Y Geiriadur Mawr*, p. 155.

which means Rhiannon is punished for the disappearance of her son; Blodeuwedd has no children and plots the death of her husband; Aranrhod is continuously punished for rejecting the son born through rape. Only Cigfa does not seem to have children, and she remains unharmed throughout the narrative.

Blodeuwedd's faithlessness in the medieval branch is construed to result from her marginal and female position in a patriarchal society. In the re-imaginings the (mostly) catastrophic outcome of the stories is caused by her vegetal origin. Blodeuwedd is certainly a marginalized character in the medieval text, but, as has been shown, her marginalization is not connected to her nonhumanness. In the twentieth-century texts, written in a period still influenced by humanist thinking, the distinct categorization of species results in woman being grouped with the animal/vegetable 'other'.[146] Certainly, the language with which she is described creates a flower out of the female body, while the flower's growth is male in its physicality. The link of the female body to the vegetal results in the foregrounding of her eroticism. Blodeuwedd's heightened sexuality, as it is portrayed in the later re-imaginings, exemplifies the anxiety and simultaneous allure of the nonhuman in the corpus.

Conclusion: A Child's Myth?

In the first two chapters, we have seen how certain aspects of the *Mabinogi* myth – the otherworldliness of nonhuman Wales, the place-names of rural locations – have been possessed by the fantasy and children's writers throughout the corpus, and that

[146] This over-categorizing can be most poignantly seen in Hélène Cixous' theory of binary opposites; see Andermatt Conley, 'Hélène Cixous: The Language of Flowers'. Even towards the end of the twentieth century, these binary opposites persist in literary and cultural studies. See e.g. Muller, 'De Blathnat á Blodeuwedd ou de la Femme-Fleur à la Femme Adultère'. For a critique of this theory, see e.g. Caputi, 'On Psychic Activism', p. 434.

those texts which wish to attempt to 'update' the narratives must reject them. We find a similar dialogue in the corpus with regard to the story of Blodeuwedd, in that out of the three major texts discussed here, by Saunders Lewis [D3], Garner [YA2] and Gwyneth Lewis [Na4], the text by the only non-Welsh writer (Garner) is also the only non-adult version and the one with the most obvious mythical and supernatural aspects.[147] In *The Owl Service*, Blodeuwedd is not a tangible, real-life figure, such as Saunders Lewis' Blodeuwedd, or Gwyneth Lewis' impersonation of Blodeuwedd through Nona. In Garner's re-imagining, the woman of owls is a phenomenon which the reader never truly grasps. This extreme mythological focus in this version surely derives from his fascination with Graves' narration of the tale in his *The White Goddess*, in which Blodeuwedd is portrayed as having been 'an Owl thousands of years before Gwydion was born.'[148]

While Blodeuwedd is mythologized in the manner of Eliade's eternal return in the young adult version, the other three texts fall into the tradition of the scientific creation of a female human being.[149] In the latter three the mythic is mingled with the scientific – science thus becoming part of the myth in the vein of Shelley's *Frankenstein*.[150] While the creation of Blodeuwedd is in no way a sexual process in the medieval text, both Batt's and Gwyneth Lewis' versions emphasize that it is a biological procedure. This ties in with the attempt to explain the supernatural in a

[147]Alan Garner himself has published a children's volume on *Collected Folktales* (London: HarperCollins, 2011). For a discussion of themes prevalent in children's and young adult texts, see e.g. Immel, 'Children's Books and Constructions of Childhood', in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed Grenby and Immel, pp. 19-34. For myth specifically see *Magical Tales: Myth, Legend and Enchantment in Children's Books*, ed. by Carolyne Larrington and Diane Purkiss (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2013). On Garner and young adult literature, see Paul Hardwick, '"Not in the Middle Ages"?: Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* and the Literature of Adolescence', *Children's Literature in Education*, 31.1 (2000), 23-30.
[148] Graves, *White Goddess*, p. 306.
[149] Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or Cosmos and History*, trans; by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955).
[150] See Sheehan, 'Posthuman Bodies'.

scientific manner in these texts and the substitution of the magicians with scientists.[151] Indeed, Batt calls Gwydion 'an Alchemist. Gwydion was a *Scientist*!'[152] While Saunders Lewis' version contains the least scientific imagery of the adult editions, Griffiths' interpretation of Lewis' text posits the magicians' creation as a scientific process: the play 'has today a significance probably undreamt of by its author in 1947 – it strikingly depicts the catastrophic results of "scientific" meddling with the natural order of things.'[153] Similarly, Humphries writes that the conjugation of Blodeuwedd in Saunders Lewis 'can be understood as a comment on our twentieth-century experience of science intervening like magic in the process of sexual love.'[154]

The sticky divide between 'adult rationality' and 'mythical, nonhuman' is aligned with the perceived concept that situated knowledges are the preserve of human adults.[155] This divide closely mirrors an early medieval belief that the main difference between humans and animals is the nonhuman's lack of reason.[156] Human experience is the only experience that counts: Bloduewedd's previous life as vegetation equals a childlike 'innocence' once she has transformed.[157] This is perhaps one of the main reasons why the concept of the nonhuman is so appealing to the re-imaginings corpus: it is not seen as something that needs to be grappled with, it is something that can be moulded into any desired shape, always retaining its mythical, infantile character. Why is it that the motifs of childhood, myth and nature are so intertwined in this corpus, and in many other works of mythical re-imaginings ('Celtic' or not)? It is because they are all at once human and nonhuman. They reside

[151] Interestingly, the naming of the magicians as scientists occurs also in literary criticism of the medieval text, see e.g. Sterckx, 'Les Malheurs Conjugaux', p. 229.
[152] Batt, *Blodeuwedd*, p. 6.
[153] Griffiths, 'His Theatre', p. 84.
[154] Humphreys, *Outside Time*, p. 7.
[155] Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges'.
[156] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 4.
[157] For a discussion of the child and the primitive, see Thomson, 'Substitute Communities, Authentic Voices', esp. pp. 260-62.

in perceived intermediate states – before rationality and before adulthood – and they are all able to destabilize what it means to be human. Perhaps Blodeuwedd is so popular because she embodies the desire to be close to the nonhuman and the 'return' to a more innocent, a more childlike state.[158] As Marina Warner writes on the production of anthologies of myths for children in the nineteenth century: 'The childhood of the species – the era of myth and legend – seemed appropriate for the young.'[159] This is perhaps why the *Mabinogi* Effect, the reading of the stories as myths, creates a supremacy of the nonhuman: myths are also seen as belonging to a more innocent, a primordial time; and only by seeing the narratives through the lens of the mythic, can a return to nature be achieved and the nonhuman observed more closely. The close relationship with language, the Welsh language in particular, that the texts in the corpus entertain (as discussed in the previous chapters), emphasizes the oral origins of the *Mabinogi*. This stress on orality mirror's Rousseau's notions of writing as opposed to living; indeed, a return to Nature in the corpus is accompanied by the sound-symbolism of the Welsh tongue.[160] The reactionary themes that we have found present throughout the corpus stem, perhaps, from the link of the *Mabinogi* with children, with primitivism, with a window on a previous age. Yet, we also find these reactionary themes in the adult versions of the corpus. Even though these attempt to 'update' the texts, the link with children conditions even these versions, in their rejection of a children's *Mabinogi*.

Like the use of place-names, Blodeuwedd's story has both been used to attempt to 'update' the *Mabinogi* on the one hand, by aligning it with scientific progress and on the other hand, to link the story with an imagined, mythical past as in

[158] See Chapter One, 'Otherworldly Wales-Innocent Wales'.
[159] Warner, *Managing Monsters*, p. 38.
[160] On Rousseau and writing, see Thomson, 'Substitute Communities, Authentic Voices: the Organic Writing of the Child', pp. 253-57. Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley, see esp. pp. 134-55.

Garner's *The Owl Service*. The ease with which the *Mabinogi* narratives can be used for directly opposing modes of thought illuminates why these stories are so widely adapted. As set out in the introduction, they are readily mouldable into any desired shape, retaining even then a kind of authenticity through their imagined origins in a mystical, unknowable past. The chapters have shown that *Mabinogi* has never been static; it has been de-politicized by divorcing it from its geography and politicized by concentrating on peopled towns and cities. In the same way, the character of Blodeuwedd is fashioned into an international mythical persona, while she has also been re-imagined into an emblematic figure who stands for Wales itself. Indeed, this moveable quality, which the *Mabinogi* entertains in the corpus, can be seen in the approaches to the figure of Blodeuwedd as at once a mythical figure and scientific automaton.

Throughout the chapters of this thesis the consequences of the *Mabinogi* Effect, the regarding of the *Mabinogi* narratives as myths, has been analysed, revealing the centrality of the nonhuman in the corpus of re-imaginings. This nonhuman is exemplified by the figure of Blodeuwedd, an entity at once desired and feared. Future re-imaginings will continue the narrative of the indefinable nonhuman standing at the centre of the corpus. This corpus serves not only as a mirror on the re-fashioning of a set of four medieval stories, but also as a reflection on what it means to be human from the nineteenth century to today and how contemporary cultural trends react with a medieval courtly narrative.

Conclusion: Consequences of the *Mabinogi* Myth

This thesis has, for the first time, examined the body of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings in one definable corpus. In contrast to earlier studies in which the texts were restricted to certain genres (fantasy texts, children's literature) or to a language (texts in English not Welsh), this study has set up a corpus with texts from eight different genres and in both English and Welsh, and can thereby show how wide-reaching the corpus of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings is. While keeping the overarching corpus in mind, this thesis has selected specific texts to focus on. The individual texts were chosen for their contrasting involvement with, and influence on, the *Mabinogi* myth, in order to showcase a variety of responses to the *Mabinogi* narratives. This means that this study has been able to compare and contrast different *Mabinogi* versions written in both English and Welsh, and been able to draw out the development and dialogue between these texts.

Previous studies on *Mabinogi* re-imaginings have consistently worked from the premise that the Four Branches are myths, part of a mythology, or remnants of myths.[1] Their starting point has thus not been the medieval texts themselves but evolved out of the midst of the mythologization which surrounds the *Mabinogi* in popular culture. As has been shown in this thesis, approaching the *Mabinogi* as a mythical text, with definitions varying of what that means from writer to writer, has a crucial bearing on the kind of version that is created. Indeed, the act of re-imagining itself is an act of mythologization. It marks a text as part of a continuum, part of a cultural moment, of a dialogue of existing narratives and in contributing to this

[1] See e.g., Sullivan, *Welsh Celtic Myth*, p. 78.

dialogue, the text becomes more mythic. Examining this mythologization reveals what motivations and ideologies lie behind the creations of the texts in the corpus which has been the subject of this thesis. This shift in perspective, investigating the process of mythologization itself, has allowed for a deeper understanding both of the medieval and of the later versions.

We can conclude, that next to numerous divergent impulses which differ from re-imagining to re-imagining and which were discussed in the chapters, there are two overarching and directly opposing trends which are visible in the corpus: first, the desire to establish and propagate a national Welsh body of myths; and second, to facilitate the appropriation of the stories outside of Welsh literary culture. This is the *Mabinogi* Effect: the consequences of the mythologization of the *Mabinogi*. The particular nonhuman fashioned in each version serves to create the specific myth of the *Mabinogi*.

The analysis of the *Mabinogi* Effect offers an alternative reading to the long-held view of the *Mabinogi* as a work delivering deep human morals. Sioned Davies for example writes that 'it is probably the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* that convey most effectively the appropriate moral behaviour that is essential for a society to survive.'[2] This emphasis on human behaviour has often been listed as the reason for the popularity of the tales both in the academic world as in the literary.[3] Yet, this thesis has shown that the nonhuman plays a fundamental function in the establishing of the popularity of and fascination with the *Mabinogi*.

The *Mabinogi* myth is a very specific kind of myth – one that has been created, upheld and encouraged by generations of re-imaginings for these two very precise purposes. It is a myth which is highly political, even though individual texts

[2] Davies, '"He was the best teller of tales in the world"', p. 26.
[3] See Chapter One, p. 95.

shy away from specific socio-cultural contexts. It is a myth that is sometimes fought in the corpus, as seen in the Seren versions published in the twenty-first century. They energetically counter the mythic image of the *Mabinogi* created within the corpus. This has the effect, however, both of continuing the myth by validating the previous versions, and of contributing to the idea of the myth itself. Indeed, these versions, in all their valiant efforts to 'update' the narratives, still play into many of the mythologizations which have been created by previous versions.

The popularity of certain texts – by Garner [YA2], Alexander [YA3], Cooper [Ya4], Nimmo [YA5] – has in itself shaped the *Mabinogi* myth. Due to the barrier of texts written in the Welsh language, the *Mabinogi* retains its strangeness, its view from the outside. In reverse, the strangeness of the *Mabinogi* itself has led, early on, to its popularity among non-Welsh writers and Welsh writers living outside Wales, such as Lanier [YA1], Morris [N1, N2] and Walton [N3], who create versions which distance the narratives from their medieval courtly source. Children's illustrated versions were consistent throughout the corpus, indicating, as has been discussed, the tendency to link the *Mabinogi* with children. With the popular fantasy versions above also young adult versions, the myth of the *Mabinogi* is shaped by genre as much as it is by the texts themselves, and has firmly become part of children's literature. The late wave of poetry beginning in the 1980s which overwhelmingly chronicled the female characters from the *Mabinogi*, no doubt under the influence of late twentieth-century feminism, was strengthened by the fact that earlier texts – such as those by Walton and Garner – had already positioned female characters in places of prominence, and that this trend was mirrored within academic inquiry. Thus the dialogue of the corpus reveals itself.

As the chapters of this thesis have moved, deliberately, through the different elements of the *Mabinogi* Effect, they have shown that the *Mabinogi* myth is envisioned as a fragmented myth, allowing authors to pick and choose places, plots and characters and re-distribute and re-assemble them in various ways. It is understood to be a myth which originated in a pre-Christian, pre-medieval, idealized pastoral environment, and in which characters are often remnants of divinities. This hypothesis sanctions the application of varying beliefs, such as the relegation of woman to Nature as discussed in Chapter Three. It is thought to be a myth which has been transmitted orally from the murky past of pre-history and from which mythic truths can be uncovered. Finally, it is a myth which is imagined to belong to the nonhuman realm, manifested in a mythical, primordial Wales.

The first chapter demonstrated that the otherworld construct has been employed in many re-imaginings to tell a specific version, be that an origin story in Walton's *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* (1936, 1970-4) [N3], a 'Celtic' otherworld in Ellis and Holbrook's operatic play 'Bronwen' [D2] or a rejection of the concept of a traditional otherworld in the Seren versions, such as Lloyd Jones' *See How They Run* (2012) [Na2-5]. The otherworld is linked with the notion of an otherworldly Wales, and has become so intertwined with the idea of the *Mabinogi* in the corpus, that those versions which wish to 'update' the narratives, create very diverse otherworlds, or none at all. The otherworld also functions to contain the narratives in an imaginary and nonhuman text world, especially in texts by non-Welsh writers, such as Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles* (1964-8), [YA3], thus allowing for an appropriation of the stories outside of Wales.

The second chapter revealed that the use of place-names in versions such as those Morris's *The Fates* (1914) and *The Book of the Three Dragons* (1930) [N1, N2], Cooper's *The Grey King* (1975) [YA4] and Lanier's *The Boy's Mabinogion* (1881) [YA1] make use of these names and the fabricated strangeness of the Welsh language, to construct a nonhuman mythworld. As standalone texts, the place-names dislocate the Four Branches from the medieval scribe and aid the fragmentation and mythologization of the *Mabinogi*. The discarding of these place-names in some Welsh versions, such as Owen Sheers' *White Ravens* (2009) [Na2] and Russel Celyn Jones' *The White Wave* (2009) [Na3] attempts to disassociate their texts from this archaic symbolism. This chapter shows that many authors, both non-Welsh and Welsh, see the Welsh language as a tongue which connects the speaker to a fabricated past and to the nonhuman landscape of Wales. For non-Welsh writers this allows them to appropriate the language and the stories as part of their own heritage, while for Welsh authors the 'national' importance of the tales is thus heightened.

Beginning with the figure of Branwen and her relationship with a starling, the third chapter showed how the perfunctory connection between the human and animal in the medieval version is transformed into a symbol for the oral transmission of the *Mabinogi*, and for the connection to the nonhuman the Welsh language affords, in texts such as 'Branwen's Songs' by Gillian Clarke (1993), *Branwen a Bendigeidfran* by Meinir Wyn Edwards (2010), and a theatre production by the *West Glamorgan Youth Theatre and Dance Company* (1996). The analysis of the character of Rhiannon demonstrated how the medieval queen is converted into the divinity of Nature personified in versions such as Morris' *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914), and Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame* (2012), thus allowing the narrative to be placed into a wider mythical framework. The reading of the character of Lleu revealed how his

human to nonhuman transformation was changed from instant change to laboured metamorphosis in texts such as *Y Mabinogi* by Mike Collins (2002) and Conran's 'Blodeuwedd' (1988), exposing the anxiety of human animality. Finally, the chapter discussed Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's human to animal transformations and sex changes, revealing that the few texts which include this episode –Ellis' 'The Children of Don' (1922) and Gwyneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree* (2010) among others – do so within the normative coupling of nature and heterosexuality.

Chapter Four showed how Blodeuwedd's vegetal origins, which are not further remarked upon in the medieval version, are re-imagined so that she becomes the embodiment of Wales itself in Saunders Lewis' 'Blodeuwedd' (1923-4, 1948); her lack of a childhood and social connections are re-fashioned as the reason for her faithlessness in verse by Feaver (2006) and Conran (1983) among others; while in Garner's *The Owl Service* (1962) her nonhuman origins result in the possession of the female human characters. In contrast to the chaste creation in the medieval text, the re-imagining of Blodeuwedd effects the creation of a character whose sexuality stands at the forefront of many versions – such as Batt's *Blodeuwedd* (2001), Gwyneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree* (2010) or Mike Collins' *Y Mabinogi* (2002), creating a link between flowers and sexuality, which, in the wider context of all four chapters, mirrors the anxiety and fascination of the nonhuman in the human.

Blodeuwedd is sometimes re-imagined a national Welsh figure and at other times written as a universal, supernatural persona. The widespread nature of her appeal, for both Welsh and non-Welsh writers is mirrored in the centrality of the nonhuman in the corpus as a whole.

The *Mabinogi* Effect, the consequences of approaching the narratives as myth with the nonhuman at its centre, can be summed up as follows: it enables the transformation of the nonhuman landscape into a collective mythscape; and it allows for a divorce from the geography of Wales, for the creation of a linguistic link to the nonhuman, for characters which transcend the human-nonhuman boundary, and for the embodiment of Wales itself in a character. In short, it enables both a nationalization and de-nationalization, both a politicization and de-politicization of the *Mabinogi* narratives, thus creating texts which are national Welsh stories, and at the same time also international myths.

The mythic in this corpus stands in connection to the nonhuman, is attached to the nonhuman: to the otherworldly, supernatural creature, the remote place, the talking bird and the vegetal automaton. The nonhuman is shown to take on many forms: it can be natural, supernatural, artificial, often a hybrid of these, and always preserving its roots in an idealized Romantic-pastoral. Even texts which reject a pastoral landscape, the counter-pastoral, the machine in the garden, link back to the pastoral through other media. Thus, a text such as *The Ninth Wave* (2009) [Na3] makes use of garden imagery to reject the postmodern, while *See How They Run* (2012) [Na5] uses the virtual artificial to hold up a mirror to a society which has turned its back on a return to Nature.

The Corpus of the Mabinogi: Looking to the Past

Tracing the texts from Guest's translation in 1848 to today, seven distinct yet overlapping conceptual waves can be identified within the corpus of re-imaginings:

1. The first is that of the Arthurian Romance tradition of the nineteenth century, of which Guest's own translation [S1] is a product. The praise of Arthurian heroes and their values, a common theme in Victorian society, can be seen in Guest's attempt to situate the tales within this corpus, evident in the preface to her edition, in which she encourages her children to follow the values laid out in the stories, and the accompanying illustrations which depict medieval knights resplendent in armour and weaponry.[4] The first to follow Guest and this tradition is the American poet Lanier [YA1], who wrote the second English-language re-imagining after Guest, posthumously published in 1881. Lanier, a Georgian confederate and aspiring poet, published several versions of Arthurian matter. It is striking that the first version after Guest should be written in America, but it is evocative of the mythologization which began through the export of the tales as exotic ware. This wave, running from the 1880s to the 1930s, includes the first fantasy version by Morris [N1], a Welsh writer living in California, a trilogy of plays by Ellis (1922) [D1], which evokes the Macpherson-inspired German Romantics, a music drama by Holbrooke set to Ellis' play [D2], and the longest fantasy tome to date by the American Walton [N3]. Originally entitled *The Virgin and the Swine* (1936), Walton's version of The Fourth Branch was later re-named *The Island of the Mighty*, indicating a collective mythical history of this island.

2. The second wave, lasting from the 1920s to 50s, is one of scholarly interest in a highly politicized environment, with the formation of Plaid Cymru in 1925. Texts such as Saunders Lewis' *Blodeuwedd* (1923-5, 1948) [D3] use images from the *Mabinogi* to embed them into current national trends. His Blodeuwedd can almost be

[4] See Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) for a discussion of chivalric notions in Victorian Britain.

read as a Cathleen Ni Houlihan of the Welsh. For the first time the *Mabinogi* narratives are made use of extensively in Celtic scholarship and literary translations are published on a regular basis. Ifor Williams' authoritative Middle Welsh edition from 1930 [S10] is still the text used in universities today. In 1948 (revised 1974) Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones published a special edition of the Mabinogion in English, titled *The Golden Cockerel Mabinogion* [S12], and in 1949 they issued the version, which until recently, was the translation used most widely in academic contexts. 1948 also saw the first publication of Graves' *The White Goddess* (republished in 1952 and 1961) [S13], which was intended to be a serious work of scholarship but not accepted by academics in the field.[5] It was, however, an important, if not vital influence for many of the fantasists re-fashioning the *Mabinogi* in the second half of the century.

3. These fantasists can be grouped into the third phase of re-imaginings. Written after the Second World War, from the 1960s to 80s, the re-imaginings by Garner [YA2], Alexander [YA3], Cooper [YA4] and Nimmo [YA5] are possibly the most famous internationally, creatively building storyworlds based on the Four Branches.[6] Influenced by World War Two, their versions focus on questions of morality, often darkly supernatural events, counteracted by strong human and nonhuman intervention. Following Walton, the *Mabinogi* is here more than anywhere, a myth which holds universal truths. The most defining characteristic of this group is, however, their reliance on Graves in matters of myth and poetic truth. This is the

[5] 'Robert Graves: The White Goddess', review in *Notes and Queries*, 193.20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 439-440, see esp. the second to last paragraph of scathing criticism of Graves' lack of Celtic scholarship. See also Glyn E. Daniel's review in which he states: 'Its unscholarly methods will discredit any virtue its main thesis may have'. Daniel, 'Prehistory and Poetic Myth', *The Spectator*, (June 4 1948), 680.

[6] On storyworlds, see David Herman, 'Storyworld', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), pp. 569-70.

period where the *Mabinogi* really breaks through into the popular canon, riding the wave of the resurgence in fantasy literature after Tolkien. In a review of Garner's *The Owl Service* in the Spectator the novel is deemed 'brillianty successful' in 'some ways', but it is also criticised for being 'over-literal' in its connection with the *Mabinogi*.[7]

4. Partially concurrent with the fantasists, starting in the 1970s and lasting until the early twenty-first century, a second wave of scholarly interest in the *Mabinogi* is evident. This time the translations are geared towards a more popular audience, possibly reflecting the rising interest in the medieval stories through the publications of the fantasy versions and the general rise in interest in the medieval and the mythic. Translations are published by Gantz (1976) [S17] and Ford (1977) [S18], and Lee illustrates a version of Guest's edition in 2000 [C18]. More recently the storyteller Morden published his *Tree of Leaf and Flame* in 2012 [C23] and Knill self-published *The Mabinogion Brought to Life* in 2013 [S33].

5. Beginning in the 1980s two waves of re-imaginings appear simultaneously: children's illustrated editions, especially Welsh language versions, as well as poetry and plays by mostly Welsh writers (see wave 6). Like the wave of fantasy versions, the children's illustrated editions play heavily on the mythic status of the tales, often combining La Tène symbols with pre-medieval settings. There is Gwyn Thomas' *Y Mabinogi* (1984) [C10], also brought out with Crossley-Holland in the same year as *Tales from the Mabinogion*, both illustrated by Margaret Jones; Rhiannon Ifans' *Mabinogi'r Plant* (1986) [C12] and *Hud y Mabinogi* (1988) [C15], also published in

[7] David Wade, 'Hints of discord', *Spectator*, 219. 7271 (Nov 3 1967), 542.

English as *The Magic of the Mabinogion*, illustrated by Helen Holmes. Haydn Middleton's *Island of the Mighty* [C13] and *Son of Two Worlds* [C14] are published in 1987, and in 1997 Tegwyn Jones' *Stori Branwen* [C16], illustrated by Jac Jones appears, also published by Nimmo in English. The most recent children's version, sumptuously illustrated by Valériane Leblond, is Siân Lewis' *Pedair Ceinc Y Mabinogi* (2015) [C24], also published in English in the same year.

6. The stage concurrent with stage 5 is a group of poems and plays published from the 1980s onwards until today, written almost exclusively by Welsh writers, mostly in English. In 1987 Llewellyn-Williams publishes her collection *The Tree Calendar*, which includes 'The Song of Blodeuwedd on a May Morning' [P5]. Conran's 'Blodeuwedd' is published in (1983) 1988 [P6], as well as his *Branwen and other Dance Dramas and Plays* (1984-7; 1989) [D6]. Clarke's 'Blodeuwedd' is published in *Collected Poems* (1985) [P4] and her *The King of Britain's Daughter* appears in 1993 [P7]. Feaver's *The Book of Blood* (2006) includes 'Blodeuwedd' [P8], and Anna Lewis' *Other Harbours* contains the poem 'The Wash-house' (2012) [P9]. These texts focus overwhelmingly on the female characters of the *Mabinogi*, and often attempt to rewrite the tales from their perspectives. Characters from the Four Branches, as well as from the Mabinogion, also permeate Welsh poetry outside of the re-imaginings proper in this period. An example for this is the poem 'Marsh-marigolds: *Caltha palustris*, Aberdaron (for Tony Conran)' by Peter Gruffydd.[8]

7. The final stage (until now) of *Mabinogi* re-imaginings consists of realist, magic realist and dystopian texts. Starting in the early 2000s, exclusively written by Welsh

[8] Gruffydd, 'Marsh-marigolds: *Caltha palustris*, Aberdaron (for Tony Conran)', in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, pp. 20-22.

authors in English, these texts re-fashion the medieval stories in a new, often harsh, light. 'Following the granting of limited political powers to Wales in 1999, a renewed sense of nationhood and the potential for further independence from the Westminster government are gradually reconfiguring attitudes and policies regarding cultural life in Wales.' [9]At the centre of this wave are the novellas commissioned by the Welsh publisher Seren for their *New Stories from the Mabinogion* series. The Four Branches are re-imagined by Owen Sheers (2009) [Na2], Russel Celyn Jones (2009) [Na3], Gwyneth Lewis (2010) [Na4] and Lloyd Jones (2012) [Na5]. The emphasis on these versions is either a modern, mundane Wales or a dystopian future. Not part of the Seren series, but similarly a 'modern' revamp, is Batt's *Blodeuwedd* from 2001 [Na1]. A year later sees Mike Collins' graphic novel *Y Mabinogi* [G1] appear, together with the S4C (*Sianel Pedwar Cymru*) film of the same title, a collaboration with Collins' graphic novel.

These seven phases show the development of the corpus, from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century versions written in the wake of the Arthurian Romance revival, to the twenty-first century dystopian texts. They demonstrate how the re-imaginings have been influenced by the rise of specific genres, as well as academic interests in each period. The fantasy versions of the 1960s to 80s, for example, clearly follow in the footsteps of the fantasy resurgence inspired by Tolkien. These influences are strong enough to make these distinct phases easily discernible. The *Mabinogi* is re-imagined anew for each generation, each readership, in a different genre, a different style. The enduring appeal of the Four Branches is such that they can be adapted to any genre, their perceived

[9] Fulton, 'Matthew Arnold and the Canon of Medieval Welsh Literature', p. 224.

fragmentation allowing for the texts to fit any mould. The corpus as a whole has reacted to the cultural trends of the last 180 years or so. Yet, the genre of myth into which the Four Branches have been stoically pressed, and the constant look into the past, which pervades the corpus, have largely resulted in texts for which any socio-political environment serves mostly as the background to the mythic narratives. Situated knowledges are created through the 'Celtic' corpus and since this is a construct shaped out of the perceptions with which the writers approach the *Mabinogi* myth, the situated knowledges are fabricated too.[10] Thus there is a constant anxiety around the historic-social environments of the re-imaginings and the placement of the myth at the centre of the narratives. This tension is one reason for the prominence of the nonhuman in the corpus. The use of the nonhuman allows for the creation of both a national Welsh myth as well as an universal 'Celtic' myth.

The corpus is not without overtly political texts, of course, such as Conran's *Branwen* (1984-7) [D6], in which Branwen and her brothers are Welsh revolutionaries, and *Branwen a Bendigeidfran* by Meinir Wyn Edwards (2010) [C20], in which Branwen teaches the starling Welsh, symbolizing the oppressed fate of the language. Saunders Lewis' *Blodeuwedd* (1923-25, 1948) [D3] has already been mentioned as a possible Cathleen Ni Houlihan of the Welsh, and Gywneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree* (2010) [Na4] can be read as an environmental novella. Yet, these tales raise what are ultimately existential questions; they do not chronicle specific political situations. In the same way that many fantasy texts grapple with questions of good and evil, the *Mabinogi* corpus contends with the questions of the Welsh. The centrality of existential subjects does not imply a diminishing of the

[10] Situated Knowledges is a term coined by Donna Haraway. See Haraway, 'Situtated Knowledges.

political relevance of the corpus; it means that it has become the Matter of the Welsh. As such, it explains (but does not excuse) the sometimes shockingly uncritical portrayal of myth. While differing genres mirror literary and social trends – nineteenth-century Arthuriana, post-Tolkien, post-WWII fantasy, the late twentieth-century Welsh poetry revival, early twenty-first century dystopias – the versions constantly re-align themselves with their concept of the *Mabinogi* myth. The single text to be situated within a very specific socio-political period is Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2], in which the ownership of English holiday homes in rural Welsh communities serves as the background to the story of the Fourth Branch. This is also an example, however, in which the tensions between the situated knowledges come to a climax: the cyclical aspect of the myth jarring (deliberately) with the precise situatedness of the 1960s setting. In the corpus of re-imaginings, however, this contemporary critique serves in the first instance to demonstrate the relevance of the 'myth' in contemporary society. The myths are not employed to showcase pressing societal issues – it is rather the other way round. Societal issues and contemporary politics provide a relevant backdrop to the mythic narratives. Correspondingly, Owen Sheers' novella *White Ravens* (2009) [Na2] demonstrates that the myth of Branwen cannot be escaped, even in the aftermath of World War Two. In these texts, the mythic shapes lives with no regard to current socio-political situations.

As the *Mabinogi* myth has come to constitute the Matter of Wales for Welsh authors and poets, Blodeuwedd has become the Welsh Cathleen and Bendigeidfran the King of the Britons. An example of this mythologization of the characters outside of the corpus can be found in a description of Conran by Menna Elfyn:

> Perhaps the time will come when Welsh-language poetry goes out into the world and declares its freedom; perhaps the richness of English writing in Wales, alongside her, will also claim recognition. In such a moment, Tony Conran will be seen as the Bendigeidfran of verse, armed not with a spear but a steely sense of urgency.[11]

Conran himself envisioned Bran as a revolutionary king in his dance play 'Branwen' [D6].[12] The symbolic nature attached to the characters creates their mythic status outside of the re-imaginings and reinforces the *Mabinogi* as the Matter of the Welsh. For the poet Harri Webb, Branwen represents the mother of his country: 'Lady, your land's invaded,' laments the speaker in 'A Crown for Branwen' (1974), speaking of the 'raw soil' in which:

> the crops do not grow
> Here where we man the trench.[13]

Returning to the conception of the *Mabinogi* myth belonging to the realm of the nonhuman, to an idealized Romantic-pastoral Nature, the politics of the state become the politics of the land. Indeed, the Cambridge University Society of Wales is called *Cymdeithas Y Mabinogi*, the Society of the *Mabinogi*. It is a paradox of the corpus that that which it evolves around, the *Mabinogi* stories, at once symbolize Wales and Welshness itself, and at the same time, a kind of universal 'Celticity' which crosses borders into England and the US.

The re-imaginings written by English and American writers have, without doubt, contributed to the *Mabinogi* crafting the Matter of Wales, representing the Welsh branch of 'Celtic' myth. Especially the versions published in the early stages

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[11] Menna Elfyn, 'Working with the Translator', in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Tony Conran*, ed. by Jenkins, pp. 71-76 (p. 76).
[12] Conran, 'Branwen'.
[13] Harri Web, 'A Crown for Branwen', in *A Book of Wales: An Anthology*, selected by Meic Stephens (London: Dent, 1987), pp. 290-91 (ll. 29-32).

of the corpus, not least by Guest herself, which blazed a trail in the possibilities the Four Branches presented, have furthered this view. Although the publisher Seren undoubtedly wished to update the *Mabinogi* with their New Stories of the Mabinogion in the wake of the well-known fantasy versions of the 1960s to 80s, these earlier re-imaginings have in general been well received in Wales. 1976 saw the establishment of the Welsh children's literature *Tir na nÓg* prize, which Cooper won twice for *The Grey King* in 1976 and *Silver on the Tree* in 1978; Nancy Bond for *A String in the Harp* in 1977 and Nimmo for *The Snow Spider* in 1987. More recently, the Welsh writers Tegwyn Jones and Jac Jones won for *Stori Branwen* in 1998 and Daniel Morden for *Tree of Leaf and Flame* in 2013. Their success is proof, if needed, that non-Welsh versions of the *Mabinogi* myth are accepted as part of the Matter of Wales. Even though the postcolonial question looms furtively in discussions of the corpus, as set out in Chapter Two, many Welsh and non-Welsh writers and poets view the *Mabinogi* as part of *Yr Hen Ogledd*, as part of a shared British heritage. Furthermore, the wish to connect to the past through the Welsh language creates a common goal for the writers: in contrast to the priorities of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialism, these writers wish to belong to the 'Celtic' mythical otherworld, thereby arguably ignoring Wales the country.

The Corpus of the Mabinogi: Looking to the Future

In the year 2017 alone four *Mabinogi* versions were published: one academic edition [S35], one translation [S34], and two works of verse [P10, P11]. 2017-2018 also saw a variety of other *Mabinogi* creations: *Cardiau Brwydro: Y Mabinogi* (2017) by cartoonist Huw Aaron (publisher: Atebol) are battlecards based on *Mabinogi* characters; the exhibition 'The Beasts of the Mabinogion' by Helley Powell, is

composed of faux taxidermy, of Rhiannon's horse and the boar hunt among others, shown March – May 2017 at Melin Tregwynt; 'Dreaming the Night Field' (2018) is an adaptation of the Fourth Branch by Adverse Chamber theatre group (assisted by Sioned Davies); and the Touring exhibition 'Petals and Claws' is inspired by *The Owl Service*, shown at MOMA Machynlleth 2018. Does this outburst of *Mabinogi*-related literature and art have something to do with our uncertainty with what it means to be human in the Anthropocene? Certainly, the earlier versions give permission to re-create and re-imagine new *Mabinogi* narratives; and new technology, such as the Virtual Reality shown in Gwyneth Lewis' *The Meat Tree*, provides different outlooks on human and nonhuman life. I would argue that it is no coincidence that an explosion of re-imaginings started to appear in the 1970s to 80s [see appendix 2, 39-59], a time when environmental concerns became more important than ever before. I would also say that the same reason lies behind the large number of very recent versions [appendix 2, 90-94]. It is because, as this thesis has shown, the nonhuman looms large in the corpus of re-imaginings; it is the main draw which lies behind the popularity of the *Mabinogi* texts. Given that environmental concerns are (or should be) at the forefront of global politics, and that we live now in an age called the Anthropocene, in which technology has already challenged our notions of what it means to be human, I am certain that the *Mabinogi* will continue to be re-imagined in years to come: re-imagined as a way to look to an imaginary pastoral past, and as a way to understand what it means to be both human and nonhuman in the uncertain future of humanity.

Appendix I: Thematic Compendium of Re-imaginings

This is a thematic compendium of the re-imaginings of the Four Branches, including editions used for educational purposes. As set out in the introduction, not all of these texts are covered to the same extent in this thesis, for the simple reason that this study focuses on those which have played the most prominent roles in the mythologization of the *Mabinogi*, the process of which is the topic of this study. There are numerous collections of 'Celtic' myths which include some of the *Mabinogi* narratives, but these have not been included in this study. The emphasis lies on the deliberate re-fashioning of the tales: that is the essential criteria for inclusion here.
Some versions are outlined in more detail than others owing to their deviation from the plot lines of the Four Branches and to their more extensive treatment in this study.

The Medieval Version

B1. *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*
Existing mainly in two manuscripts, as set out in the introduction, the MSS texts of the medieval *Mabinogi* are similar enough to speak of a single group of narratives. They consist of Four Branches: One, in which Pwyll meets Arawn, the king of the 'otherworld'; Pwyll meets his future wife Rhiannon, they have a child Pryderi who is stolen from them. Rhiannon is accused of murdering her own child, but Pryderi is found at the end of the story and reunited with his parents.

B2. Two, in which Branwen is married to Matholwch, the King of Ireland, but because her half-brother Efinisien was not consulted, he insults Matholwch, who is then given a wondrous cauldron by Bendigeidfran, Branwen's other brother. A year after their marriage and after the birth of their son, the Irish court demands punishment for Efnisien's actions and Branwen is banished to the kitchen. Bendigeidfran and his men come to rescue her and a battle begins which nearly wipes out both countries. Efnisien kills Branwen's son. Branwen dies of a broken heart.

B3. Three, in which Manawydan, Pyderi, Rhiannon and Cygfa encounter a magical mist which enchants Dyfed so that they are alone in the kingdom. They travel to England to find work but are not made welcome, and so return to Dyfed where Manwydan works the fields, and Rhiannon and Pryderi disappear in a magical fortress. Through his wit, Manawydan uncovers the magician who is causing all this chaos, and peace and prosperity is returned to Dyfed.

B4. Four, in which Gilfaethwy lusts after Goewin who is under the protection of Math. Gilfaethwy and his brother Gwydion create a war to lure Math away, and Gilfaethwy rapes Goewin. As punishment, Math turns the brothers into animals of the forest, where they mate with each other and produce offspring. Math needs a new virgin and tests Aranrhod but she gives birth during the test, and

later curses her son Lleu whom Gwydion is looking after. One of the curses is that Lleu cannot have a wife from this earth, so Math and Gwyion create Blodeuwedd from flowers. She cheats on Lleu with Gronw and they plot to kill Lleu. Lleu however turns into an eagle instead of dying. Gwydion transforms Blodeuwedd into an owl as punishment and helps Lleu return to human form, who then kills Gronw.

Scholarly Editions & Verbatim Versions

These versions are included here for reasons of completeness, apart from Charlotte Guest's, Ifor Williams', and Sioned Davies' versions, most of the volumes in this category are only marginally included in this study.

S1. Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion* (1838-45)
The version which catapulted the Mabinogion stories into the popular imagination. Based on the Red Book, it situates the stories into the Arthurian Romance tradition of the nineteenth century and includes *Hanes Taliesin*, which does not appear in either the Red or the White Book.

S2. Isaac Foulkes, *Y Mabinogion Cymreig* (1880)
The first Welsh language edition, subtitled as *Chwedlau Rhamantus Yr Hen Gymry* ('Romantic Tales of the Ancient Welsh'). Foulkes includes the same tales as Guest.

S3. Gwenogvryn Evans and John Rhys, *The Text of the Mabinogion* (1887)
This version is the second English-language translation after Guest [S1] and also based on the Red Book.

S4. Joseph Loth, *Les Mabinogion* (1889; reprinted and revised 1913)
The first complete French translation, with extensive footnotes, and based initially only on the Red Book, was later republished in 1913 to encompass the version of the *Mabinogi* found in the White Book as shown in Evans, *The White Book Mabinogion* (1907) [S6]. An influencial translation mentioned by several later academic versions [S8], [S9], [S10].

S5. Alfred Nutt, *The Mabinogion*, transl. by lady C. Guest, with notes by A. Nutt (1902)
An edition of Guest's translation edited by Nutt and printed in New York. The Four Branches are labelled as 'mythology of ancient Britain'.

S6. Gwenogvryn Evans, *The White Book Mabinogion* (1907)
This translation by Evans is based solely on the White Book. It includes all of the eleven Mabinogion texts.

S7. Martin Buber, *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (Leipzig, 1914)

The first German translation of the Four Branches, which names Loth's edition [S4] as the most reliable and complete version in contrast to Guest's [S1].

S8. Ludwig Mühlhausen, *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (1925, a second edition was brought out in 1988 with notes and additions by Stefan Zimmer)
Edited by Mühlhausen, it is the first German edition in Middle Welsh with German notes consisting of the Four Branches with a glossary and notes on personal and place-names. It is aimed at students of Middle Welsh, and does not consist of further commentary on the text for the reason, as the introduction states, that Loth's 1913 version [S4] fulfills this purpose. Mühlhausen's text is based on the Red Book with notes on the variations of the White Book und Peniarth 6.

S9. Thomas Peter Ellis and John Lloyd, *The Mabinogion* (1929)
A two volume English-language translation encompassing all eleven tales. Loth's *Les Mabinogion* (1913) [S4] is mentioned as the most acceptable translation, which they are indepted to. This translation is based on Gwenogvryn Evan's 1887 and 1907 editions [S3 and S6], and its aim is to encompass the versions found in both the Red and White books.

S10. Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* (1930)
The Middle Welsh version with extensive notes which is, to this day, the standard text used when discussing the *Mabinogi*.

S11. T.H. Parry Williams, *Pedair Cainc Y Mabinogi* (1937)
An edition similar to those by Thomson and Thomson [S14; S15], this version is aimed at Welsh-speaking readers. It sets the *Mabinogi* up as ancient tales with roots in mythology. The text is based on Ifor Williams 1930 [S10] edition of the White Book.

S12. Gwyn Jones, Thomas Jones*, The Golden Cockerel Mabinogion* (1948, rev. 1974)
This translation is based predominately on the White Book, but makes use of all MSS sources for reasons of completeness. It was the standard university text until the publication of Sioned Davies' 2007 translation [S31]. It includes all eleven Mabinogion tales. Illustrated by Dorothea Braby in the style of La Tène Art with elaborate spirals, figures carrying swords, Celtic knots and stylised human figures, it clearly alludes to the illuminated manuscript tradition. It also includes a map of Wales and Ireland, showing places named in the stories. Several editions of this version have been published since: *The Mabinogion* (1949), and an illustrated edition in 1948 (1976).

S13. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (1948, 1952, 1961)
Conceived as a scholarly work, but not accepted by Celtic scholars, this volume includes only the story of the Fourth Branch in chapter seventeen, 'The Lion with the Steady Hand.' Graves calls his version*, The Romance of Llew Llaw Gyffes*. This book is a study of poetic language and myth, based on the notion that the study of myth is imbedded in the imagery of Nature.

S14. R.L. Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* (1957)

Part of the Medieval and Modern Welsh Series, Vol. I and II respectively, these editions aim to open up the text of the *Mabinogi* for modern non-Welsh readers, although some knowledge of Middle Welsh is expected.

S15. D.S Thomson, *Branwen Uerch Lyr* (1961)
See [S14].

S16. Olwen Bowen, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Richard Kennedy (1969)
This translation stays very closely to the narrative sequence of the medieval versions, bar various stylistic embellishments, but it leaves out the Fourth Branch entirely. It is a volume aimed at people with an interest in medieval narratives and myths and legends.

S17. Jeffrey Gantz, *The Mabinogion* (1976)
This translation includes all eleven Mabinogion narratives. It presents the tales as incomplete fragments, in much the same light as Jones and Jones (1948) [S12] and Ford (1977) [S18].

S18. Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (1977)
This scholarly edition, based primarily on the White Book with reference to the Red Book, includes the Four Branches, Lludd and Lleuelys, Culhwch and Olwen, The Tale of Gwion Bach and The Tale of Taliesin. They are presented as remainders of a mythological cycle and the characters based on divinities.

S19. Dafydd Ifans, Rhiannon Ifans, *Y Mabinogion* (Gomer, 1980)
A modern Welsh translation of all eleven Mabinogion tales commissioned by *Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru* (Arts Council of Wales).

S20. Eliès Abeozen, *Pevar Skourr Ar Mabinogi* (Preder, 1980)
Based on the White Book, this is a translation in Breton.

S21. Gabriella Agrati and Maria Letizia Magini, *I Racconti Gallesi del Mabinogion* (Milan, 1982)
The first Italian translation.

S22. Alun Ifans, Bernadette Watts (illustr.), *Pedair Cainc Y Mabinogi I Dysgwyr* (1982)
Not strictly an academic text but a simplified version for Welsh learners with a map showing the places named and vocabulary lists at the ends of chapter.

S23. Jowann Richards, *Peder Skorrenn an Mabinogi* (1988)
A Cornish translation with an English language Introduction.

S24. Pierre-Yves Lambert, *Les Quatre Branches du Mabinogi, et Autres Contes Gallois du Moyen Âge* (1993)
A French edition based on Loth, 1889 [S4], with the aim to update Loth's notes and commentary. This is an example for the need to re-analyse the *Mabinogi* based on contemporary academic debate. Loth's reading relied too much on the mythological aspects, according to Lambert, while his own 1993 edition looks

to the social history of the Middle Ages, but does not discount mythological themes.

S25. Elżbieta Nogieć and Andrzej Nowak, *Mabinogion* (Kraków, Oficyna Literacka, 1997)
A Polish translation which comprises of Manawydan, Culhwch and Olwen, and Owein.

S26. Bernhard Maier, *Das Sagenbuch der Walisischen Kelten: Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (Munich, 1999)
The second German translation from the Middle Welsh with extensive notes, published for the 150th anniversary of Guest's first translation.

S27. Patrick K. Ford, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (1999)
Based on the edition by J. Gwenogvryn Evans [S3], with reference to Ifor Williams' 1930 edition [S10], this is aimed at students of Middle Welsh and complements the earlier versions by R.L. Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* (1957) [S14] and by D.S. Thomson, *Branwen Uerch Lyr* (1961) [S15].

S28. Patrick K. Ford, *Manawydan Uab Llyr* (2000)
Based on the edition of the White Book by J. Gwenogvryn Evans [S3], like his *Math* [S27] this is a teaching edition.

S29. Ian Hughes, *Math uab Mathonwy* (Aberystwyth, 2000; also published in 2013 for non-Welsh speakers)
In his introduction Hughes writes that it is time for a new Welsh edition of the Four Branches after Ifor Williams 1930 [S10], and R.L. Thomson's *Pwyll* (1957) [S14] and D.S. Thomson's *Branwen* (1961) [S15].

S30. John K. Bollard and Anthony Griffiths, *The Mabinogi: Legends and Landscapes of Wales* (2006)
A photographic version of the Four Branches with simplified texts, showing the places named in the narratives.

S31. Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007)
The translation which since its publication is used widely at universities. Its emphasis lies in the oral performance character of the texts.

S32. Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr* (Cardiff, 2007)
Following on from his *Math uab Mathonwy* (2000) [S29], this edition of the Third Branch is aimed at a Welsh-speaking academic audience.

S33. Stanley Knill, *The Mabinogion Brought To Life* (2013)
A self-published version, which attempts to 'modernize' the tales, updating the language and style of the eleven Mabinogion stories.

S34. Matthieu Boyd and Stacie Lents, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (2017)
This translation was commissioned by Broadview Press, with the purpose to provide an accessible version for undergraduate readers in North America. The unusual feature of this version is that the personal names are translated, so that

Pwyll becomes ‘Sage’. This version has several appendixes which include texts from The Welsh Laws, the Welsh Triads, Gerald of Wales’ Description of Wales, and images from Peniarth MS 28 to provide context to the *Mabinogi*.

S35. Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran uab Llyr* (2017)
A volume with extensive notes and introduction, similar to the earlier versions of the first and second branch by Thomson (1957) and Thomson (1961) [S14, S15]. This is the third edition by Hughes, see [S29; S32], only the First Branch has not yet been brought out.

Twentieth-Century Novels

N1. Kenneth Morris, *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914)
The second earliest novel, after Lanier’s *The Boy’s Mabinogion* [YA1], which re-imagines the *Mabinogi* / Mabinogion, *The Fates* is a sprawling, dense version which concentrates on the divine aspects of the characters, mix and matching protagonists from the various eleven tales. It loosely follows the plot of the Branches, extensively expanding on the plots lines, but concentrating mainly on the adventures of Pwyll, Pryderi and Rhiannon.

N2. Kenneth Morris, *The Book of the Three Dragons* (1930)
The Book of the Three Dragons, which was written at the same time as *The Fates* [N1], deviates more extensively from the plot of the Branches and was edited severely by Morris, after the poor reception of *The Fates*. Therefore, its style, while still excessive, is far more accessible than the earlier novel.

N3. Evangeline Walton, *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* (1936, 1964-74),
The weightiest tome in the corpus to date, this fantasy version in four books extensively re-imagines and embroiders the Four Branches. It consists of (in the order of the Four Branches): *Prince of Annwn* (1974), *The Children of Llyr* (1971), *The Song of Rhiannon* (1972) and *The Island of the Mighty* (1936, 1964), whose plots overlap broadly with that of the *Mabinogi*, but does follow the protagonists of the Fourth Branch.

N4. Roscoe Howells, *Rhiannon: A Welsh Island Story* (1987)
Set on the island of Scalmey, the novel is part pseudo-history, reaching from the Stone Age to the twentieth century, part romance. The story of Rhiannon (who is descended from Rigantona) is presented as a legend, which has been handed down through generations of the family through a family heirloom, a bronze bracelet.

Young Adult Novels

YA1. Sidney Lanier, *The Boy’s Mabinogion* (1881)
This second English-language version after Guest [S1] leans so heavily on her translation, that it is, in effect, a reproduction.

YA2. Alan Garner, *The Owl Service* (1967)
A coming-of-age story set in the Welsh mountains, a few hours from Aberystwyth, in which the ownership of English holiday homes in rural Welsh communities serves as the background to the story of the Fourth Branch. Three teenagers, Alison, her brother Roger and Welsh boy Gwyn, are affected by the 'myth' of the Fourth Branch, especially by the figure of Blodeuwedd.

YA3. Lloyd Alexander, *The Chronicles of Prydain*, (1964-8)
A five-book fantasy series, consisting of *The Book of Three* (1964), *The Black Cauldron* (1965), *The Castle of Llyr* (1966), Taran Wanderer (1967), *The High King* (1968), which follows the young assistant pig-keeper Taran on his quest to find answers to his unknown heritage. Based only very loosely on the *Mabinogi*/Mabinogion, it is set in a self-contained fantasy world called Prydain, whose geography is vaguely based on Wales.

YA4. Susan Cooper, *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (1965-77)
A five-book fantasy series, consisting of *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), *The Dark is Rising* (1973), *Greenwitch* (1974), *The Grey King* (1975), *Silver on the Tree* (1977), in which the forces of the Light and the Dark play out their battle for power and within which a group of young children and teenagers play various roles. Like Alexander [YA3], the connection to the *Mabinogi* is tenuous, but it has been establish within the corpus in the popular imagination.

YA5. Jenny Nimmo, *The Snow Spider Trilogy* (1986-9)
A trilogy of fantasy books set in a Welsh valley, consisting of *The Snow Spider* (1986), *Emlyn's Moon* (1987), *The Chestnut Soldier* (1989), in which mythical elements in the shape of characters from the Four Branches involve themselves in the lives of several families. One of the main characters, Gwyn, is the descendant of Gwydion from the Fourth Branch and has also inherited his magic powers.

Graphic Novel

G1. Mike Collins, *Y Mabinogi* (2002)
The only graphic novel in the corpus, the Welsh-language *Y Mabinogi* was created from film stills of the animated film of the same name, which aired in 2002 and was directed by Derek W. Heyes for S4C (*Sianel Pedwar Cymru*). It begins in the sea near the island of Gwales, from which three teenagers enter the secondary world of the *Mabinogi* and are recast into the roles of Rhiannon, Lleu and Pwyll. From there it follows the plot of the Four Branches faithfully.

Novellas by Welsh Writers

Na1. Ogmore Batt, *Blodeuwedd* (2001)
Envisioned as a pre-Christian, pre-Roman narrative, its emphasis lies in Blodeuwedd's perceived eroticism. The mythic landscape is stressed through

the inclusion of a list of places with their Ordnance Survey coordinates. Batt uses Jones and Jones [S12] as his source material.

Na2. Owen Sheers, *White Ravens* (2009)
Commissioned by Seren Books as part of their *New Stories from the Mabinogion* series, this is a version of the Second Branch and is set in Ireland and Wales during and after World War Two, and follows Matthew O'Connell who, after being wounded in Italy, is sent to Wales to collect six ravens for the Tower of London, and meets Branwen, the sister of the farmer Bendigeidfran who is raising the birds. Sheers uses Davies [S31] as his source material.

Na3. Russel Celyn Jones, *The Ninth Wave* (2009)
Commissioned by Seren Books as part of their *New Stories from the Mabinogion* series, this is a version of the First Branch and is set in a post-oil, dystopian Wales, in which Pwyll is the young, disillusioned lord of a medievalized region.

Na4. Gwyneth Lewis, *The Meat Tree* (2010)
Commissioned by Seren Books as part of their *New Stories from the Mabinogion* series, this is a version of the Fourth Branch and is set in the distant future, and the only two human protagonists, Inspector of Wrecks, Campion, a veteran space traveller and his female Apprentice Nona, are on a mission to discover the history of an ancient spaceship.

Na5. Lloyd Jones, *See How They Run* (2012)
Commissioned by Seren Books as part of their *New Stories from the Mabinogion* series, this is a version of the Third Branch and is set in modern day Wales and Ireland, reworking the story from the perspective of the villain in the medieval version, Llwyd, who conjures up the mist over Dyfed.

Drama

D1. Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, *The Cauldron of Annwn* (1922)
A trilogy comprising of three operatic plays: 'The Children of Don', first performed in 1912 at the London Opera House, 'Dylan', performed at Drury Lane in 1914, and 'Bronwen' at Huddersfield in 1929. All three plays are published together in *The Cauldron of Annwn*. Ellis cites Guest as his first contact with the *Mabinogi* [S1]. The preface cites the belief that the story of Branwen (here named Bronwen) and Dylan are Bronze Age tales based on Pictish culture.

D2. Joseph Holbrooke and Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, *Bronwen: A Music Drama* (1922)
A dual English-German libretto written by Ellis with the music by Holbrooke, this version is split up into three acts and tells the story of Branwen based on Ellis' 'Bronwen' [D1].

D3. Saunders Lewis, 'Blodeuwedd' (1923-25, 1948); also published in translation as 'The Woman Made of Flowers,' by Joseph P. Clancy; adapted for children in Welsh by Robin Llwyd ab Owain, 'Blodeuwedd' (2000)

A Welsh-language play which portrays Blodeuwedd as a Cathleen Ni Houlihan of the Welsh, arising out of Lewis' political inclination, published in a highly political period of Welsh history, shortly before the formation of *Plaid Cymru*.

D4. Saunders Lewis, 'Eisteddfod Bodran' and 'Gan Byll' (1952)
Two comic plays marginally based on the Third and First Branches respectively, composed specially for Garthewin Theatre.

D5. Saunders Lewis, 'Branwen' (1975)
A play marginally based on the Second Branch, written in part as response to Mac Cana's analysis of the myth of sovereignty (1958).[14]

D6. Tony Conran, 'Branwen' (1984-7)
This version is set in, what it calls, two Third World countries: Ancient Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland. Yet the setting includes modern day warfare. Branwen, Bran, Nisien and Efnisien are revolutionaries who have fought their way to power.

D7. West Glamorgan Youth Theatre and Dance Company, 'On the Tongue of a Bird: The Story of Branwen' (1996, 1998)
This version follows the concept of a 'Celtic' tribal people living in Britain after the romans, in 'the Age of Arthur,' which has been transported into a medieval court setting.

D8. Phillip Clayton-Gore, *Masques from the Mabinogi* (2012)
A collection of four plays, each in rhyming and unrhyming stanzas, based on the Four Branches. Clayton-Gore states he came across the *Mabinogi* (abridged) at school, later he read the Everyman (Dent) edition, he further mentions Ifor Williams [S10], Guest [S1], Jones and Jones [S12], Gantz [S17], Ford [S18] as influences.

Poetry

P1. R. Williams Parry, 'Drudwy Branwen' (1952, 1971); published in English as 'Branwen's Starling,' transl. Joseph Clancy (1982)
A poem in four stanzas narrating the journey of the starling as it makes its way from Branwen to Bendigeidfran, immortalizing the story through its song.

P2. Harri Webb, *A Crown for Branwen* (1974)
A collection of English-language poetry (with the exception of one poem in Welsh), also re-issued in 1988 with wood engravings by Yvonne Skargon. One poem 'A Crown for Branwen' references Branwen as an emblematic figure, similar to Ireland's Cathleen, the lady of Wales whose land is threatened. This poem is an example for the way the *Mabinogi*'s characters have become symbols, divorced from the medieval narratives.

[14] Mac Cana, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature'. See Ioan Williams, *Dramâu Saunders Lewis: Y Casgliad Cyflawn Cyfrol*, II (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), pp. 767-768.

P3. George Moor, ‘Moon-Rider’ (1981)
A single poem in a collection entitled *Arianrhod’s Dance*. It portrays Rhiannon a symbol and a divine entity.

P4. Gillian Clarke, ‘Blodeuwedd’, (1985)
A six stanza poem which concentrates on Blodeuwedd’s fate as an outcast from both humans and other birds.

P5. Hilary Llewellyn-Williams, ‘The Song of Blodeuwedd on May Morning’, (1987)
A six stanza poem about Blodeweudd, who is cast as a nature deity, and her bewitching of Gronw.

P6. Tony Conran, ‘Blodeuwedd’ (1983)
A lengthy English-language poem divided up into twenty-one cantos, narrating the story of Blodeuwedd from the awakening of her conscious being to her transformation into an owl. She is portrayed as a human-nonhuman hybrid, her consciousness changing between both.

P7. Gillian Clarke, ‘The King of Britain’s Daughter’ (1993)
This verse narrative is broken up into thirteen cantos which tell the story of Branwen.

P8. Vicki Feaver, ‘Blodeuwedd’ (2006)
A five stanza poem, which concentrates, like Clarke’s version [P7], on Blodeuwedd’s fate as an outcast.

P9. Anna Lewis, ‘Last Light’; ‘The Wash-house’ (2012)
Two poems re-imagining the stories of Arawn’s wife, Teyrnon’s Wife, Goewin, Llwyd’s wife, Aranrhod, and Blodeuwedd.

P10. Matthew Francis, *The Mabinogi* (2017)
The only version which re-imagines the Four Branches in verse in English in their complete form.

P11. Margaret Glynne Lloyd, *Travelling On My Own Errands: Voices of Women from The Mabinogi: Poems* (2017)
A collection of six English-language poems, which, like Lewis’ verse [P9], are written from the perspective of Rhiannon, Branwen, Cigfa, Goewin, Aranrhod and Blodeuwedd. Summaries of the Four Branches are included in an appendix. The beginning of each poem includes an introductory paragraph in both Welsh and English situating the poem within the *Mabinogi* narrative.

Children’s (Illustrated) Editions

C1. J.M. Edwards, *Mabinogion* (1896)
The first Modern Welsh edition for children set in a stylized medieval environment, based on the Red Book.

C2. John Young Evans, *Pryderi Fab Pwyll: A First Welsh Reader* (1914)
Part of the series Oxford Elementary School Books, this volume comprises of the four Branches in simplified form for Welsh learners. They are presented as the story of Pryderi and the characters overall as divinities in origin.

C3. Abel J. Jones and David R. Jones, *Chwedlau Cymru Fu: The Child's Mabinogion* (1920)
A Welsh version for children, which adheres closely to the plots of the Four Branches but divides each narratives up into several sub-plots for easier comprehension.

C4. Padraic Colum, *The Island of the Mighty: Being the Hero Stories of Celtic Britain, Retold from the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Wilfred Jones (1924)
A children's edition presented in the manner of Arthurian hero stories. Colum also wrote re-imaginings of Irish folklore.

C5. Ellen Evans, *Mabinogion I'r Plant*, illustr. by A.M. Gibbs (1924-9)
A Welsh-language children's series, comprising of four slim volumes each for one of the Four Branches, developed particularly to aid with teaching Welsh in schools. The texts closely adhere to the narrative structure of the medieval versions. Black and white illustrations show a medieval setting.

C6. Trevor Williams, *Pwyll Pendefig Dyfed a Branwen Ferch Llyr*, illustr. by Anita Rees (1955)
This version situates the narratives into the High Medieval period. It is structured as a novel-play with storytellers narrating in between the protagonists' speeches.

C7. Gwyn Jones, *Welsh Legends and Folk-Tales* (1955)
A collection for children, including a version of the Four Branches, later republished as *Tales From Wales* in 2001 (both by Oxford University Press).

C8. Trevor Williams, *Manawydan Fab Llyr a Math Fab Mathonwy*, illustr. by Anita Rees (1958)
Set in the same medieval period as William's earlier narrative above [C7].

C9. Wyn Griffith, *The Adventures of Pryderi*, illustr. by Leslie Jones (1962)
This version originated as a broadcast for BBC Welsh Children's Hour in 1943. It is an abridged version for children with illustrations, setting the narrative into a medieval setting, but pre-facing that it originated as a pre-Roman story.

C10. Gwyn Thomas, *Y Mabinogi*, illustr. by Margaret Jones; Gwyn Thomas, Kevin Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Margaret Jones (1984)
With a text modelled closely on the medieval version, this version presents the tales as pre-medieval stories with La Tène- influenced art dominating the illustrations.

C11. Harri Webb, *Tales from Wales*, illustr. by Lesley Bruce (1984)

A Compendium of fifteen short tales, including from the Four Branches, a mix of other tales, such as 'Kilhwch and Olwen' from the wider Mabinogion, as well as saints tales and folktales. The style of these simplified stories is adapted to a child audience's familiarity of medievalized fairytales.

C12. Rhiannon Ifans, *Mabinogi'r Plant* (1986)
This small version tells only a part of each narrative of the eleven Mabinogion stories, simplified for young children.

C13. Haydn Middleton, *Island of the Mighty*, illustr. by Anthea Toorchen (1987)
An illustrated English-language children's volume containing 'The Last of the Great Kings', which is an embellished version of the Second Branch, telling the story of the beginning of the people of Wales is told as descending from the giants, and Ireland is called Tara, a realm of 'Anuvin'.

C14. Haydn Middleton, *Son of Two Worlds: A Retelling of the Timeless Celtic Saga of Pryderi*, illustr. by Anthea Toorchen (1987)
In contrast to the story collection *Island of the Mighty* (1987) by Middleton and Toorchen [C14], this version is aimed an older readership. Its illustrations are more muted and the text is written in the style of mystical narratives of a mythological nature, similar to Walton's *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* [N3]. There are 'Four Branches' in this collection, re-imagined around the character of Pryderi, which vaguely follow the plot of the first and third branches, and the characters are established as deities.

C15. Rhiannon Ifans, *The Magic of the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Helen Holmes, (1988); *Hud y Mabinogi*, illustr. Helen Holmes (1993)
These versions are based on Ifans earlier one from 1986 [C12] with illustrations by Holmes situating the tales into a medieval style fairytale setting.

C16. Tegwyn Jones, *Stori Branwen*, illustr. by Jac Jones (1997); published also as an English language version: Jenny Nimmo, *Branwen*, illustr. Jac Jones (1997)
A version of the Second Branch aimed at a younger readership, in which the illustrations tie the *Mabinogi* with Iron Age Celtic La Tène art.

C17. Esyllt Nest Roberts, *Blodeuwedd*, illustr. by Carys Owen (1999)
Told in the style of fairytales this version is the only young children's text of Blodeuwedd's story. Also published in English with an adaptation into English by Sîan Lewis titled *The Flower Maiden* (1999). These versions begin the story with Aranrhod giving away her sons, and cursing Lleu – thus positioning her as the 'wicked woman' while Gwydion plays the role of beneficent wizard who helps Lleu.

C18. Guest, *The Mabinogion*, illustr. by Alan Lee (2000)
An elaborate edition of Guest's version illustrated lavishly by Alan Lee, it reminds very much of his drawings for the Lord of the Rings, and enhances Guest's emphasis on knights and romance.

C19. Katy Cawkwell, *The Story of Rhiannon*, illustr. by Peter Bodenham (2007)

A version by an oral storyteller and performer, this narrative fits into the canon of 'Celtic' folktales, in which Irish and Welsh motifs intermingle. The language is evocative of a storytelling performance.

C20. Meinir Wyn Edwards, *Branwen a Bendigeidfran*, illustr. by Morgan Tomos (2010)
A slim volume published for young children, it tells the story of The Second Branch in Welsh. Its setting is unclear: it could be early medieval or pre-medieval with La Téne style brooches and torches.

C21. Nanna Ryder and Carys Richards, *Pwyll a Rhiannon*, illustr. by Brett Breckon (Llandysul: Gomer, 2010)
This is large, oversize, illustrated Welsh-language volume of the First Branch for children. Disney style illustrations set this version into a quasi-medieval fairytale environment, in which the First Branch is recast as a romantic love story which ends in marriage.

C22. Mererid Hopwood, *Straeon o'r Mabinogi*, illustr. by Brett Breckon (Llandysul: Gomer, 2011)
A simplified Welsh-language version for young readers, consisting of 'Pwyll a Rhiannon', 'Branwen', 'Pryderi', and 'Blodeuwedd'. 'Pwyll a Rhiannon' uses the same illustration by Breckon as the 2010 *Pwyll a Rhiannon* [C21]. Part of 'Branwen' is composed in verse, the only story in this collection.

C23. Daniel Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, illustr. by Brett Breckon (2012)
This dainty, illustrated English-language version re-imagines the Branches in their entirety, using a narrative style that is updated, embroidered and fast-paced. It won the Tir na n-Og Award in 2013.

C24. Siân Lewis, *Pedair Ceinc Y Mabinogi*, illustr. by Valériane Leblond (2015); Lewis, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, illustr. Valériane Leblond (2015)
This is aimed at very young children with the texts simplified and the illustrations large and colourful. Lewis also translated Esyllt Nest Roberts' *Blodeuwedd* (1999) [C17].

Appendix II: Chronological Compendium of Re-imaginings

1. *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* [B1-4]
2. Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion* (1838-45) [S1]
3. Isaac Foulkes, *Y Mabinogion Cymreig* (1880) [S2]
4. Sidney Lanier, *The Boy's Mabinogion* (1881) [YA1]
5. Gwenogvryn Evans and John Rhys, *The Text of the Mabinogion* (1887) [S3]
6. Joseph Loth, *Les Mabinogion* (1889) [S4]
7. J.M. Edwards, *Mabinogion* (1896) [C1]
8. Alfred Nutt, *The Mabinogion* (1902) [S5]
9. Gwenogvryn Evans, *The White Book Mabinogion* (1907) [S6]
10. Martin Buber, *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (1914) [S7]
11. Kenneth Morris, *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* (1914) [N1]
12. John Young Evans, *Pryderi Fab Pwyll: A First Welsh Reader* (1914) [C2]
13. Abel J. Jones and David R. Jones, *Chwedlau Cymru Fu: The Child's Mabinogion* (1920) [C3]
14. Thomas Evelyn (Scott-)Ellis, *The Cauldron of Annwn* (1922) [D1]
15. Joseph Holbrooke and Thomas Evelyn (Scott-)Ellis, *Bronwen: A Music Drama* (1922) [D2]
16. Saunders Lewis, 'Blodeuwedd' (1923-25, 1948); also published in translation as 'The Woman Made of Flowers,' by Joseph P. Clancy; adapted for children in Welsh by Robin Llwyd ab Owain, 'Blodeuwedd' (2000) [D3]
17. Padraic Colum, *The Island of the Mighty: Being the Hero Stories of Celtic Britain, Retold from the Mabinogion*, illustr. Wilfred Jones (1924) [C4]
18. Ellen Evans, *Mabinogion I'r Plant* (1924-9) [C5]
19. Ludwig Mühlhausen, Stefan Zimmer, *Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (1925, 1988) [S8]
20. Thomas Peter Ellis and John Lloyd, *The Mabinogion* (1929) [S9]
21. Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi* (1930) [S10]

22. Kenneth Morris, *The Book of the Three Dragons* (1930) [N2]

23. T.H. Parry Williams, *Pedair Cainc Y Mabinogi* (1937) [S11]

24. Gwyn Jones, Thomas Jones*, The Golden Cockerel Mabinogion* (1948, rev. 1974) [S12]

25. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (1948, 1952, 1961) [S13]

26. R. Williams Parry, 'Drudwy Branwen' (1952, 1971); published in English as 'Branwen's Starling,' transl. Joseph Clancy (1982) [P1]

27. Saunders Lewis, 'Eisteddfod Bodran' and 'Gan Byll' (1952)

28. Trevor Williams, *Pwyll Pendefig Dyfed a Branwen Ferch Llyr*, illustr. by Anita Rees (1955) [C6]

29. Gwyn Jones, *Welsh Legends and Folk-Tales* (1955) [C7]

30. R.L. Thomson, *Pwyll Pendeuic Dyuet* (1957) [S14]

31. Trevor Williams, *Manawydan Fab Llyr a Math Fab Mathonwy*, illustr. by Anita Rees (1958) [C8]

32. D.S. Thomson, *Branwen Uerch Lyr* (1961) [S15]

33. Wyn Griffith, *The Adventures of Pryderi*, illustr. by Leslie Jones (1962) [C9]

34. Lloyd Alexander, *The Chronicles of Prydain*, (1964-8) [YA3]

35. Evangeline Walton, *The Mabinogion Tetralogy* (1936, 1964-74) [N3]

36. Susan Cooper, *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (1965-77) [YA4]

37. Alan Garner, *The Owl Service* (1967) [YA2]

38. Olwen Bowen, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Richard Kennedy (1969) [S16]

39. Harri Web, *A Crown for Branwen* (1974) [P2]

40. Saunders Lewis, 'Branwen' (1975) [D5]

41. Jeffrey Gantz, *The Mabinogion* (1976) [S17]

42. Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (1977) [S18]

43. Dafydd Ifans, Rhiannon Ifans, *Y Mabinogion* (1980) [S19]

44. Eliès Aboezen, *Pevar Skourr Ar Mabinogi* (1980) [S20]

45. George Moor, 'Moon-Rider' (1981) [P3]

46. Alun Ifans, *Pedair Cainc Y Mabinogi I Dysgwyr*, illustr. by Bernadette Watts (1982) [S22]

47. Gabriella Agrati and Maria Letizia Magini, *I Racconti Gallesi del Mabinogion* (Milan, 1982) [S21]

48. Tony Conran, 'Blodeuwedd' (1983/1988) [P6]

49. Gwyn Thomas, *Y Mabinogi*, illustr. by Margaret Jones; Gwyn Thomas, Kevin Crossley-Holland, *Tales from the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Margaret Jones (1984) [C10]

50. Harri Web, *Tales from Wales*, illustr. by Lesley Bruce (1984) [C11]

51. Tony Conran, 'Branwen' (1984-7) [D6]

52. Gillian Clarke, 'Blodeuwedd', (1985) [P4]

53. Rhiannon Ifans, *Mabinogi'r Plant* (1986) [C12]

54. Jenny Nimmo, *The Snow Spider Trilogy* (1986-9) [YA5]

55. Haydn Middleton, *Island of the Mighty*, illustr. by Anthea Toorchen, (1987) [C13]

56. Haydn Middleton, *Son of Two Worlds*, illustr. by Anthea Toorchen (1987) [C14]

57. Hilary Llewellyn-Williams, 'The Song of Blodeuwedd on May Morning', (1987) [P5]

58. Roscoe Howells, *Rhiannon: A Welsh Island Story* (1987) [N5]

59. Jowann Richards, *Peder Skorrenn an Mabinogi* (1988) [S23]

60. Rhiannon Ifans, *The Magic of the Mabinogion*, illustr. by Helen Holmes (1988); *Hud y Mabinogi*, illustr. by Helen Holmes (1993) [C15]

61. Pierre-Yves Lambert, *Les Quatre Branches du Mabinogi, et Autres Contes Gallois du Moyen Âge* (1993) [S24]

62. Gillian Clarke, 'The King of Britain's Daughter' (1993) [P7]

63. West Glamorgan Youth Theatre and Dance Company, 'On the Tongue of a Bird: The Story of Branwen' (1996, 1998) [D7]

64. Tegwyn Jones, *Stori Branwen*, illustr. by Jac Jones (1997); published also as an English language version: Jenny Nimmo, *Branwen*, illustr. by Jac Jones (1997) [C16]

65. Elżbieta Nogieć and Andrzej Nowak, *Mabinogion* (1997) [S25]

66. Esyllt Nest Roberts, *Blodeuwedd*, illustr. by Carys Owen (1999) [C17]

67. Bernhard Maier, *Das Sagenbuch der Walisischen Kelten: Die Vier Zweige des Mabinogi* (1999) [S26]

68. Patrick K. Ford, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (1999) [S27]

69. Patrick K. Ford, *Manawydan Uab Llyr* (2000) [S28]

70. Ian Hughes, *Math uab Mathonwy* (2000, 2013) [S29]

71. Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion*, illustr. Alan Lee (2000) [C18]

72. Ogmore Batt, *Blodeuwedd* (2001) [Na1]

73. Mike Collins, *Y Mabinogi* (2002) [G1]

74. John K. Bollard and Anthony Griffiths, *The Mabinogi: Legends and Landscapes of Wales* (2006) [S30]

75. Vicki Feaver, 'Blodeuwedd' (2006) [P8]

76. Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (2007) [S31]

77. Katy Cawkwell, *The Story of Rhiannon*, illustr. by Peter Bodenham (2007) [C19]

78. Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr* (2007) [S32]

79. Russel Celyn Jones, *The Ninth Wave* (2009) [Na3]

80. Owen Sheers, *White Ravens* (2009) [Na2]

81. Gwyneth Lewis, *The Meat Tree* (2010) [Na4]

82. Meinir Wyn Edwards, *Branwen a Bendigeidfran*, illustr. by Morgan Tomos (2010) [C20]

83. Nanna Ryder and Carys Richards, *Pwyll a Rhiannon*, illustr. by Brett Breckon (2010) [C21]

84. Mererid Hopwood, *Straeon o'r Mabinogi*, illustr. by Brett Breckon (2011) [C22]

85. Daniel Morden, *Tree of Leaf and Flame*, illustr. by Brett Breckon (2012) [C23]

86. Lloyd Jones, *See How They Run* (2012) [Na5]

87. Philip Clayton-Gore, *Masques from the Mabinogi* (2012) [D8]

88. Anna Lewis, 'Last Light,' 'The Wash-house' (2012) [P9]

89. Stanley Knill, *The Mabinogion Brought To Life* (2013) [S33]

90. Siân Lewis, *Pedair Ceinc Y Mabinogi*, illustr. by Valériane Leblond (2015); Lewis, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, illustr. by Valériane Leblond (2015) [C24]

91. Matthieu Boyd and Stacie Lents, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (2017) [S34]

92. Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran uab Llyr* (2017) [S35]

93. Matthew Francis, *The Mabinogi* (2017) [P10]

94. Margaret Glynne Lloyd, *Travelling on my own Errands: Voices of Women from The Mabinogi: Poems* (2017) [P11]

Appendix III: Illustrations



Figure 1: Samuel Williams, 1849, wood cuts



Figure 2: Samuel Williams, 1849, wood cuts



Figure 3: Ellis and Holbrook, Cover Piece to 'Bronwen', 1922

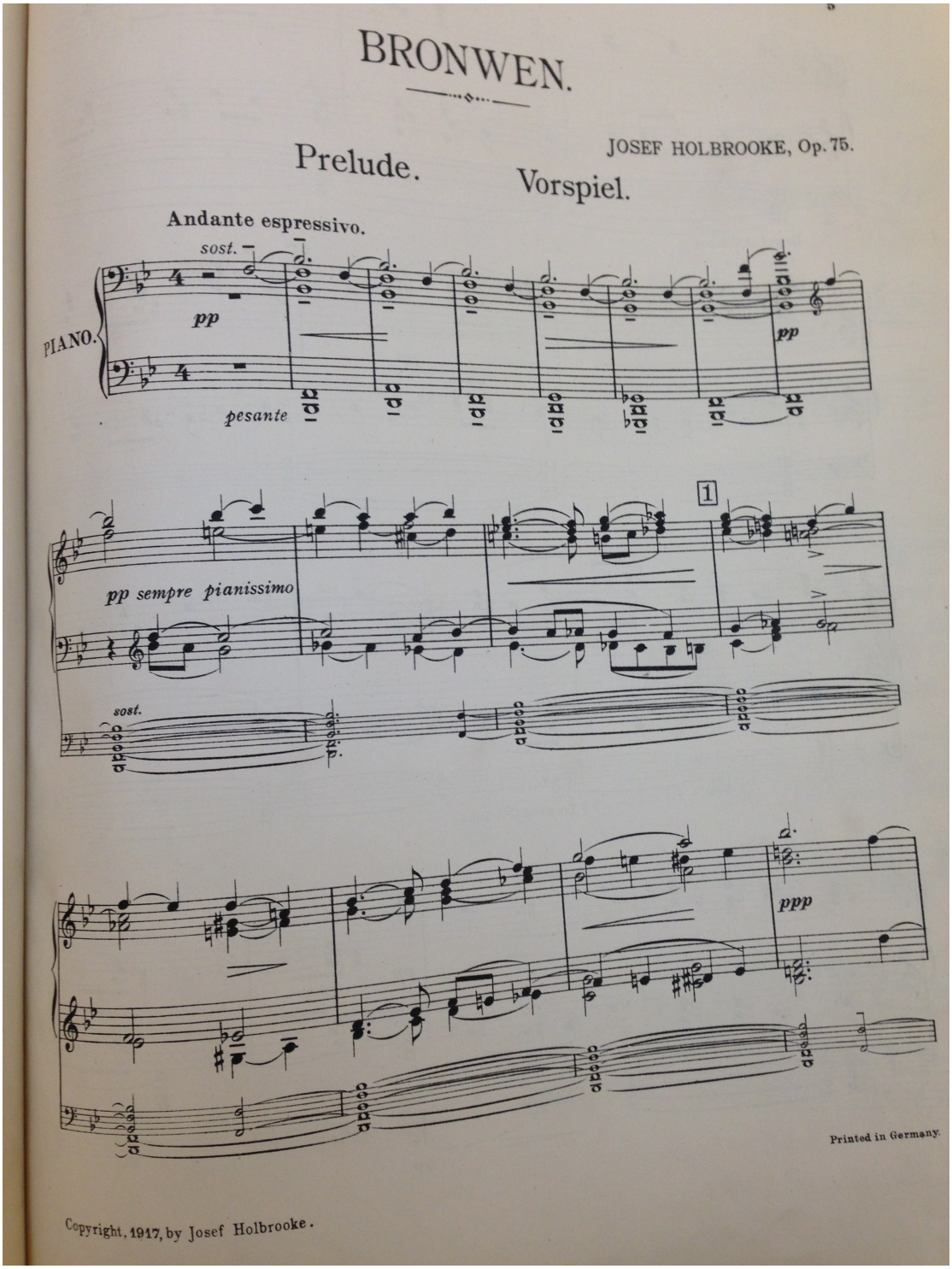


Figure 4: Holbrooke, 'Bronwen', 1922, Prelude



Figure 5: Margaret Jones, 'The Enchantment of Dyfed', 1984



Figure 6: Cara Bartels-Bland, 'Bedd Branwen', photograph, 2013



Figure 7: Brett Breckon, 'Pwyll a Rhiannon', 2011

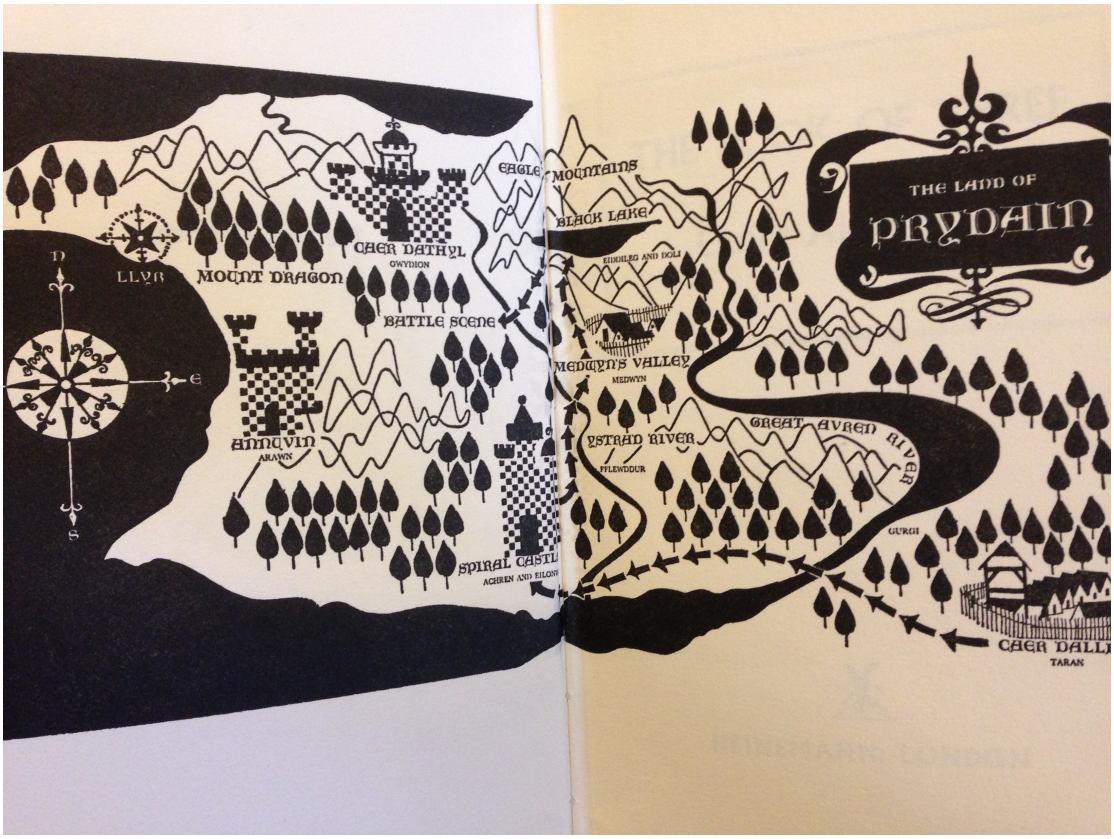
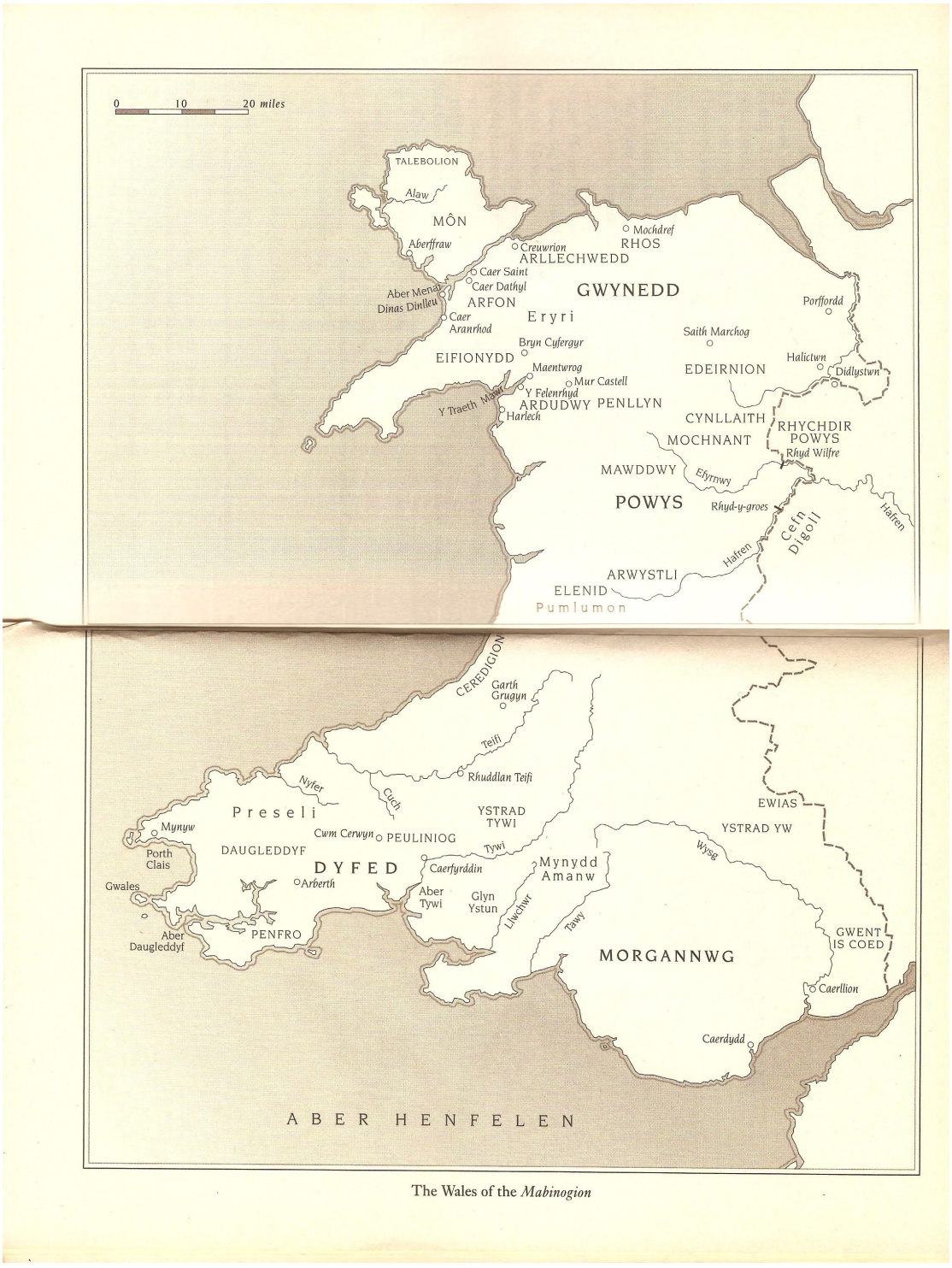


Figure 8: Lloyd Alexander, 'Map of Prydain', 1966



The Wales of the *Mabinogion*

Figure 9: Sioned Davies, 'The Wales of the Mabinogion', 2007



Figure 10: Alan Lee, 2000



Figure 11: Morgan Tomos, 2010



Figure 12: Mike Collins, 2002



Figure 13: Margaret Jones, 'The Eagle in the Oak', 1984



Figure 14: Mike Collins, 2002

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